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**PRESS RELEASE
March 20, 2018**

**Summit County Files First Utah Lawsuit against “Big Pharma” Opioid
Manufacturers and Distributors**

Margaret Olson, Summit County Attorney, announced today that her office and a team of private law firms filed today the first opioid lawsuit to be initiated by a county in Utah. The Summit County Attorney, together with the firms Napoli Shkolnik PLLC (New York City), Dewsnup King Olsen Worel Havas & Mortensen (Salt Lake City) and Magleby Cataxinos & Greenwood (Salt Lake City) filed an opioid lawsuit against drug manufacturers and distributors on behalf of Summit County, Utah. The Complaint was filed in Utah’s Third Judicial District Court for Summit County, at the Silver Summit Courthouse.

Kim Carson, the Chair of the Summit County Council, stated, “The opioid epidemic has significantly impacted residents of Summit County. We as a community are very concerned with the easy access to opioids and the devastating effects these drugs have on our families, friends and neighbors. The Summit County Council fully supports the County Attorney’s decision to file this lawsuit. All of us have been affected by the prolific distribution of these drugs and the false assurances given as to their safety. We need resources to help educate our citizens on the dangers of opioid addiction and on alternatives to their use.”

The 240-page Complaint states that the opioid crisis was created by misinformation, false claims and marketing by the manufacturers and distributors of the drugs. Beginning in the 1990s, opioid manufacturers lied to both doctors and the public about the serious risks associated from long-term use of these drugs – one of the most critical risks being addiction. Meanwhile, opioid distributors injected millions upon millions of opioid pills into small communities, like Summit County, who are now left to cope with the human and financial consequences. According to Margaret Olson, “These drug manufacturers and distributors reaped the financial benefits in the billions of dollars and now they should be financially responsible for the opioid crisis facing our communities.”

Utah is seventh in the nation for drug overdose-related events and deaths, primarily due to the overuse of prescription drugs like opioids. In 2014, nearly one-third of all adults in Utah had a prescription for opioid painkillers. More drug deaths in Utah result from prescription opioids than any other drug. The cost of the addiction takes time to unfold, but can be measured in the impact on families and the community, whether it is child neglect, infants born with drug dependence, estrangement of families, lost careers or criminal justice involvement. Utah communities have been forced to expend significant resources to combat the epidemic.

Defendants include the major manufacturers and distributors of opioids in the United States, Purdue Pharma L.P.; Endo Pharmaceuticals; Allergan; Teva; Cephalon, Janssen; AmerisourceBergen; Cardinal Health; and McKesson. These companies market branded opioids such as OxyContin, Percocet, and Fentora, and generic opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl.

A press conference will be held today at 4 p.m. on the grounds of the historic Summit County Courthouse in Coalville, Utah, to answer questions about the case.
