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# In opioid litigation, federal judge urges settlement

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Parties involved in litigation over the nation's opioid abuse epidemic should settle the case rather than battling it out while more people die, a federal judge said on Tuesday.

Nationwide, scores of lawsuits have been filed against companies that make and distribute opioid painkillers. Hospitals, states, cities and county governments charge that they've been saddled with the costs of handling an epidemic of addiction fueled by corporate irresponsibility. A number of Alabama entities have filed such suits, including the cities of Birmingham and Mobile; several counties; and Mobile-based Infirmity Health.

More than 200 such suits, including some of those originating in Alabama, have been consolidated in a multi-district process being overseen by U.S. District Judge Dan A. Polster in Cleveland. News site Cleveland.com reported that in an initial hearing on Tuesday, Polster told more than 100 attorneys that because of the life-and-death stakes, "We don't need a lot of briefs and we don't need trials."


According to the report by Eric Heisig, "Polster said he was particularly troubled by reports that the number of deaths caused by opioids has contributed to an overall decrease in the life expectancy for Americans. He said he believes everybody has some responsibility for the crisis."

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Polster reportedly said that if no settlement is reached, more American will die while litigation proceeds. According to the Cleveland.com report, "Attorneys from across the country filled every corner of Polster's courtroom at the federal courthouse in downtown Cleveland, with others either in an overflow room watching a video feed or listening on the phone."

Cleveland.com also published a separate story sharing extensive excerpts from Polster's remarks. Among other things, he said that "what I'm interested in doing is not just moving money around, because this is an ongoing crisis. What we've got to do is dramatically reduce the number of the pills that are out there and make sure that the pills that are out there are being used properly. ... So that's what I want to accomplish. And then we'll deal with the money. We can deal with the money also and the treatment. I mean, that's what -- you know, we need a whole lot -- some new systems in place, and we need some treatment."





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