



# Kentucky Lawmakers Push for New Heroin Law

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As injection drug overdoses and hepatitis C virus (HCV) cases continue to rise across Kentucky, lawmakers are pushing for a compromise between the state's proposed House and Senate heroin bills before things get worse, the State Journal [reports](#).

At a recent meeting, lawmakers from both legislative camps and political parties raised their concerns about differences in the bills, focusing on issues such as sentencing laws for injection drug users, a local option for syringe exchange programs and "good Samaritan" legal protections.

The proposed Senate bill, Senate Bill 5, includes a relatively hardline good Samaritan legal provision that would delay prosecution for anyone who calls for medical assistance in the event of an overdose.

On the other hand, the proposed House Bill 213 would assure that no possession or paraphernalia charges could be filed against someone calling for help, as long as they stay with the person overdosing until medical assistance arrives. The House bill would also not persecute the person needing that assistance.

Legislators are also in the process of re-thinking their opinions about instituting local needle exchanges across the region and whether that would be a statewide or locally decided initiative.

Northern Kentucky's hep C rate is 24 times higher than the rest of the country. The state's hepatitis B virus (HBV) rates have also gone up in recent years, mostly due to shared needles.

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