

**Tuesday, October 23, 2018**

## **Proponents Tout Impact Of Counterfeiting Bill After Kasich Inks It Into Law**

A bill signed into law Tuesday by **Gov. John Kasich** is proof that the General Assembly is taking steps to address the opiate epidemic, according to one of the measure's proponents.

Backers of the controversial Issue 1 have claimed they were left with no choice but to take a citizen-initiated constitutional amendment to the voters of Ohio after years of inaction on the part of lawmakers to address the opiate crisis.

But Lou Tobin, executive director of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, said at a Statehouse news conference that the signing of a bill (**HB 405**) to create a state-level criminal offense for counterfeiting is one example of the steps the legislature has taken to combat the crisis.

"Our association right now is part of the effort to defeat State Issue 1 and one of the things we hear from proponents about this is that the legislature hasn't done anything to address the opiate problem, and I think House Bill 405 is evidence that they have done stuff to address the opiate problem," he said. "They are still doing things to address the opiate problem."

Kevin Dye, resident agent in charge of Dayton's Secret Service Office, said as much as 85% of the counterfeiting cases he comes across are connected to the drug trade.

While federal statute forbids counterfeiting, the Secret Service is typically forced to focus on the larger cases.

"The smaller cases never see the light of day in federal court," he said.

With Ohio being one of ten states without a counterfeiting statute, county prosecutors are oftentimes forced to rely on law pertaining to forgery and criminal simulation, according to Mr. Tobin.

"Law enforcement lacks guidance on what they should investigate," he said. "Prosecutors lack guidance on what they should charge people with."

Mr. Tobin said the lack of a specific statute has created a haven for counterfeiters and people involved in the drug trade.

Secret Service agents in the southern district of Ohio typically come across about \$60,000 in counterfeit currency in a month, according to Mr. Dye.

"Criminals talk and once they find out this law is in place in the state of Ohio they are going to go to other states," he said.

The bill's sponsor, **Rep. Rick Perales** (R-Beavercreek), said the problem not only has been exacerbated by the drug crisis, but also by technology that makes producing fake currency easier.

He said a printer that costs just \$150 can create fake currency capable of fooling experts.

"This bill is going to make sure Ohio doesn't become a safe haven for counterfeiters. It's going to help with the opiate crisis and it doesn't cost a cent," he said.

The measure cleared the House in an 89-1 vote and the upper chamber with unanimous support.

---