

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Statement for the Record
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control Hearing on
"The Dangers of Synthetic Cannabinoids and Stimulants"
April 6, 2011

Chairman Feinstein and Co-Chairman Grassley, I commend you for holding this important and timely hearing on synthetic drugs. I am particularly concerned about the prevalence and abuse of "bath salts" throughout Pennsylvania and the United States. Marketed as bath crystals, plant food, and herbal incense, the synthetic chemicals MDPV and mephedrone have a similar effect on the body as cocaine and methamphetamines. Unlike cocaine and methamphetamines, however, "bath salts" are sold legally in most states, including in my home state of Pennsylvania.

The misuse of "bath salts" has led to many violent crimes, particularly in northeastern Pennsylvania. This past month, a priest was stabbed by a man who admitted to being high on "bath salts." In February, a teen who crashed his car in Dickson City admitted that he had taken "bath salts." In Wilkes-Barre, two women who took "bath salts" were charged with driving erratically with two children in the car. One man was arrested three days in a row in Wilkes-Barre for chasing cars around a parking lot and entering parked cars. A couple in West Pittston was arrested for endangering their child after police found them stabbing the walls of their home with knives because they believed there were people in the walls.

These are just a few examples of the devastation that "bath salts" are having on communities. In a recent article in the Scranton Times-Tribune, Dr. William J. Dempsey Jr., an emergency room doctor at Community Medical Center, said the number of patients high on bath salts that he has seen over the last four to six months is reaching "almost epidemic proportions." As I stated on March 29 in a letter to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), DEA should use its authority to temporarily ban the chemicals in "bath salts" to immediately take these dangerous drugs off our streets.



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United States Senator