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National prescription tracking system is urged

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Officials say the growing efforts to smuggle drugs into Kentucky from other states underscore the need for a national prescription-monitoring system similar to Kentucky's statewide system.

That system is called KASPER (Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting).

"We'd like to see a national system like KASPER. We could eliminate this," Capt. Kevin Payne, commander of the state police Drug Enforcement-Special Investigations unit for the eastern half of the state, said of interstate doctor-shopping.

More than 20 other states have prescription-monitoring programs, but many are not as comprehensive as KASPER, and some are not open to police, officials here said.

Work is under way to establish such programs in more states, however, and to create a national system for them to share information.

U.S. Rep Hal Rogers, a Republican from Somerset who represents the 5th District, has gotten more than \$50 million in funding since 2001 for grants to help states establish or upgrade prescription-monitoring systems.

Of the 41 states that have gotten grants, 29 have prescription-monitoring systems in place and five more will set them up this year, while others are designing or planning systems, according to Rogers' office.

The U.S. Department of Justice is working to create a Web-based system for states to share information from prescription-monitoring programs.

"I'll continue to push the Congress to provide ample funding for state-based systems, and look forward to the day when all 50 states are active and connected," Rogers said in a statement.

U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield, a Republican who represents Kentucky's 1st District, pushed a measure that President Bush signed in 2005 to create a national system modeled on KASPER, calling it NASPER, but Congress hasn't funded it yet.