

Lori Otter to speak in Washington, D.C., in support of Idaho's anti-meth effort

Erika Bolstad
04/02/08

WASHINGTON -- Idaho First Lady Lori Otter called on Congress to increase money for drug prevention programs to combat rampant methamphetamine use in the state.

Otter, who has been spearheading the private fundraising drive for Idaho's methamphetamine prevention program, spoke Wednesday to a House Appropriations subcommittee looking at criminal justice funding.

She told the committee that she and her husband, Gov. Butch Otter, are committed to doing what it takes to "rid our state of this terrible scourge." But they and other states need a dedicated source of federal money to help prevent young people from becoming addicted to methamphetamines.

"Methamphetamine is the number one illegal drug of choice in Idaho and the state's leading drug problem," Otter said. "High purity, low-cost methamphetamine is readily available and abused throughout the state."

Otter shocked the small committee with some statistics, including that Idaho ranks No. 5 in methamphetamine use in the U.S. That is not a per capita ranking, Otter pointed out. The state's prison system spent \$66 million last year housing felons convicted with methamphetamine-related crimes, Otter said.

Idaho's methamphetamine prevention program is based on the Montana Meth Project, an intensive advertising effort that helped the neighboring state cut methamphetamine use by 70 percent. Montana philanthropist Tom Siebel founded the preventative ad campaign, which was the state's No. 1 advertiser for three years.

Idaho will be using the Montana Meth Project as a model for its prevention program, which works to "unsell" methamphetamines by making their use seem unsavory. The ad campaign features graphic imagery designed to deter teens and young adults from ever trying the drug.