

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., issued the following statement after Sen. Joe Manchin, D-WV., and Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., announced today that they will introduce Buchanan's "Pill Mill Crackdown Act" (H.R. 1065) in the Senate.

"I am thrilled to have Senator Manchin and Senator Kirk join me in this bipartisan effort to crack down on prescription drug abuse nationwide," said Buchanan, whose "pill mill" bill is supported by more than 50 members of Congress from both parties. "Pill mills have turned my home state of Florida into the nation's warehouse for deadly narcotics...claiming seven lives a day. Now, more than ever, we need to shut down these so-called "pain clinics" that bring untold misery to our children, our families, and our communities."

The National District Attorneys Association and the National Criminal Justice Association recently endorsed Buchanan's legislation.

Senator Kirk's Release:

Bipartisan, Bicameral Group of Lawmakers Support Pill Mill Crackdown Legislation

Bill increases prison sentences, fines for pill mill operators

WASHINGTON - During the 23rd annual National Red Ribbon Week to promote drug abuse prevention, a bipartisan group of lawmakers from the United States Senate and House of Representatives have come together in support of legislation that will combat the nation's fastest growing drug epidemic - prescription drug abuse. United States Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) have joined Congressmen Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and Edward Markey (D-MA) in introducing the Pill Mill Crackdown Act of 2011 in both the House of Representatives (H.R. 1065) and Senate (S. 1760). This legislation would crack down on "pill mill" operators by doubling the prison sentence and tripling the fines for illegal distribution of controlled substances. In addition, any assets seized from violators would be used to fund drug treatment programs and state drug-monitoring databases that collect information on prescription drugs prescribed and dispensed.

"Drug abuse is devastating communities in my state, whether it's preventing employers from being able to hire or tearing families apart. Today in my state, I held a roundtable discussion on drugs and our economy and we brought together folks on all sides of the issue: treatment, education, law enforcement, prevention, business and labor," Senator Manchin said. "We all agreed that prescription drug abuse is one of the biggest problems plaguing our communities and our nation, and I pledged to take the commonsense ideas and values that were shared back to Washington to help solve this national epidemic. And this bipartisan piece of legislation is the kind of idea that will help make sure our employers can get back to hiring and the people of West Virginia and America can have strong, drug-free communities."

"Prescription drug abuse is rising. Drug fatalities have surpassed motor vehicle deaths, largely due to prescription drug overdoses," Sen. Kirk said. "This bipartisan legislation makes common-sense reforms to the Controlled Substances Act that will help save lives from prescription drug overdoses. I am pleased to join Sen. Manchin and our House colleagues, Congressmen Buchanan and Markey, in introducing this bill."

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"Doctors earn their medical licenses to prescribe drugs, not to peddle them. Yet 'pill mills' are spurring an epidemic of prescription drug abuse in communities, doctor's offices, and homes across the country," Rep. Markey said. "This bi-partisan legislation will help curb the growing problem of prescription drug abuse by cracking down on the healthcare providers who prescribe medically unnecessary painkillers. The bill will also support law enforcement officials on the front lines of this battle to identify pill mills and shut them down. I thank Senators Manchin and Kirk for their leadership on this issue and look forward to working with them to pass this critical legislation that will save lives across the country."

Today, two-and-a-half times more Americans abuse prescription drugs than use cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, and inhalants combined. "Pill mills", or doctors, clinics, and pharmacies that prescribe and/or dispense prescription narcotics irresponsibly, inappropriately, or for non-medical reasons, are a growing part of our nation's surge in prescription drug abuse. Pill mills are pain clinics that dispense prescriptions, often without physical exams or medical record

assessments. Pill mill doctors generally let patients choose their drugs, treat ailments only with pain medication and direct patients to "their" pharmacies.

In addition to doubling the prison sentence and tripling the fine for pill mill operators, the Pill Mill Crackdown Act of 2011 would reclassify hydrocodone combination drugs, such as Vicodin, to provide law enforcement with greater tools to monitor their distribution and decrease access for people using them for non-medical purposes. Reclassifying these drugs would have several benefits, including preventing patients from re-filling a hydrocodone prescription without a visit to the doctor.