



ERIC SCHMITT

MISSOURI ATTORNEY GENERAL



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Missouri Attorney General Schmitt Files Lawsuit Against Chinese Government

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In a historical move, Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt filed a lawsuit today against the Chinese government, Chinese Communist Party, and other Chinese officials and institutions, alleging that their actions to suppress information, arrest whistleblowers, and deny the contagious nature of the 2019 novel Coronavirus led to loss of life and severe economic consequences in Missouri.

“COVID-19 has done irreparable damage to countries across the globe, causing sickness, death, economic disruption, and human suffering. In Missouri, the impact of the virus is very real - thousands have been infected and many have died, families have been separated from dying loved ones, small businesses are shuttering their doors, and those living paycheck to paycheck are struggling to put food on their table,” said **Attorney General Schmitt**. “The Chinese government lied to the world about the danger and contagious nature of COVID-19, silenced whistleblowers, and did little to stop the spread of the disease. They must be held accountable for their actions.”

The lawsuit, filed this morning in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, alleges, “During the critical weeks of the initial outbreak, Chinese authorities deceived the public, suppressed crucial information, arrested whistleblowers, denied human-to-human transmission in the face of mounting evidence, destroyed critical medical research, permitted millions of people to be exposed to the virus, and even hoarded personal protective equipment (“PPE”)—thus causing a global pandemic that was unnecessary and preventable.”

According to the lawsuit, by late December, Chinese health officials had serious evidence of human-to-human transmission. Despite this evidence of human-to-human transmission, Chinese health officials did not report the outbreak to the World Health Organization until December 31. When Chinese authorities did inform the WHO of the outbreak, they denied the potential for human-to-human transmission.

The lawsuit also alleges that, despite having knowledge of the disease, Chinese officials did little to contain the spread. According to **data gathered** by the New York Times, nearly 175,000 individuals left Wuhan on January 1 alone to travel for the Lunar New Year. The Chinese government also continued with New Year celebrations, despite the risk for potential further infections.

Chinese officials’ alleged coverup and silencing of whistleblowers is also noted in the lawsuit. On January 1 or 2, Wuhan police stated in a message that was broadcast across the country on CCTV that they had taken “legal measures” against eight people who published and shared “rumors” online. One of those eight is believed to be a doctor that shared information about the disease on a platform called *WeChat*. One doctor in a Wuhan hospital emergency room was disciplined for instructing staff to wear masks, suspecting human-to-human transmission.

The lawsuit notes the immense negative impact that COVID-19 has had on Missourians, pointing out the unprecedented number of jobless claims, the impact on Missouri’s unemployment rate, and the impact on the State’s budget now and in the future. On the human side - Missouri’s nurses and doctors are forced to quarantine from their families, our elderly citizens are stuck in nursing homes away from loved ones, and more.

The lawsuit seeks relief on one count of public nuisance, one count of abnormally dangerous activities, and two counts of breach of duty. Remedies could include civil penalties and restitution, abatement of the public nuisance, cessation of abnormally dangerous activities, punitive damages, and more.

The key factual allegations can be found [here](#).

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