# John Oliver criticises management of $50 billion opioid settlements by US governments



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John Oliver, host of "Last Week Tonight," focused a recent episode on how the $50 billion from opioid settlements is being managed by state and local governments in the U.S. This settlement figure stems from the resolution of thousands of lawsuits consolidated over 18 years, addressing the role of drugmakers and other entities in the opioid crisis.

Oliver highlighted that the settlement funds, which are intended for opioid crisis mitigation, are not being distributed directly to affected individuals but rather to governmental bodies. He expressed concerns regarding the lack of stringent guidelines on the usage of the funds, noting that while 85% of the money must be spent on opioid remediation, the term is vaguely defined and the remaining 15% can be freely utilized.

The episode showcased examples where funds had been poorly managed or diverted away from direct crisis alleviation efforts, including cases where money was allocated to law enforcement rather than health and treatment services. Oliver critiqued such allocations as ineffective and potentially harmful, particularly to overpoliced communities of color.

Oliver’s report also drew parallels to past mismanagement of tobacco lawsuit settlements. He emphasized the importance of using the opioid settlement funds effectively, advocating for increased transparency and accountability in funding decisions made by local authorities. He urged the public to actively participate in local governance, questioning and influencing how these funds are spent.