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WHITE HOUSE DRUG CZAR RECOGNIZES EFFECTIVE MONTANA EFFORTS REDUCING METH PRODUCTION, USE

(GREAT FALLS) – The White House National Drug Control Policy Director, John Walters, today announced significant progress in Montana in pushing back against the methamphetamine crisis. Recently released data show a significant downturn in meth use and production, largely due to a balanced approach driven by public and private sector individuals and organizations.

Workplace drug testing data indicate a 73 percent decrease in the number of people testing positive for amphetamines, including methamphetamine, in Montana in the first five months of this year, compared to the same time period for 2005. Twenty-six of every 10,000 people tested in Montana tested positive for amphetamines January through May of 2006, compared to 96 of every 10,000 people testing positive January through May of 2005. Workplace drug test positives are an indicator of national drug use trends. Additionally, youth lifetime meth use in Montana dropped from 13.5 percent in 1999 to 8.3 percent in 2005 – a 38 percent reduction – according to the CDC’s 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

There has also been a dramatic downturn in meth lab incidents since the State’s law regulating the sale of the precursor chemicals went into effect on July 1st, 2005. According to the El Paso Intelligence Center’s Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System, Montana meth lab seizures decreased a staggering 77.3 percent from July 2005 through December 2005. During that period, there were just ten meth lab incidents throughout the State.

Director Walters said, “Montana is seeing communities once paralyzed by methamphetamine emerge healthier and safer because of a balanced and comprehensive approach. Senator Conrad Burns has been a strong leader in the fight against meth, and his work, along with that of the Montana Meth Project, local law enforcement, and area treatment providers, is making a difference in the lives of Montanans. As a Nation, we must build on the progress made in Montana by continuing to use research-based, creative public awareness campaigns to educate young people about the dangers of drug use; to implement science-driven, effective treatment programs for those whose lives have been torn apart by meth addiction; and to rid our communities of the criminals who produce, traffic, and sell this poison.”

Director Walters awarded certificates of recognition to one individual and two organizations that have led Montana’s efforts pushing back against meth. Retired Lt. Greg Tadman was recognized for his selfless service and sacrifice working for the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office. Gateway Community Services, which provides evidence-based treatment programs and helps to mend families torn apart by meth, was highlighted for its important work. The Montana Meth Project, an innovative and hard-hitting private sector response to the public health problem of methamphetamine use, was commended for its significant role in helping to drive meth from the State.

“We are honored to be recognized for the dramatic impact the Meth Project is having in Montana,” said Tom Siebel, founder of the Montana Meth Project. “Over the past year, we have raised awareness, increased dialogue, and significantly changed perceptions about the risks of methamphetamine. We have shown that by combining research-validated advertising campaigns with aggressive community action programs we can make real progress in preventing meth use. We’re proud that Montana can serve as a model for prevention efforts across the Nation.”

In June of this year, ONDCP released the first-ever national Synthetic Drug Control Strategy. The *Synthetics Strategy* establishes goals of a 15 percent reduction in the number of past-month methamphetamine users and a 25 percent reduction in the number of domestic meth lab seizures over the next three years. The *Synthetics Strategy* also seeks to increase the treatment capacity for those addicted to meth and to build on anti-meth advertising campaigns to help high-risk communities integrate effective public health messaging into their synthetic drug prevention efforts.

For more information, visit www.methresources.gov

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