

February 2018 Newsletter
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NATIONAL OPIOID EDUCATION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN STARTED

On February 6, leading partners across healthcare, public health and the pharmaceutical supply chain joined together to launch [Allied Against Opioid Abuse \(AAOA\)](#), a national education and awareness initiative to help combat the nation's opioid abuse epidemic. Read more [here](#).

GOVERNORS GROUP LAUNCHES NEW OPIOID PROJECTS

Twelve states have been selected to participate in two projects the National Governors Association unveiled on February 6. The first focuses on Kentucky's efforts to address the increased risk of infectious disease through public health surveillance and community prevention efforts. In the second, states will learn from Ohio's efforts to better serve pregnant and post-natal women with opioid use disorder and improve health outcomes for their babies. Read more [here](#).

FDA INTENSIFIES WARNING ABOUT KRATOM

On February 6, the Food and Drug Administration intensified its warnings about kratom, saying new research provides strong evidence that the unregulated botanical substance has "opioid properties" and is associated with 44 deaths. Read more [here](#).

WAYS AND MEANS HEARING ON REMOVING BARRIERS TO TREATMENT IN MEDICARE

On February 6, the House Ways & Means Committee, Subcommittee on Health held a hearing titled, Removing Barriers to Prevent and Treat Opioid Abuse and Dependence in Medicare. Read more [here](#).

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO GIVE NIH NEW SPENDING AUTHORITY IN OPIOID CRISIS

On February 8, Senate HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced a bill to give the NIH director new spending authority in response to the opioid crisis in hopes of developing more nonaddictive painkillers. Read more [here](#).

PRESIDENT'S FISCAL 2019 BUDGET RELEASED

The Trump administration's fiscal 2019 budget allocates \$10 billion across HHS to address the opioid epidemic. Read more [here](#).

BUDGET AGREEMENT INCLUDES OPIOID FUNDING

On February 7, Senate leaders reached a two-year budget agreement to raise spending caps on defense and domestic spending. The agreement provides \$6 billion over 2 years for opioid prevention and treatment activities, \$3 billion for FY18 and \$3 billion for FY19. Read more [here](#).

REPORT RELEASED IN INVESTIGATION INTO OPIOID MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

On February 12, Senator Claire McCaskill, Ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, released "Fueling an Epidemic: Exposing the Financial Ties Between Opioid Manufacturers and Third Party Advocacy Groups," the latest product of her investigation into opioid manufacturers and distributors. Read more [here](#).

DRUG CZAR NOMINATED

White House deputy chief of staff Jim Carroll was nominated as President Donald Trump's drug czar. Read more [here](#).

THE HIGH COST OF THE OPIOID CRISIS

The opioid epidemic cost the country more than \$1 trillion between 2001 and 2017 in lost wages, productivity, tax revenue and by triggering more health costs, according to a report by nonprofit health research and consulting institute Altarum. Read more [here](#).

MARKEY, PAUL SEEK ANSWERS ON EFFORTS TO EXPAND OPIOID ABUSE TREATMENTS

Senators Rand Paul (R-KY) and Edward Markey (D-MA) wrote a letter to Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Elinore McCance-Katz asking for a status update on implementation of a provision they authored to expand medication assisted treatment for opioid abuse. Read more [here](#).

HOUSE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE HEARING ON OPIOID EPIDEMIC

On February 15th, the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions and Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held a joint hearing entitled, The Opioids Epidemic: Implications for America's Workplaces. Read more [here](#).

TOP OVERSIGHT DEMOCRAT WANTS WHITE HOUSE OPIOID BRIEFING

On February 16, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD), the top Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, sent a letter asking Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) to request a White House briefing on the status of the administration's efforts to implement recommendations from the President's Opioid Commission. Read the letter [here](#).

MARIJUANA LEGISLATION

The Sensible Enforcement Of Cannabis Act (H.R. 5050), introduced on February 15 by Reps. Lou Correa (D-CA), Matt Gaetz (R-FL), and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), would restore Obama-era marijuana protections rescinded by Attorney General Sessions. Read more [here](#).

FDA DESTROYS KRATOM SUPPLEMENTS

The FDA said it recalled and destroyed a number of supplements containing kratom. Read more [here](#).

VETERAN PROSECUTOR WILL LEAD DOJ OPIOID EFFORTS

Mary Daly has been appointed head of the Justice Department's opioid enforcement and prevention efforts, a new position established to combat the epidemic. Read more [here](#).

GUIDANCE TO EXPAND ACCESS TO MAT COMING

HHS Secretary Alex Azar told governors on February 24 that the FDA will soon release two draft guidance documents designed to expand access to medication-assisted treatment as part of the Trump administration's strategy to combat the opioid epidemic. Read more [here](#).

MARIJUANA ACCESS

Supporters of legal cannabis lost in their latest effort to scale back the drug's federal classification among the most dangerous narcotics. A Manhattan-based federal judge dismissed the claims yesterday, saying that Congress ultimately holds authority to classify drugs. Read more [here](#).

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO FILE STATEMENT OF INTEREST IN OPIOID LITIGATION

The Justice Department will file a statement of interest in litigation that includes hundreds of lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on February 27. DOJ will argue that the federal government has borne substantial costs because of the opioid

epidemic and should be reimbursed for health programs and law enforcement efforts to combat the crisis. Read more [here](#).

CARA 2.0 INTRODUCED IN SENATE

On February 27, a bipartisan group of eight senators [introduced](#) a follow on to the 2016 Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, dubbed CARA 2.0. The bill outlines plans for spending some of the \$6 billion in additional opioid funding in the congressional spending deal while proposing new policies addressing opioid prescribing. Read more [here](#).

DOJ PRESCRIPTION INTERDICTION AND LITIGATION TASK FORCE

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on February 27 the creation of a new effort, the Department of Justice Prescription Interdiction & Litigation (PIL) Task Force, to fight the prescription opioid crisis. Read more [here](#).

MEDICAID EXPANSION HAS HELPED FIGHT THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The latest data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality highlights the importance of the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Medicaid expansion in increasing insurance coverage among people with opioid-use disorders (OUD). Read more [here](#).

SENATE HEARING ON ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND DATA IN PREVENTING AND TREATING ADDICTION

On February 27, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing entitled, The Opioid Crisis: The Role of Technology and Data in Preventing and Treating Addiction. Read more [here](#).

BILL TO REDUCE SHORTAGE OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS INTRODUCED

On February 28, Congressman Hal Rogers (R-KY) and Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA) introduced H.R. 5102, the bipartisan Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act. The Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act offers student loan repayment of up to \$250,000 for participants who agree to work as a substance use disorder treatment professional in areas most in need of their services. Read more [here](#).

HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE HEARING ON PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS OPIOID EPIDEMIC

On February 28, the House Energy and Commerce Committee Health Subcommittee held the first of three hearings on legislative proposals to address the opioid misuse and overdose epidemic, including H.R. 2851, Stop the Importation and Trafficking of Synthetic Analogues (SITSA) Act of 2017. Read more [here](#).