

Johnson & Johnson appeals Oklahoma's \$572M opioid ruling

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In this Thursday, Sept. 12, 2019 file photo, Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter speaks during a news conference in Oklahoma City. Consumer products giant Johnson & Johnson is appealing an Oklahoma judge's \$572 million order against the company and its subsidiaries for helping fuel the state's opioid crisis. The company filed an appeal with the Oklahoma Supreme Court on Wednesday, Sept. 25 arguing the ruling was an "unprecedented interpretation of Oklahoma public nuisance law." A spokesman for Hunter said their office is reviewing the appeal. (AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki, File)

Consumer products giant Johnson & Johnson is appealing an Oklahoma judge's \$572 million order against the company and its subsidiaries for helping fuel the state's opioid crisis.

The [company](#) filed an appeal with the Oklahoma Supreme Court on Wednesday, arguing the ruling was an "unprecedented interpretation of Oklahoma public nuisance law."

The judge's decision that the marketing and sale of a lawful product can constitute a public nuisance could have grave implications for all businesses that operate in the state, the company warned.

"That novel ruling has immense public-policy implications, undermining product-liability law rules, which have always governed disputes over the marketing and sales of goods, and threatening wide-ranging liability for companies that do business in Oklahoma," attorneys wrote in the appeal.

In his ruling last month, Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman ordered the company to pay \$572 million to help address the damage the opioid crisis has caused in the state. Attorneys for the company have said that figure was grossly inflated.

The state had presented the judge with a plan to abate the crisis that would have cost between \$12.6 billion for 20 years to \$17.5 billion over 30 years.

A spokesman for Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter said their office is reviewing the appeal.

Oklahoma's case was closely watched because it was the first among more than 1,500 similar lawsuits against drugmakers and others involved

in the sale of opioids filed by state, local and tribal governments to proceed to trial.

Before the trial began, Oklahoma reached settlements totaling \$355 million from two other groups of defendant drugmakers, including Oxycontin-maker Purdue Pharma and Israeli-owned Teva Pharmaceuticals.

Purdue filed for [bankruptcy protection](#) earlier this month, the first step in a plan it says would provide \$10 billion to \$12 billion to help reimburse state and [local governments](#) for the costs associated with cleaning up the damage from the opioid crisis.

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