

Senate Judiciary Committee

“Community Solutions to Breaking the Cycle of Heroin and Opioid Addiction”

March 17, 2014

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Charles E. Grassley

James W. Baker, Chief of Police, Rutland , VT

1. In your testimony, you describe a joint law enforcement effort called *Operation Fedup*, which resulted in the seizure of over 8,000 bags of heroin. Were any other drug types seized in this operation? If so, please provide the other drugs and quantities seized.

There were no other drugs seized in that particular operation.

2. In addition to heroin, what other illegal drugs are being distributed in the Rutland community? What do you estimate are the quantities of those other drugs being distributed and how do those quantities compare to heroin?

In Rutland we see crack cocaine as the second most distributed drug followed closely by the theft and diversion of prescription drugs. Those prescription medications are often redistributed on the black market.

3. Do you believe that fully legalizing recreational marijuana, as Colorado and Washington states have done, would have a positive effect on Vermont’s efforts to combat the crisis in opioid abuse?

I do not support the legalization of marijuana. I see clear defining lines between decriminalization, legalization and the retail sale of marijuana. It is one matter to have civil violations for possession of marijuana and another to legalize and sell marijuana on the retail market. The challenges as a police chief in the area of diversion of pharmaceutical drugs leaves me concerned that we cannot in fact regulate and control the distribution of marijuana.

As to the impact of legalization of marijuana on opioid abuse, it is our experience that within the culture of the heroin distribution networks, the use marijuana is common. So common in fact that the probable cause developed for a good majority of traffic stops that result in the seizure of heroin, is often the presence of burnt and/or marijuana in the vehicle. As an example, our agency just seized approximately 400 bags of heroin and \$8,000

in cash after responding to an active domestic violence call in the City of Rutland. Upon being greeted at the door of the residence the responding officers could smell a strong odor of burnt marijuana. This odor was the basis for further investigation that resulted in the arrest of New York City based individuals (who have extensive records) for trafficking heroin in Rutland, Vt.

To summarize, I do not see a positive impact if marijuana is legalized as it is in Washington and Colorado.