



News From:

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MILLER TAKES STEPS TO CRIMINALIZE SALE OR POSSESSION OF SYNTHETIC DRUG KNOWN AS "PLANT FOOD" AND "BATH SALTS"

St. Paul – State Senator Jeremy Miller (R-Winona) took steps today to criminalize the sale or possession of a dangerous new synthetic drug known as “plant food” and “bath salts.” Miller amended the Senate Omnibus Drug bill to add the currently legal synthetic drug mephedrone to the Schedule I controlled substances list in state statute.

Mephedrone, which is snorted, ingested or injected, mimics the effects of illegal narcotics such as cocaine or amphetamines. It may be purchased online and is also sold on the street. Newly developed synthetic drugs are legally sold or possessed under the pretext of not being intended for human consumption, and are often labeled and sold as “bath salts” or “plant food.”

“People buy it as an alternative to illegal drugs because of the similar effects but they don’t show up on drug tests,” Senator Miller commented. “Law enforcement officials in southeastern Minnesota encounter individuals under the influence of ‘plant food’ several times a week, and they are currently powerless to take any action. Dangers of this drug have been suggested to be similar to those of other illegal drugs, so it is important that we empower law enforcement to properly deal with this issue.”

Miller worked closely with local law enforcement and the Minnesota Board of Pharmacy to draft the amendment, which designates the chemical names of the ingredients in “plant food” as Schedule I controlled substances. Schedule I substances include drugs or substances with a high potential for abuse and have no currently accepted medical use. Penalties for sale or possession would be similar to other Schedule I offenses up to and including a felony, depending on the particular case.

The omnibus bill also makes it illegal to sell or possess synthetic cannabinoids, known as K2 or SPICE, and adds 2C-E and 2C-I and analogs—substances whose chemical structure is substantially similar to the chemical structure of a controlled substance--to Schedule I. The bill also clarifies whether the weight of the water in a water pipe is included when determining the amount of marijuana consumed. Criminal charges are based on the weight of the drugs in a suspect's possession.

Miller’s amendment passed on a voice vote and the omnibus bill passed 65-0. Pending the governor’s signature, the bill is effective August 1, 2011, and applies to crimes committed on or after that date.

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