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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Urges Congress to Ban Contraband Phones



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is urging congressional leaders to pass legislation to give states the authority to use phone-jamming systems in prison. Last year, Attorney General Moody's Statewide Prosecutors worked with state and federal law enforcement agencies to shut down a massive fentanyl trafficking operation, where drug cartel members used contraband cellphones to issue orders from within prison. The massive interdiction effort resulted in the seizure of more than 50 pounds of fentanyl, enough to kill approximately half of Florida's population. Statewide Prosecutors charged 25 defendants, including SUR-13 gang members, with multiple felony counts. On the heels of this massive drug interdiction operation, Attorney General Moody is asking Congress to take action to help stop the use of contraband cellphones in prison.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Drug cartel members used contraband cellphones to lead a massive fentanyl trafficking ring from behind bars. My Statewide Prosecutors and our great law enforcement partners executed a sophisticated operation to take down the drug smuggling ring and seize enough fentanyl to kill more than 11 million Floridians. Now, we need Congress to take swift action to keep inmates from orchestrating further criminal activity through the use of contraband cellphones."

Attorney General Moody is joined by 21 other attorneys general in urging Congress to take action. In a letter to congressional leaders, the attorneys general detail how the issue of contraband cell phones is a nationwide problem, with several instances of inmates using cell phones to continue their criminal behavior behind bars, including drug trafficking, fraudulent

schemes and facilitating violent crimes.

The letter states: “In Oklahoma, the white supremacist prison gang, the Universal Aryan Brotherhood, used contraband cell phones to help commit murder, money laundering, assault and robbery throughout the state. In Tennessee, a Memphis inmate used a contraband cell phone to orchestrate drug conspiracy deals by sending a FedEx package full of methamphetamine to his girlfriend. Then in Georgia, inmates used contraband cell phones to make scam calls and demand payment and even texted photos of bloodied inmates to the relatives demanding cash.”

Congressional members filed bills addressing these concerns in previous sessions, H.R. 1954 in the 116th Congress and H.R. 8645, S. 4699 in the 117th Congress, although the bills did not gain traction or receive a vote.

In addition to Attorney General Moody, the following attorneys general signed the letter: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

To read the letter, click here.