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ID might be a requirement when buying cold medicine

Oregon might follow Oklahoma's example to lower the number of methamphetamine labs and drug users

BY BRAD CAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — A grocery industry group is criticizing Gov. Ted Kulongoski's plan to combat Oregon's methamphetamine problem by requiring people to show identification when buying over-the-counter cold medicines.

The rules, announced by the governor last week, target those cold remedies because they contain the main ingredients used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine.

But the Oregon Grocery Association says Kulongoski's rule will be a hassle for consumers and retailers and that tougher law enforcement is the key to fighting the state's methamphetamine epidemic.

"It requires the collection of personal information, thereby doing little more than infringing upon the liberties of cold sufferers, not the criminals," association spokesman Joe Gilliam said Tuesday.

However, Kulongoski's rule drew strong support from White House

drug czar John Walters, who said it would help curtail supplies of ingredients used by local "cooks" to make the highly addictive street drug.

Walters, who was in Oregon this week to announce local anti-drug grants, said a similar rule enacted in Oklahoma has resulted in a 60 percent drop in the number of meth lab seizures in that state.

"It has made a profound difference," Walters said. "We are encouraging all states who suffer from this problem to do the same thing."

Under Kulongoski's rule, purchasers must go to a store's pharmacy counter or front register and show identification to purchase the cold medicines.

Retailers will be required to keep a record of every purchase to enable officials to keep an eye out for people making multiple purchases in a short time.

Gilliam said the grocery industry is worried because details of how names and other personal information will be gathered and stored have yet to be worked out.

"There could be big costs in maintaining the database, and there's no evidence that this will really have an impact on the drug problem," the industry spokesman said.

But Kulongoski's spokeswoman, Marian Hammond, said the Oklahoma experience shows the rule could be effective in combating meth, a leading cause of child neglect and property crimes in Oregon.

"Any potential inconvenience to consumers or retailers is greatly outweighed by the need to protect children, families and communities from the devastation caused by meth," Hammond said.

Walters, meanwhile, conceded that most of the methamphetamine that's used in Oregon is produced in "superlabs" in California and elsewhere.

Still, Kulongoski's rule could have a big impact on the problem because there are hundreds of meth labs in Oregon, where amateurs using everyday ingredients are making the drug, the White House drug czar said.

"They create toxic sites that endanger neighborhoods and families," Walters said of the estimated 500 meth labs currently in operation around Oregon.

British doubtful that Howard can follow past Tory example

The party leader has added life to the faction, but must stunt Tony Blair's power to become prime minister

BY ED JOHNSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOURNEMOUTH, England — Conservative Party leader Michael Howard tried to turn next year's expected national elections in Britain into a battle of trust and credibility, accusing Prime Minister Tony Blair on Tuesday of being untruthful about the Iraq war.

Seven years after being dumped from power, the once mighty party of Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher is still trailing in opinion polls and Howard is struggling to convince voters he should form Britain's next government.

Addressing his party's annual convention, he set out a string of policies on crime, education, health, immigration and Europe that he hopes will woo voters. But his core message was simple: We can be trusted; Blair's Labour government cannot.

"In the run-up to the war, Tony Blair did not tell the truth. He did not give a truthful account of the intelligence he received. He did not behave

as a British prime minister should," Howard said to loud applause.

"I hope we will not face another war. But the world is a very dangerous place and you can never be sure. What if this prime minister asks people to trust him again? Could the British people trust him a second time?"

The Tories dominated British politics for most of the 20th century. Under Prime Minister Thatcher, who championed individual initiative and the free market, the party commanded an unassailable majority in the House of Commons.

But throughout the 1990s its popularity slipped, due to an unpopular new local tax, internal feuding over European integration, an economic recession and repeated sleaze scandals that damaged its credibility.

The public voted en masse against the party in 1997, giving Blair the first of two election landslides and consigning the Tories to the political wilderness. Many key Tory lawmakers lost their seats, leaving the party rudderless, with-

out distinctive policies and riven by factionalism.

Howard took the helm 11 months ago and reinvigorated the party. His sharp wit, tough-talking style and experience — having served as a minister under Thatcher and her successor John Major — appear to have halted internal squabbling.

But polls suggest he has failed to win over the wider public. Only 12 percent of respondents to a survey for the British Broadcasting Corp. thought Howard would ever be prime minister, while 78 percent said he would never hold the country's top job. Even among Conservative voters, 65 percent said Howard would never be premier.

Pollster ICM interviewed 1,004 people from Oct. 1-3. The margin of error was three percentage points.

Howard hopes a raft of new policies floated during the four-day conference in Bournemouth, southern England, will win support for him and the party.

He promised tough action on crime, better discipline in Britain's schools, more choices of hospitals for patients and tighter immigration controls — all mirroring commitments made by Blair's Labour government.

Brazil reluctant to give agency access to nuclear fuel factory

The country objects to demands by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but Powell expects a resolution this month.

BY MICHAEL ASTOR
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRASILIA, Brazil — Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday night that he expected Brazil would resolve a dispute with the International

Atomic Energy Agency over access to a nuclear fuel factory.

Powell, on a two-day visit to Brazil, said he was confident the country would "work out any problems with IAEA when they come later

this month." Brazil and the IAEA are at loggerheads over an energy agency demand for unimpeded access to a factory that produces nuclear fuel. Brazil has indicated that it wants less-stringent standards than the IAEA is seeking.

Powell, who met with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Foreign