

# GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

[oag.dc.gov](http://oag.dc.gov)



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## **Attorney General Racine Announces Agreement with Korean-American Grocers to Educate Shop Owners on Synthetic Drugs**

*OAG Expanding Efforts to Warn D.C. Residents about the Dangers of Synthetic Cannabinoids*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today announced that the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) has reached an agreement with the Korean-American Grocers Association of Washington (KAGRO), a leading local business group, to educate its members about the sale of synthetic drugs in their establishments. The agreement is part of a broader effort to educate District residents on the dangers that synthetic cannabinoids pose.

As partners, the OAG and KAGRO leadership will:

- Educate KAGRO members on the brand names and packaging of synthetic drugs to prevent them from reaching the shelves of members' stores;
- Warn members of the dangers of these drugs;
- Teach members about the law-enforcement tools that OAG, the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) are using to stop the sale of synthetic drugs as well as the prosecution process for stores caught selling;
- And facilitate training and workshops for KAGRO members.

**“Synthetic drugs are extremely dangerous, and it’s important to ensure that potential sellers and users of these drugs know the significant risk they pose,”** Attorney General Racine said. **“I want to applaud the Korean American Grocers Association for immediately embracing this partnership, and we will look for other opportunities to partner with outside groups to eliminate synthetic drugs. We will also continue to work with MPD, DCRA and other government agencies to ensure that we use every tool in our tool box to fight this battle.”**

### **New OAG Pamphlets Part of Overall Effort to Eliminate Synthetic Cannabinoids**

As part of the District government’s wider fight against synthetics, OAG is also enhancing its education and outreach efforts on the issue. OAG has produced and is distributing two pamphlets to teach District residents about the consequences of using synthetic cannabinoids. The pamphlets target two demographic groups:

children/teens and parents/guardians. They are available for download on OAG's Resources Page at <http://oag.dc.gov/resources>.

OAG staff members have supported and attended "Beat the Streets" events across the District, educating residents about synthetic drugs. Members of OAG's Community Outreach Team have spoken to hundreds of youth, parents and others, including residents at the Community for Creative Non-Violence Shelter at 2<sup>nd</sup> and D Streets NW, about synthetic drugs. In addition, OAG staff members have conducted presentations on the dangers of synthetic cannabinoids for Collaborative Solutions for Communities, at the Bald Eagle Recreation Center, and for Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program workers at the Calvin Woodland Foundation.

In February, Attorney General Racine, along with attorneys general from 43 other states and territories, implored nine oil companies (British Petroleum, Chevron Corporation, Citgo Petroleum Corporation, Exxon Mobil Corporation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Phillips 66, Shell Oil Company, Sunoco, and Valero Energy Corporation) to help eradicate the sales of these drugs in their gas stations and convenience stores.

OAG has taken legal action to prevent the distribution of synthetic cannabinoids to District residents. OAG's Neighborhood and Victim Services Unit has filed a complaint against the owners of 3661 Georgia Avenue NW under the District's drug-nuisance laws; issued Notices of Unlawful Activity against the owners of 1109 Bladensburg Road NE, 800 Upshur Street NW and 3653 Georgia Avenue NW because of repeated instances of selling synthetic drugs; and filed a drug-nuisance suit against the owner of Aida's Electronics at 209 Florida Avenue NW in Ward 5. In each of the cases, agreements or judgments have been reached that will either close the store for the long term or ensure that synthetic drugs are no longer sold there.

### **The Dangers of Synthetic Drugs**

Synthetic cannabinoids – sometimes called "synthetic marijuana," "fake weed," "K2," "Bizarro" or "Spice" – are extremely dangerous and can even cause death. Synthetic chemicals are used to mimic the effects of THC, the operative chemical in cannabis. These chemicals are unregulated, and using them can cause dangerous side effects, including:

- Psychosis;
- Loss of consciousness;
- Confusion;
- Panic attacks;
- Severe paranoia;
- Hallucinations;
- Seizures;
- And other dangerous side effects.

Young people are particularly at risk from synthetic drugs. Manufacturers irresponsibly and illegally target youth as potential buyers by distributing synthetic drugs in brightly colored packaging with cartoon characters emblazoned on the front and names like "Scooby Snax." In a 2013 poll conducted by the D.C. Department of Health as part of its K2 Zombie D.C. campaign, 17 percent of young respondents had seen synthetic cannabinoids being sold at a convenience store. Another survey, taken in 2012, found that 20 percent of high school and 10 percent of middle school students had used synthetic drugs.