

Opioid Epidemic Declared a National Emergency; Proposed Law Calls for Mandatory E-Prescribing of Controlled Substances to Curb Drug Abuse

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Today, in a move that is widely supported by those in both political parties and across the country, President Trump declared the opioid epidemic a national emergency. Doing so will allow for additional resources to be used toward fighting the opioid crisis, which could include expanding treatment facilities and supplying first responders with the anti-overdose remedy, naloxone. The declaration of a public health emergency unrelated to a natural disaster is rare; the US Department of Health and Human Services declared one in 2016 due to the Zika virus but, prior to that, the last declaration unrelated to a natural disaster was during the 2009-10 flu season.

Drug overdose deaths continue to rise across the country, with 6 out of 10 involving an opioid. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose, and overdoses from prescription opioids are a driving factor in the increase in opioid overdose deaths. Since 1999, the prescription opioids sold (and the deaths from prescription opioids) have quadrupled, with no overall change in the amount of pain American's report.

Across the country, states have adopted a variety of strategies to combat the alarming rise in opioid drug abuse. Additionally, as of late, a number of legislative bills have been introduced in an attempt to curb the abuse. For example, on July 28, 2017, the "Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act" ("Act") was introduced in the United States House of Representatives. The Act calls for, with some exceptions, controlled substance prescriptions covered under Medicare Part D to be transmitted by a health care practitioner electronically to a pharmacy. Representative Markwayne Mullin, one of the authors of the Act, said in a press release, "[b]y requiring all doctors and pharmacists to use an online database when prescribing these highly addictive drugs, we allow e-

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prescriptions to control, track, and monitor these highly addictive painkillers on a new level.” The National Association of Chain Drug Stores has long been a proponent of electronic prescriptions believing that electronic prescriptions “are more efficient, improve prescription accuracy, and . . . make it easier for patients to get the medications they need, while also helping to prevent fraud and abuse.”

A full copy of the Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act can be found by clicking [here](#).