

Penry, West Slope colleagues vow to fight to the end against meth



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Citing reports that methamphetamine use is on the decline across Colorado, a group of Mesa County lawmakers say they want to keep up the fight against the drug to ensure its eradication once and for all.

Today the Senate gave its full approval to a measure that extends the life of the Colorado Methamphetamine Task Force, which is set to sunset in 2010. [Senate Bill 231](#) is sponsored by Josh Penry in the Senate and Reps. Laura Bradford and Steve King in the House--all Grand Junction Republicans. Front Range Democrat Rep. Judy Solano, of Adams County, is also a co-prime sponsor of the measure.

The legislators say they want to reassure law enforcement officials they stand with them in the fight against the highly addictive drug, and they pointed to [data from the Drug Enforcement Agency showing meth use is down in Colorado](#). The report largely credits task forces with the success; Penry says that shows efforts so far have been on the right track, but he warns that campaign against the dangerous drug is far from over.

"Colorado's winning the battle against meth thanks to the statewide task force and its partners around the state, but the war's not yet won," Penry said. "This task force has done heroic work and this bill will keep them in the fight into the future."

The DEA bases its conclusion on the fact that number of meth-lab raids dropped in Colorado from a record high of 450 in 2002 to just 46 in 2007. The busts have limited supply and caused a steep increase in the street price of the drug. Jim Schrant, head of western Colorado's DEA office, [told the Denver Post last month that the rising cost of meth is "the most pure, empirical data we can use to judge success" in the war against meth](#).

King, who worked in law enforcement in Mesa County for over 24 years, says although the numbers are encouraging, his community is still struggling with the widespread devastation of methamphetamine abuse.

"Even though we've turned the corner on meth addiction on the West Slope, continued focus and support on treatment, enforcement and prevention are to vital to guarantee the elimination of this dark plague on our society," King said.

In February, [Colorado's Attorney General John Suthers said Colorado still ranks eighth in the nation in per-capita methamphetamine](#). He also said it costs the state about \$1.4 billion a year to wage the war on meth.

Suthers added that meth abuse also leads to a whole host of other public safety problems including ID theft and burglaries. He said that approximately two-thirds of ID thefts are perpetrated by meth users.

The bill extends the task force to 2014 and will cost the state nothing since it is completely funded by gifts, grants, and donations.



Sen. Josh Penry, R-Grand Junction, says even though major inroads are being made in the fight against meth abuse, the war is far from over. Today his bill extending the life of the state's Methamphetamine Task Force won the approval

of the whole Senate.

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