Nebraska's Senator Ben Nelson has cosponsored bipartisan legislation to provide new tools to drug enforcement officials to combat the production and distribution of the drug methamphetamine (meth).

"Meth has become a blight on our nation's rural and small communities," said Senator Nelson.

"Drug enforcement officials need all the resources we can give them to ensure that the large quantities of ingredients necessary for meth production are kept out of the hands of criminals who would use them to produce this horrible drug," he said.

Nelson and 15 senators introduced The Combat Meth Enhancement Act of 2009 on Jan. 15. It responds to problems that Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) enforcement officials have identified in the implementation of the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act, which Congress passed in 2006.

Senator Nelson was also a sponsor of the 2006 Act, which was successful in reducing meth labs in Nebraska and nationwide.

According to the DEA, in 2006 there were only 28 methamphetamine lab incidents in Nebraska, compared to 228 the year before – a 90% reduction.

The original bill required that retail sellers of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products file a self-certification, attesting to employee training on proper handling and sale of these products. DEA officials have reported, however, that many retailers have not yet complied and that they are having trouble identifying those stores that have not yet self-certified.

Key aspects of 2009 Act

The Combat Meth Enhancement Act of 2009 includes:

- Requiring all people engaged in retail sales of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine products to register with the DEA and/or self-certify that they have trained their personnel and agree to comply with the Combat Meth Act
- Requiring distributors of these products to sell only to retailers who have filed such self-certifications;
- Requiring the DEA to publish the list of all retailers who have filed such self-certifications on the DEA's website; and
- Clarifying that any retailer who fails to file self-certifications as required can be subject to fines and penalties.