

## **North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State**

### **NEWS**

**October 2, 2024**

For Immediate Release

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**Elaine F. Marshall  
Secretary of State**

### **Counterfeits Concealing THC-laced Snacks Seized in Multi-County Operation**

**HOPE MILLS, NC** – North Carolina Secretary of State Trademark Enforcement Agents recently assisted in a multi-county enforcement action resulting in the seizure of more than \$313,000 worth of THC-infused gummies and snacks concealed by counterfeited brands that are popular with children and teenagers. In addition to the counterfeit branded edibles, 31 weapons, 1,800 kilos of marijuana products, and more than \$300,000 in currency were seized as part of the operation involving 107 vape stores. The operation resulted in 3 arrests and 24 shops were issued warnings for counterfeit merchandise.

Secretary of State Trademark Law Enforcement Agents and the N.C. Anti-Counterfeiting Task Force worked with local authorities, including the Hope Mills Police Department, Fayetteville Police Department, and other local law enforcement in Cumberland and Robeson Counties on the coordinated enforcement effort.

Counterfeited brands ranged from Skittles and Lay’s brand chips to Nerds and Tic Tac.

“This growing trend of THC-infused edibles using counterfeit snack brands popular with our kids is dangerous for our communities,” said Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall. “Counterfeiting is not a victimless crime. As is the case here, there is oftentimes other dangerous activity associated with counterfeiting, including guns and illegal drugs.”

“They don’t care about people’s health, they just care about their profit,” said Chief Stephen F. Dollinger of the Hope Mills Police Department. “We’re not going to stand by and allow these drugs to get into our community where they could harm our children.”

Dollinger said the Southeastern NC Violent Crime Task Force began investigating vape stores at the request of Robeson County District Attorney Matthew Scott after receiving information about young adults experiencing overdoses.

According to America’s Poison Centers, reports of cannabis edible poisonings in children 12 and under have skyrocketed since 2018. In 2023, there were 6,888 reports to poison control centers compared to 808 in 2018.

Secretary of State Agents assisted other law enforcement authorities including the Hope Mills Police Department and the Fayetteville Police Department. Secretary of State Anti-Counterfeiting Task Force Agents from Sheriff Offices in Craven, Granville, and Sampson Counties, along with Police Departments in New Bern, Raleigh, and Wilson Mills assisted the operation. Other partners included the Southeastern NC Violent Crime Task Force, the N.C. Department of Revenue Drug Tax Unit, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, the Consumer Brands Association, and Vaudra International.

Combined with two operations leading into Halloween in 2022 and 2023, these three major operations have led to more than \$700,000 worth of THC edibles being taken off store shelves.

The North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State has the statutory duty to enforce laws that protect the holders of state and federally registered trademarks. Suspected counterfeit goods can be reported to the Secretary of State's Office at [anticounterfeit@sosnc.gov](mailto:anticounterfeit@sosnc.gov).



**NC Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall speaking during a press conference at the Hope Mills Police Department Wednesday morning. (Photo courtesy of NC Secretary of State)**



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