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# Albertsons, Safeway Must Pay $900 Million to Washington for Its Contribution to Opioid Epidemic, Judge Says

Albertsons and its subsidiary Safeway must pay $900 million related to its contribution to the opioid epidemic within the State of Washington, a King County judge ordered Nov. 5. The award is split between funding a plan designed to address opioid-related harm in Washington state by funding treatment and prevention-related efforts, and penalties for what the Court founder were unfair business practices related to Albertsons distribution and dispensing of opioid drugs.

The Court ordered Albertsons to pay $800 million to fund its portion of a $24-$30 billion abatement plan that is intended to address prescription opioid abuse over the coming years, and the Court found that Albertsons must pay at least $100 million for violations of the State's consumer protection act. The verdict is believed to be the highest ever against a single company in the State of Washington and the largest verdict in the opioid litigation nationwide.

The Washington state attorney general sued Albertsons, Kroger, and Rite Aid in 2022, alleging their pharmacy chains helped fuel the state's opioid epidemic by illegally and negligently filling "red flag" prescriptions.

The bench trial against Albertsons and Safeway began on July 13 before Judge Janet Helson and lasted about two months. Powell & Majestro attorneys Anthony Majestro, Christina Smith, and Graham Platz were among the lawyers designated as Special Assistant Attorneys General and served on the trial team.

During closing arguments, the state argued that the companies dispensed over 641 million prescription opioid pills in Washington from 2006 to 2022. Of those, 63% raised red flags that required further review. The state asserted there was minimal documentation about how these concerns were addressed.

The companies disputed the state's allegations, claiming its pharmacies met or exceeded the applicable standard of care. The companies argued that they were not a substantial factor in causing the state's opioid crisis.

Claims against Kroger and Rite Aid were dismissed before trial, either through settlement or bankruptcy.

Rite Aid filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in October 2023. Six months later, the Washington state attorney general secured a $47.5 million settlement from Kroger.

The case is State of Washington v. Rite Aid Corp. et al., Case No. 22-2-20910-1, in King County Superior Court.

# Sources


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