

# Legislators slow down cold medicine proposal

BY JOE NGAN  
STAFF WRITER

The move to restrict sales of some cold medicines used to make methamphetamine, a highly addictive illegal drug, hit a speed bump Thursday when some legislators voiced opposition to the inconvenience the act would cause.

The Meth Lab Prevention Act, discussed in a Senate judiciary committee Thursday, would move cold and sinus medicine containing pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacy counter. Pseudoephedrine, a decongestant, is the critical ingredient in meth manufacturing.

The legislation would require customers purchasing the drugs to show a valid photo ID and to sign their names.

Some senators say the bill would take cold tablets away from grocery stores and other outlets without a pharmacist, spoiling the chances of a late-night medicine run for a runny-nosed child.

Others worry about the inconvenience of having to show a photo ID to obtain the medicine.

Some pharmacists also said the law would cause inefficiency, forcing them to perform extra work.

Stephen Gathy, a Chapel Hill pharmacist, said he does not think the legislation is necessary.

"If over-the-counter medicine is the only source of the problem, I would support the legislation," he said.

"But there are other sources. The legislation is only going to impede

people who have colds from obtaining the cold medicine they need."

Gathy also said he worries that the legislation would force pharmacists and officers to do more paperwork.

"Is the state going to hire more people to walk around different stores and check the paperwork?"

He added that the meth problem in the area is not serious.

"How many meth labs are there within 10 miles of Chapel Hill?" he asked. "And how many meth labs are there in North Carolina when compared with other states?"

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 322 meth labs were busted by law enforcement officers in North Carolina in 2004, compared to 1,594 in Tennessee. But North Carolina has seen an increase in meth production during the past five years — in 1999, it only busted nine labs.

But state Sen. Walter Dalton, a Rutherford County Democrat and primary sponsor of the bill, said the low detection rate does not mean the problem is not serious, adding that many officers are not well-trained in detecting meth production.

Dalton also said he disagrees that the legislation would inconvenience the average person, since only cold medicines in solid form would be moved behind the counter.

Those in liquid and gel cap form, which account for 57 percent of the cold medicines sold, would still be

readily accessible, he said.

He also said the process outlined in the bill isn't complicated, either. "All the customers have to do is to sign their names and show their photo IDs," Dalton said.

A similar law moving cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine behind the counter passed unanimously in the Tennessee legislature earlier this month, prompting some concern that Tennessee meth labs could migrate across the border to North Carolina.

Pharmacists record purchasers' addresses and driver's license numbers in addition to the quantity of medicine customers buy, said Andrew Morris, a pharmacist at a CVS in Crossville, Tenn. Employees also record their initials as an extra safeguard.

"It caused some problems, but what we are trying to prevent is a much worse problem," Morris said, adding that the meth problem in Crossville is the worst he has ever seen.

The Tennessee bill was passed unanimously in both the state House and Senate. Dalton said he expects similar support for the final version of the bill in North Carolina, but he added that there could be debate before the legislation is finalized.

"When people recognize the magnitude of the problem, they would support the legislation."

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu)

# Bush backs free-trade deal

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez says he's optimistic the Bush administration can "get the facts out" and win the necessary votes in Congress for a free-trade agreement with six Latin American countries.

Gutierrez, who made his comments Monday in an interview with The Associated Press, said he recognizes the administration faces a battle on the trade pact, which would eliminate barriers between the United States and five countries in Central America as well as the Dominican Republic.

The agreement faces significant opposition from Democrats who contend it doesn't do enough to protect American workers from unfair competition from low-wage countries with lax environmental protections.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement, also known as CAFTA, is also opposed by lawmakers who represent districts with textile and sugar producers. The two industries contend they would suffer job losses from the increased

competition from the six countries covered by the agreement.

Gutierrez said that because the six countries buy yarn and fabric made in the United States, the U.S. textile industry would be helped by CAFTA's elimination of all U.S. tariffs on clothing from those countries shipped into the United States. The agreement also will gradually eliminate those countries' duties on U.S. yarn and fabric.

"If we don't get the agreement, that textile business that we are part of today will most likely go to China. So this is very important free-trade agreement for the textile industry," Gutierrez said.

He said he didn't believe the agreement would hurt U.S. sugar producers. The amount of extra sugar imports from the CAFTA countries would be very small, Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez said he would talk to businesses, lawmakers and others to shore up votes for the trade deal. "We want to get the facts out," he said. "I believe that when people see the facts ... we will have the necessary votes."

A vote on the trade pact could be held in the House next month.

On other matters Gutierrez:

— Said opening overseas markets to U.S. companies, making sure America's trading partners play fairly and getting the economies of Europe, Japan and other countries to grow at a faster pace are all factors that would help improve the United States' trade deficit. Using the broadest measure, the deficit swelled to a record high of \$666 billion last year.

A country's economic health can't be judged solely by its trade standing, he said, noting that Germany, for instance, runs a trade surplus but is struggling with sluggish economic growth.

— Didn't shed much light on the administration's examination into whether it should reimpose quotas to protect U.S. clothing and textile makers from a surge of Chinese imports. "We are going to let the facts drive the conclusion. But that could lead us toward establishing quotas on Chinese textile imports," he said.

Before joining the Bush administration this year, Gutierrez was head of the Kellogg Co., the world's largest cereal maker.

## THE Daily Crossword

By Diane C. Baldwin

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### ACROSS

- 1 Hedgepodge
- 5 Highland hillside
- 9 Congregate thickly
- 14 Beer formation
- 15 Superman's girl
- 16 Apple drink
- 17 Behave
- 20 Individuals
- 21 Keg quaff
- 22 Archipelago members
- 26 Steering mechanisms
- 30 Gives the what for
- 31 Chest muscles, briefly
- 32 Comic Costello
- 33 Madame Curie
- 34 Suitable moment
- 35 Galactic time period
- 36 Master the basics
- 39 Ailments
- 40 Numbered composition
- 41 Adde-brained
- 43 Name for an unknown
- 44 Park and Lex
- 45 Evening event
- 46 Gave a pitch
- 48 Neck bands
- 49 Moving truck
- 50 "Fatha" Hines
- 51 Attend to details
- 59 Smart guy?

### DOWN

- 1 Unit of resistance
- 2 Wahine's adornment
- 3 Writer McEwan
- 4 Fluky
- 5 Fair-haired boys
- 6 Rakes
- 7 Shows on the tube
- 8 6th sense
- 9 Brings almost to boiling
- 10 and dined
- 11 Contribute
- 12 Order form: abbr.
- 13 "Dalloway"
- 18 Over thar
- 19 Shallow dish

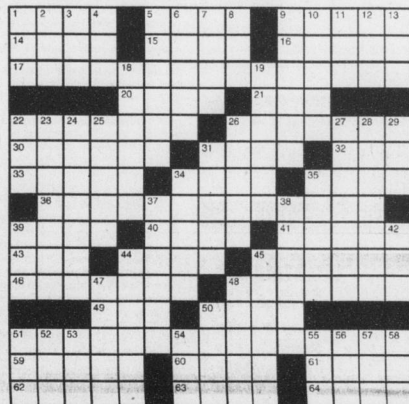
### 22 Ending for a belief

- 23 Fan-shaped mollusk
- 24 Siren of legend
- 25 Pseudonym
- 26 Story-telling uncle
- 27 Entertainer Carmen
- 28 Chanticleer
- 29 Nearest star
- 31 Holler-than-thou
- 34 Tapped on a keyboard
- 35 Seething
- 37 Nine-days' devotion
- 38 Son of Zeus
- 39 Psyche parts

### 42 Willing word

- 44 49th state
- 45 Brownish horse
- 47 Kick out
- 48 Spiny flora
- 50 Author Ferber
- 51 June celebrant
- 52 Toledo bravo
- 53 Aviv-Jaffa
- 54 Put a collar on
- 55 Sleuth Spade
- 56 Porker's pad
- 57 Freight weight
- 58 Vichy or Ems

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# Students meet gay, lesbian group

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Dozens of students at conservative Liberty University greeted members of a gay and lesbian organization with open arms on Monday despite contempt from the school's founder, the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

Fifty-five members of Soulforce, a Lynchburg-based gay and lesbian group, met with Liberty students to discuss academic freedom issues at the campus and the treatment of gays and lesbians.

Liberty students went out of their way to welcome the Soulforce members with cookies, bottled water and lots of friendly dialogue.

"I'm glad they're here and I don't see anything wrong with them being here, getting to know each other and loving each other," said

Natalie Bullock, a Liberty student from Cincinnati.

But the Rev. Jerry Falwell, who founded the Christian school in 1971, sternly condemned homosexuality during a regular Monday convocation attended by Liberty students, faculty, staff and Soulforce members.

"Contrary to rumors, this is not 'Gay Day' at Liberty University," said Falwell, urging Liberty students not to accept any literature from the group. The university had no comment beyond Falwell's message, and Falwell did not meet with Soulforce members.

Despite Falwell's admonishments, dozens of Liberty students gathered in small groups with members of Soulforce, which represents gay and lesbian student organizations at several Virginia

college and universities. Members wore brightly colored shirts with the organization's Web site printed on the front and many wore stickers reading "Stop Spiritual Violence."

Soulforce director Mel White wanted to deliver to Liberty's library copies of a book entitled, "What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality," and to give professors small rainbow stickers for their doors as safe havens for students with questions about their sexuality.

However, after the group left for an afternoon news conference, campus police refused to allow them back on campus.

There was heavy security from campus police and Lynchburg city police, but there were no incidents.

# Death-row sentences drop in U.S.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The number of people sentenced to death last year fell to the lowest level since the Supreme Court reinstated the penalty in 1976.

There were 125 people sent to death row in 2004, down from 144 the previous year and the sixth consecutive annual decline, according to figures compiled by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. In 1998, 300 people received death sentences.

Miriam Gohara, assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, said one major cause for the decline is high profile exonerations based on DNA evidence.

"I think people are more concerned about the irreversibility of the death penalty. Once somebody is executed, you can't bring them back."

Dianne Clements, president of Justice for All, a pro-death penalty victim advocacy group, offered another explanation.

"Not only has the murder rate declined, thank goodness, but the types of killers eligible for the death penalty have been redefined by the Supreme Court," she said.

The high court has issued a series of decisions narrowing the death penalty, putting a stop to the execution of juveniles, the insane and the mentally retarded. There also are more jurisdictions where jurors are given options other than death, said Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

"Juries are being given a choice of life without parole that they didn't have in the early '90s," he said.

Dieter also said increased public attention has led to better legal representation for defendants who could face the death penalty.

In his State of the Union address this year, President Bush called for more training for lawyers who represent accused killers, tacit recognition that not all suspects receive an adequate defense.

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