

SPECIAL 1

MOTION

The use of synthetic cannabinoids, a type of manufactured drug that is sprayed onto plant material and smoked like a cigarette or marijuana, has significantly increased in the City of Los Angeles over recent months. This drug, often referred to as spice, is far less expensive and far more potent than natural marijuana and can often cause serious side effects, such as loss of consciousness, paranoia, tachycardia and psychotic episodes. Over recent months, there have been numerous overdoses related to the use of synthetic cannabinoids among the homeless population in Skid Row, with two mass overdoses in the area last week that resulted in over fifty people being transported to the hospital.

The use of synthetic cannabinoids is not just a problem in Los Angeles; cities across the state and country are also dealing with overdoses and other problems caused by these drugs. In an effort to address this problem, the state passed legislation in 2011 criminalizing the sale and distribution of synthetic cannabinoids. However, state law only identified five chemical compounds, and the manufacturers of these drugs are constantly modifying the chemical compounds in their products in order to skirt the law and continue pushing their products. In fact, these drugs are often purchasable in convenience stores and smoke shops.

State legislation is currently on the Governor's desk to help address this loophole. SB 1036 (Hernandez) would expand the definition of controlled substance analog to include slight variations in synthetic marijuana, provided that the chemical makeup and intoxicating effects are similar to the already-banned formulation. The City's support for this legislation, with the concurrence of the Mayor, should be immediately expressed to the Governor.

In an effort to address this problem, the City of San Diego recently enacted a new ordinance prohibiting the sale, distribution, manufacture and possession of novel synthetic drugs and novel psychoactive drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids. This ordinance shifts the focus from the chemical compounds that make up synthetic cannabinoids to the effect of these synthetic drugs on the brain. An ordinance similar to San Diego's may enable the City of Los Angeles to more effectively curb the sale and distribution of synthetic cannabinoids, and could be an effective tool in addressing the public health crisis being caused by the availability of these synthetic drugs.

It is of particular interest to track down the manufacturers and distributors of these illegal substances. While it is important to provide education and prevent use of these dangerous drugs, it is not efficient to focus law enforcement resources on small scale use or possession. It has been reported that federal and local officials recently traced certain drugs being used in Florida to origins in China, which has led to legal actions against key distribution points in the supply chain. This experience should be reviewed for possible replication in Los Angeles and for coordination among federal investigators, Los Angeles law enforcement and City departments like the Port of Los Angeles.

The City must take action quickly on this issue, before additional and potentially deadlier overdoses occur.



AUG 26 2016

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council determine, as provided in Section 54954.2(b)(2) of the Government Code, and pursuant to Rule 23 of the Rules of the City Council, that there is a need to take immediate action on this matter AND that the need for action came to the attention of the City Council subsequent to the posting of the agenda for today's Council meeting

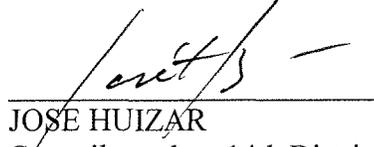
I FURTHER MOVE that the City Attorney, with the assistance of the Police and Fire Departments, be requested to draft an ordinance to prohibit the sale, distribution, manufacture and possession of novel synthetic drugs and novel psychoactive drugs in the City of Los Angeles, similar to an ordinance enacted by the City of San Diego in July 2016.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Attorney report on strategies for pursuing the manufacturers and distributors of spice, and any examples from other jurisdictions or opportunities for coordination with federal officials to prosecute key elements of the supply chain as a higher value target than the end user.

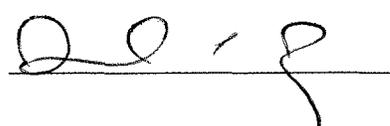
I FURTHER MOVE that the City express to Governor Brown its support for SB 1036 to close the loophole in current law that encourages criminal drug manufacturers to produce slightly different and potentially more dangerous variations of spice.

PRESENTED BY:


MITCHELL ENGLANDER
Councilmember, 12th District


JOSE HUIZAR
Councilmember, 14th District

SECONDED BY:





ORIGINAL