

# Political leaders join Urban Outfitters initiative

ROGER ALFOR, Associated Press Copyright 2013 Associated Press.

Political leaders are calling on retailer Urban Outfitters to stop selling flasks, shot glasses and pint glasses that look like prescription pill bottles. U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, the Kentucky Republican who chairs the powerful House Appropriations Committee, complained that the products trivialize the pain and suffering of people struggling with addiction. Rogers represents a largely rural area of Kentucky where prescription painkiller abuse is an epidemic. Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway joined the cause on Wednesday.

"I fear the sale of these items could have the unfortunate consequence of leading more teens to seek out prescription meds, or even worse, an increase in prescription drug-related overdoses," Rogers said in a letter to the company. "I would encourage you to remove these items from the shelves immediately so as not to contribute to this epidemic." Urban Outfitters, a clothing retailer that caters to teens and young adults, didn't respond to phone calls and emails seeking comment.

Conway, co-chairman of the Substance Abuse Committee of the National Association of Attorneys General. Said that "Combined with alcohol, the misuse and abuse of prescription medications can be deadly, making the Urban Outfitter Rx pint and shot glasses and flasks even more disturbing." Conway said prescription drugs are now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, and he said too many teens are experimenting with them, believing that they're safer than street drugs. The Urban Outfitters' products, he said, could reinforce that belief. "This type of cavalier attitude puts more teens at risk," Conway said.



In a letter to company President and CEO Richard Hayne, Rogers wrote, "For a company with sales of \$2.79 billion in 2012 to trivialize the pain and suffering of those struggling with addiction is tasteless at best, but irresponsible at worst." He said he is concerned sales of the flasks, shot glasses and pint glasses could lead to an increase in overdose deaths from prescription drugs.

"While I understand that your company's business model is predicated on the sale of controversial products, I believe marketing products to young people with an explicit allusion to the misuse of prescription medicines is simply a bridge too far," wrote Rogers, co-founder of the Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse.

Urban Outfitters did not respond to a phone call and email seeking comment, the AP noted. Last week, The Partnership at Drugfree.org urged people to write or email Hayne, or sign a Facebook petition calling on Urban Outfitters to remove the products from its stores and website. "Combined with alcohol, the misuse and abuse of prescription medications can be especially dangerous, making the Urban Outfitter Rx pint and shot glasses and flasks even more disturbing," the organization noted. "Tongue-in-cheek products that normalize and promote prescription drug abuse only serve to reinforce the misperception about the dangers.