

## Balderas finds more to blame for NM opioid crisis

Written by Staff Reports

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ALBUQUERQUE – On Dec. 20, New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas announced the addition of new claims and three new defendants to his lawsuit against companies he alleges are responsible for the opioid epidemic in New Mexico.

Following additional investigation, Balderas made the decision to amend New Mexico's original complaint both to allege an industry-wide effort among manufacturers and distributors to unlawfully increase opioid sales in New Mexico, and to name additional defendants for their part in creating the epidemic.

"The entire pharmaceutical opioid industry, including both manufacturers and distributors together, has been in on the scheme to illegally market and sell opioids to New Mexicans, and we've modified our complaint to show that," Balderas said.

Through his office's Consumer and Environmental Protection Division, Balderas filed his original complaint on Sept. 7. A month later, *60 Minutes* and *The Washington Post* jointly published a story detailing the drug industry's efforts to undermine federal regulations aimed at stemming the flow of opioids into towns and cities across the country.

According to the stories, dozens of drug companies, including those named in New Mexico's complaint filed today, spent more than \$100 million lobbying for a bill virtually eliminating the federal Drug Enforcement Agency's ability to freeze suspicious shipments of opioids despite an ever-increasing number of opioid-related deaths.

"These stories really highlight the kinds of industry-wide deceit and fraud we've been uncovering through our own investigation, and they confirm for me that we are absolutely on the right track," Balderas said. "These companies are willing to do whatever it takes to keep the profits rolling in. We cannot allow that behavior to continue."