

# Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman



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## Led By A.G. Schneiderman, State Attorneys General Form Coalition For Expanded Probe Of Herbal Supplement Industry

*Coalition Chaired by Schneiderman Brings Together Attorneys General From Connecticut, Indiana, And Puerto Rico*

*Schneiderman: Problems in the Herbal Supplement Industry Extend Beyond Just One State*

NEW YORK -- Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the formation of a coalition of state attorneys general from Connecticut, Indiana and Puerto Rico to further investigate the business practices of the herbal supplement industry. This multistate partnership brings together top law enforcement officers representing nearly 30 million Americans as they seek to ensure that herbal supplement manufacturers and retailers comply with the law. The initiative seeks to enhance transparency and ensure that the herbal supplements industry is taking the steps necessary to validate their marketing claims, including as to authenticity and purity.

The coalition's formation follows a recent analysis commissioned by the New York State Attorney General's Office that found contaminants, unlabeled plant species, and other substances in certain store brand herbal supplements. Many of the supplements, moreover, had either been so thoroughly processed that the genetic material of the original plant source was undetectable or not present at all. The office has sought documentation from the retailers as well as from several major manufacturers of supplements, as part of an ongoing investigation.

"I am pleased to announce this historic partnership to protect the millions of people who buy herbal supplements from potentially false and misleading business practices," said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. "New Yorkers and consumers nationwide deserve confidence that when an herbal supplement is represented as authentic, pure, and natural, it really is. Clearly, the questions we raised about the herbal supplements sold in New York resonate outside of our borders. By joining together, and building on the long track record of state attorneys general upholding the rights of consumers, we can go further in investigating this industry and, as needed, in achieving reform. I look forward to collaborating with these partners on this vital work."

"Consumers are entitled to expect that the product they are purchasing actually contains the ingredients as listed on the label," said **Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen**. "The findings uncovered by Attorney General Schneiderman raise serious public health and consumer protection concerns potentially impacting consumers in Connecticut and across the country. As attorneys general have shown time and time again in recent years, we have a strong and unique ability to work together on behalf of our respective constituencies on issues of national concern. I thank Attorney General Schneiderman for his leadership, and look forward to partnering with him and my fellow attorneys general on this coalition."

"The significant issues recently raised about herbal supplements are a concern that must be taken seriously so as not to further jeopardize the health and safety of people ingesting these products," **Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller** said. "As state consumer protection advocates, my fellow attorneys general and I are focused on efforts to eliminate misleading and deceptive labeling for the benefit of consumers."

"The accuracy in the information that a label offers to consumers is sacred," said **Nery Adames Soto, the secretary of the Department of Consumers Affairs in Puerto Rico**. "When is not up to par with standards, it induces the consumer to error and violates the

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**A.G. Schneiderman And DOI Commissioner Peters Announce Arrest Of Five Public Works Contractors Charged With Underpayment Of Nearly \$1 Million In Wages To Workers**



**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Agreement With GNC To Implement Landmark Reforms For Herbal Supplements**



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trust between the commerce and the client. At DACO we will be rigorous demanding that the labeling reciprocates the product contents. We are grateful to the New York State Attorney General’s Office for this coordinated effort and look forward to work together in this front.”

A 2013 study from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research estimated there are about 65,000 dietary supplements on the market consumed by more than 150 million Americans. Medicinal herbs comprise the most rapidly growing sector of the North American alternative medicine market. The Natural Products Foundation estimates that the dietary supplement industry contributes \$61 billion dollars to the national economy.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires companies to verify that their products are safe and properly labeled for their contents, but unlike drugs, supplements do not undergo the agency’s rigorous evaluation process, which scrutinizes everything about the drug—from the design of clinical trials to the severity of side effects to the conditions under which the drug is manufactured.

More than half of FDA Class I drug recalls between 2004 and 2012 were for “dietary supplements.” Class I recalls are reserved only for products whose use poses a high risk of “serious adverse health consequences or death.” One of the most dramatic examples of harm caused by use of supplements involved ephedra-containing herbal weight loss products, which caused hundreds of deaths before ephedra was banned from the market in 2004.

Mislabeled supplements ingested by the public may pose a significant danger to those who have food allergies or take medication. If the producers of herbal supplements fail to identify all the ingredients on a product’s label, a consumer with food allergies, or who is taking medication for an unrelated illness, is taking a potentially serious health risk every time a contaminated herbal supplement is ingested.

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