

NEWS ADVISORY

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



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For More Information, contact:

Mike Lewis (334) 353-2199

Joy Patterson (334) 242-7491

Claire Haynes (334) 242-7351

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## AG STRANGE URGES NINE OIL COMPANIES TO RID ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS FROM RETAIL LOCATIONS

(MONTGOMERY)-- Attorney General Luther Strange today joined with 42 other Attorneys General in an effort to more effectively fight illegal synthetic drugs. The Attorneys General sent a letter to nine oil companies notifying them that they should take steps to eliminate the sale of synthetic drugs from retail locations operating under their brand names. In Alabama such drugs are illegal, and although our state laws are vigorously enforced by law enforcement officers, synthetic drugs still are found in some gas stations and convenience stores.

Throughout the nation, the use of synthetic drugs has increased dramatically over the past four years. In 2010, more than 11,000 people--many of whom were younger than 17--went to the emergency room after using synthetic marijuana. Since then, thousands more have been harmed by synthetic drugs. In 2014, one health department reported a 220 percent increase in emergency room visits due to the ingestion of synthetic marijuana. Over this same period, enforcement agencies confirmed more than 130 instances of branded gas stations having sold synthetic drugs.

Attorney General Strange was involved in working with the State Department of Public Health and others in 2011 to regulate and fight synthetic drugs and the subsequent passage in 2012 of a law to ban these dangerous substances. In Alabama, the possession of synthetic drugs is a class C felony punishable by one to ten years imprisonment, and distribution is a class B felony punishable by two to 20 years imprisonment.

"I believe these oil companies will cooperate in these sensible and vital safeguards to fight illegal synthetic drugs, to which young people are especially vulnerable," said Attorney General Strange. "These are unlawful and dangerous substances that should never be sold in a legitimate place of business. This matter needs to be taken seriously and addressed in an effective manner, and I'm proud to stand with my fellow Attorneys General in urging the oil companies to help us rid our states of these drugs."

In a letter co-sponsored by the Illinois and Florida Attorneys General, and joined by 41 other Attorneys General, Attorney General Strange expressed concern over the problem of gas stations and convenience stores operating under brand names of reputable oil companies and selling illegal and extremely dangerous synthetic drugs. Many of these well-known retail



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locations give the appearance of safety and legitimacy to dangerous synthetic products. Enforcing stronger policies against the sale of synthetic drugs in retail locations can protect the brand reputations of these oil companies while also safeguarding our youth.

The Attorneys General request the following actions be considered by these oil companies to address this growing problem:

- Prohibit franchisees from selling any synthetic drugs;
- Ensure this prohibition is understood by store franchisees and their employees by communicating directly with each of them;
- Establish a point of contact in corporate offices for franchisees, should they have any questions about synthetic drugs;
- Revoke franchisee/franchisor relationship with any gas station or convenience store that sells any kind of synthetic drugs; and
- Report to local law enforcement authorities if any franchisee is selling synthetic drugs.

The letter was sent to the following oil companies: British Petroleum, Chevron Corporation, Citgo Petroleum Corporation, Exxon Mobil Corporation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Phillips 66, Shell Oil Company, Sunoco and Valero Energy Corporation.

The state and territorial Attorneys General offices that signed today's letter are: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.