



Delaware Governor Jack A. Markell

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Governor Signs into Law Ban on Dangerous “Bath Salts” Drugs

DOVER – Surrounded by lawmakers, police officers, scientists, social service and health officials, the Governor signed a bill into law that makes permanent a ban imposed last September on a class of designer drugs popularly known as “bath salts.” The new law also gives police and prosecutors more flexibility in dealing with the dangerous drugs.

“This is where public safety and law enforcement meet science and public policy,” said Governor Markell. “This has been a scary epidemic. These drugs, with their high potential for abuse, have been a threat to people and public safety. The emergency ban ordered through Secretary of State Jeff Bullock in September has been a success because emergency rooms are seeing fewer people affected by these ‘bath salt’ drugs. By permanently banning these drugs, we hope to lessen their availability and their use.”

People on the drug can experience bouts of extremely violent paranoia requiring emergency room personnel to take measures, including rendering patients unconscious, to treat them. In some areas, bath salts cases threatened to periodically overwhelm some emergency rooms around the state. The compound of drugs exploded in popularity last summer.

“When it became clear how much these drugs were affecting our communities, we used our emergency powers to act quickly to get them off our streets and out of our stores,” Bullock said. “With the Governor’s leadership on this issue and with the strong support of the General Assembly, we have ensured that not only are bath salts outlawed in Delaware, but also other dangerous designer drugs.”

“In order to protect the public we’ve got to stay one step ahead of the criminals that develop these poisonous substances,” said Attorney General Beau Biden. “This new law not only permanently bans ‘bath salts,’ but also more than a dozen chemicals that could be used to produce new versions of these dangerous mind-altering drugs. I applaud Senator Hall-Long for her leadership in developing this legislation and thank the General Assembly and the Governor for working so quickly to enact this bill.”

Sen. Bethany Hall-Long, D-Middletown, who is also a nursing professor, had been developing legislation banning bath salts when the General Assembly took its summer break. During that time, she worked with the administration, law enforcement as well as medical and pharmacological experts to develop the new law.

“This was a team effort,” Hall-Long said. “These are drugs that you can make in your basement, if you have the right chemicals. Without the changes we made to the law, it wouldn’t have taken a lot to make a drug with the same devastating effects but with a subtle difference in its chemical makeup that would have shielded a person from prosecution.”

A significant investigatory role rests with the Chief Medical Examiner’s Office, which will test the chemicals in the drugs.

“This will be a big challenge,” said Health and Social Services Secretary Rita Landgraf. “But we’re going to work to ensure that the Medical Examiner’s office will have the resources it needs to meet that challenge and give our partners in law enforcement the information they need to prosecute these cases.”

Rep. Rebecca Walker, a practicing nurse, saw the effects bath salts have on people first hand in her job as an emergency room nurse at Christiana Hospital.

“People under the influence of these bath salts are so out-of-control and violent that they’ve injured nurses and EMS providers, making it difficult to provide the necessary treatment,” said Walker, D-Middletown. “My biggest concern is for members of the community who may be violently attacked. Permanently banning this dangerous designer drug is an important step in protecting Delawareans.”

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