

Purdue Exec: Please Don't Take My Law License!

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File this one under knowing how to give someone a hard time. You may recall that we wrote about [Marianne Skolek](#) not long ago in connection with the sad saga known as OxyContin. Skolek spends her time hunting execs from Purdue Pharma, which sells the addictive painkiller also known as Hillbilly Heroin. Why? She won't rest until Purdue execs, who she believes are responsible for her daughter's death, are punished. In 2002, her 29-year-old daughter was prescribed the painkiller for a herniated disk and wound up dying of heart failure, leaving behind a 6-year-old son.

True to her word, Skolek is hunting them down. Her quarry this month is Howard Udell, Purdue's executive vp and chief counsel, who paid an \$8 million fine as part of a deal with the federal government, which brought criminal charges against the drugmaker and three current and former execs, including Udell, for misleading regulators, doctors and consumers about the addictive risks of Oxycontin. [All totalled, Purdue, its parent and the execs agreed to pay \\$634 million in fines.](#)



However, as part of the deal, none of the individuals are serving any jail time. And so the unflappable Skolek is seeking other forms of punishment. She recently filed a grievance against Udell with the state of Connecticut, where Purdue is based, in hopes that his license to practice law will be revoked. In fact, there are 19 individual disciplinary complaints filed against Udell, according to his reply to the state's Attorney General Grievance Panel.

In his defense, Udell writes*: "The guilty plea arose from my employment... But neither the nature of this plea nor the facts underlying it support disciplinary action, because my guilty plea involved no wrongful acts on my part, but was based solely on my position at Purdue at a time when certain Purdue sales and marketing personnel engaged in misconduct of which I was unaware." To back up his claim, he notes US District Court Judge James Jones wrote in his order last July that there was an "absence of government proof of knowledge by the individual defendants of the wrongdoing."

That's not good enough for Skolek. "Then he shouldn't have pled guilty. All he's doing is twisting words. If he didn't do anything wrong, he wouldn't be doing 400 hours of community service at a drug rehab or be on probation. He's a criminal, and he shouldn't be able to practice law. His actions killed and caused addiction among innocent people all across the nation."