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**New Law Stops Criminals Who Sell Fake Drugs**

*Partnership for Safe Medicines applauds anti-counterfeiting efforts in Florida.*

/24-7PressRelease/ - WASHINGTON, DC, May 16, 2008 - The Partnership for Safe Medicines praised Florida lawmakers for unanimously passing the Anti-Counterfeiting Act, a critical piece of legislation that increases penalties for counterfeiting activities. The act, introduced by Representative Andy Gardiner (R-Orlando) in the House and Senator Alex Diaz de la Portilla (R-Miami) in the Senate, awaits signature by Governor Charlie Crist.

"We commend the people of Florida for taking a stand against counterfeit goods," said Marvin D. Shepherd, Ph.D., Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Partnership for Safe Medicines and the Director of the Center for Pharmacoeconomic Studies and Chairman of the Pharmacy Administration Division at the University of Texas at Austin's College of Pharmacy. "Florida's new law sends a clear message that we will not tolerate criminal activities that compromise public health."

In addition to creating a tiered penalty system based on the quantity or retail value of counterfeited goods, the Anti-Counterfeiting Act increases the penalties for repeat offenders and those who disregard human life or safety when they counterfeit products such as prescription drugs, automotive parts, and household goods.

"Every state has the ability to put systems in place to protect the public," continued Dr. Shepherd. "Not only do counterfeit drugs defraud consumers, they deny ill patients the therapies that can alleviate suffering and save lives—and in too many cases, counterfeit drugs cause great harm and fatalities."

The Partnership for Safe Medicines is a group of organizations and individuals that have policies, procedures, or programs to protect consumers from counterfeit or contraband medicines. Although the Partnership believes Florida's legislation is an important first step in protecting consumers from fake drugs, lawmakers need to provide the resources to enforce these new provisions, as well as do more to address vulnerabilities of online pharmacy sales.

The makers of counterfeit drugs have enjoyed and profited from loopholes in an online system designed to deliver healthy medicines to those in need. The Partnership advocates that every Web site selling prescription drugs needs to be subject to rigorous oversight standards, such as the Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site (VIPPS) accreditation program created by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.

"It's essential that lawmakers view measures like Florida's Anti-Counterfeiting Act as the beginning of drug safety efforts in our country, not the end," said Dr. Shepherd. "It isn't enough to enact new laws, policymakers need to support anti-counterfeiting provisions by dedicating additional inspectors, investigators and prosecutors to this important fight. We encourage everyone to learn how they can take steps to protect themselves from contraband and potentially counterfeit medicines—because counterfeit drugs are unsafe at any cost."

**About the Partnerships for Safe Medicines**

The Partnership for Safe Medicines is a group of organizations and individuals that have policies, procedures, or programs to protect consumers from counterfeit or contraband medicines. For more information, please visit

<http://www.safemedicines.org>.