

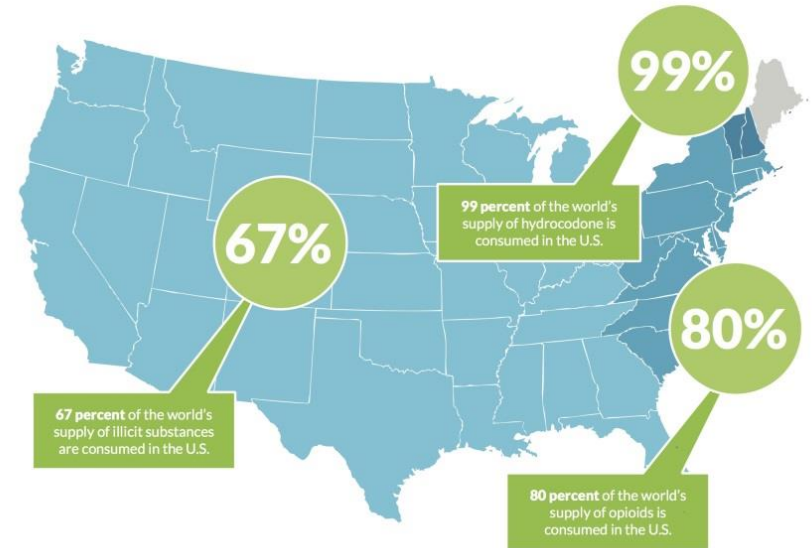
# Time To Act on Texas Opioid Crisis

**We Must Improve Prescription Monitoring to Curb Patient Abuse, Adopt Tough Penalties to Address Crime Assault on Pharmacies**

Seventy-eight Americans die every day from a prescription drug overdose, twice as many as from heroin and cocaine combined. Deaths from prescription painkillers have quadrupled since 1999.

In 2012 alone, U.S. physicians and dentists wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid drugs such as codeine, Fentanyl, hydrocodone and oxycontin — equivalent to one bottle for every U.S. adult. [Health-care spending on patients diagnosed with opioid addiction or dependence has risen by 1375%](#) over the past four years, according to a study by Fair Health, a non-profit health databank.

## THE LAND OF PLENTY



America's growing addiction to opioids is also driving a theft assault on pharmacies that feeds street-level drug dealers. The crackdown on doctor-shopping, unethical prescribers and in-pharmacy diversion is reducing easy access to prescription narcotics. As that supply dries up, street prices rise and criminals resort to other ways of scoring opioids — robbing a pharmacy or clinic, smashing a window or cutting through the roof to avoid alarm systems.



### [Pharmacy Crime Slams Texas Hardest](#)

**Learn more about pharmacy crime, opioid abuse, overprescribing and legislation to address the crisis at our dedicated website: [txopioidcrisis.org](http://txopioidcrisis.org)**

National statistics from several sources show that Texas suffers the greatest overall impact from pharmacy crime. **According to RxPatrol, a pharmacy crime database funded by Purdue Pharma, Texas ranks first nationally in pharmacy burglaries. In the current decade (Jan. 1, 2011 - Dec. 31, 2016), 239 Texas pharmacy burglaries were reported to RxPatrol, representing 30% of the national total. Pharmacists Mutual Insurance Company reports that although Texas pharmacies comprise just 9% of its pharmacies insured against crime losses, they represent 17% of its reported crime and 25% of its loss costs.**

State	Pharmacy Burglaries	% of Total
<b>TX</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>29.91%</b>
CA	66	8.26%
MI	52	6.51%
MD	42	5.26%
NY	40	5.01%
AL	39	4.88%
KY	34	4.26%
NC	34	4.26%
GA	31	3.88%
TN	30	3.75%

Texas is also home to organized gangs that target retail pharmacies. Houston-based Fifth Ward Circle has been implicated in a string of break-ins around Texas and surrounding states, but also as far away as Virginia and Utah. **Texas suffers the most pharmacy crime and is also the base for organized crime against pharmacies and communities in other states.**

**Data from RxPatrol statistics 2011-2016**



Two Texas lawmakers have taken dead aim at the problem, working with the Texas Pharmacy Business Council (TPBC) to file bills that would increase the criminal penalties for stealing controlled drugs from pharmacies, hospitals, clinics and nursing homes. SB 536 by Juan Hinojosa of McAllen and HB 1188 by John Kuempel of Seguin would make such thefts a Class 3 felony punishable by 2-10 years in prison. Both lawmakers say those convicted of pharmacy theft can too easily and quickly return to that crime.



Sen. Juan Hinojosa

"We have to do more to protect pharmacies and our communities from the wave of property crime that is feeding the illegal opioid pipeline," Hinojosa said. Increasing the criminal penalties for theft of controlled substances sends the message that Texas is serious about targeting opioid abuse and the criminals who enable it."

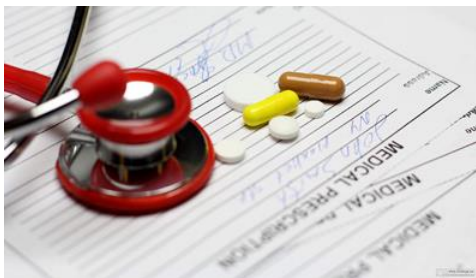
"Criminals who steal prescription drugs should not get off so easily that they are back on the street in short order to break into more pharmacies or clinics," Kuempel said. "We have to target the

organized gangs that are committing opioid thefts across our state by increasing the punishment for burglaries that target these addictive drugs."



Rep. John Kuempel

In 2015, a Seguin pharmacy was burglarized three times in a year, twice after installing an advanced security system and narcotics safe. A Waco-area pharmacy had six break-ins in 18 months. On Dec. 31, 2015, burglars stole \$1 million in prescription drugs from a Euless pharmacy ([watch the video](#)).



[Widespread Overprescribing is a Major Contributor to Addiction, Study Finds](#)

As the largest organization representing Texas independent pharmacies, TPBC understands that pharmacists have a vital role in securing and responsibly dispensing controlled drugs. The state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP) provides a database for verifying prescriber and dispenser registrations and to inquire about the patients receiving controlled drugs. **Texas pharmacists must report the dispensing of Schedule II-V drugs to the program within seven days of dispensing them, however, physicians and dentists are not required to check those reports before prescribing or dispensing a controlled drug.**

Opioid abuse is a systemic social and health-care crisis that demands shared responsibility among manufacturers, distributors, prescribers, dispensers and patients. Even so, some groups insist that only pharmacies check patient names in the PMP database before dispensing a controlled drug. **Pharmacies shouldn't bear all the monitoring and reporting burden just because they are at the end of the distribution network. Pharmacists do not prescribe high-risk painkillers, nor diagnose the patients for whom these addictive drugs are so abundantly recommended. They should not have to second-guess prescriber decisions through the PMP. Accordingly, TPBC urged the Texas Sunset Commission and the Legislature after its review of the Texas Medical Board to require that Texas physicians check the PDMP database at the time of prescribing.**

"It serves no useful purpose for pharmacists to enter a report in the database after dispensing an opioid if doctors don't even view the data before they prescribe these-high-risk drugs," TPBC Executive Director Michael Wright said. "If that's the case, pharmacy reporting is just time-consuming window dressing."

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