



## Opioid maker reaches tentative settlement, but fight far from over

Julie Havlak

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Weeks before the start of the federal trial against Purdue Pharma, the company that makes Oxycontin has reached a tentative, comprehensive settlement with attorneys representing thousands of local governments.

But for North Carolina, the fight to bring retribution to the owners of Purdue Pharma is far from over.

North Carolina is one of more than 2,000 local governments, tribes, and states suing the pharmaceutical company over the deaths and addiction brought from the opioid crisis.

Purdue Pharma is expected to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and, under the current settlement, the company would dissolve. It would form a new company that would continue to sell Oxycontin, but the proceeds would be donated to a public beneficiary company that would pay plaintiffs, according to *The New York Times*.

Purdue Pharma's owners, members of the Sackler family, would also be fined \$3 billion over seven years, but they did not have to provide a statement of wrongdoing in the settlement, the *NYT* reports.

"If Purdue declares bankruptcy, good riddance to this company that helped create and fuel the largest drug crisis in our nation's history," N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein said. "Along with many other states, I wasn't satisfied with Purdue's position."

Stein isn't done with the Sackler family. He's preparing filings to sue the Sackler family, blaming them for the thousands of North Carolinians killed by drug overdoses in North Carolina. The Sackler family is worth an estimated \$13 billion.

"The Sackler family has extracted billions of dollars from Purdue since 2007 and they've made billions more from the overseas businesses in their opioid empire," Stein said. "I allege that these people are among the most responsible for the trail of death and destruction the opioid epidemic has left in its wake — and I will not stop fighting until I am assured that they have made a meaningful and certain commitment to pay for drug addiction treatment and other remedies."

Opioids have hit North Carolina hard. The state's overdose death rate is significantly higher than the national average. In 2017 alone, 2,214 North Carolinians died of overdoses involving opioids, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Deaths from unintentional opioid-related overdoses cost North Carolina an estimated \$1.5 billion in 2015, according to the CDC.

But chronic pain patients have their own concerns over accessing the drugs for pain relief, said Cato Institute scholar Dr. Jeffery Singer.

“It’s not going to do a thing to correct the problem,” Singer said. “But this is going to result in a lot of the drug companies just getting out of the pain management business, which is not good for patients.”