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Legislators work to outlaw synthetic drugs

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“Fake pot” is drawing attention from state legislators, including Rep. Bill Hixon, who confirmed his support this week for House Bill 3793 – a measure described as “addressing synthetic marijuana and other synthetic drugs.”

One of Hixon’s recent updates offers an explanation, noting that the legislation “adds numerous materials, chemical compounds, mixtures



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and preparations, including those commonly known as bath salts, spice and K2 to the list of Schedule I controlled substances, which are unlawful for members of the general public to purchase, sell, distribute, manufacture or possess.”

A convenience store in Belvedere was described as having offered the drug for sale several months ago. An

investigator with the North Augusta Department of Public Safety, however, noted that it is apparently no longer available there. The drug has been banned in 38 states, he added.

Hixon noted that the legislation, which has passed the House and is now before the Senate, addresses dozens of chemicals which can be used to produce effects similar to those of marijuana.

He said concern about bath salts being abused arose after a couple of incidents in Anderson.

“Somebody came up with the wild

idea of smoking this stuff. It actually killed a few people, and when drug addicts are out there, they’ll grab for anything they can to give them a buzz. Bath salts were legal, so they were buying it and smoking it.”

Some federal laws were passed to restrict the substances, Hixon said, adding, “We wanted to take the lead in the state and have our own state laws. Most people would rather live by state laws than federal laws.”

One of the goals, he said, is to provide more tools for law enforcement to use in fighting substance abuse.

The investigator from North Augusta noted that bath salts can mimic cocaine in causing agitation, paranoia and hallucinations. They could definitely impair ability to drive safely, and the State Law Enforcement Division now has a system in place to test for such substances, he added.

He recalled an encounter with a man who was standing in the middle of US 1, near the Fifth Street bridge. The bath-salt user was suffering from paranoia and chest pains and was “freaking out,” he said.