

## [U.S. House Committee Presses Drug Czar on Fentanyl](#)

U.S. House lawmakers are pressing the nation's drug czar for more data on the dangerous synthetic opioid fentanyl, including how it is trafficked and how many people it has killed, in the latest effort to thwart a spiraling drug crisis.

The four-page letter from the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee, signed by bipartisan committee leaders and reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, calls the fentanyl crisis a top oversight priority. Addressed to Kemp Chester, acting director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and sent Thursday, the letter includes 15 questions such as how much fentanyl comes into the U.S. through the mail and how many counterfeit fentanyl pills authorities have seized.

“On top of opioid overprescribing and heroin overdoses, we believe the United States is now facing another deadly wave: fentanyl,” said Tim Murphy, (R, Penn.) and Diana DeGette (D., Colo), chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee on oversight and investigations, in a statement. “We are urgently seeking answers to determine whether the federal government recognizes the unique threat of fentanyl.”

The Energy and Commerce Committee has played a role in reviewing and shaping previous legislation aimed at combating the opioid crisis. Last year, Congress passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which strengthened treatment and prevention efforts. Later in the year, it passed the 21st Century Cures Act, which [included \\$1 billion in state grants to fight opioid addiction. . . .](#)An Energy and Commerce aide said the fentanyl crisis “is surging, with no end in sight,” and that it is more than a footnote to the nation's heroin problem.

Fentanyl's effect on states and cities already struggling with significant opioid problems has been devastating.

New data from Massachusetts released last week, for example, show fentanyl was involved in 75% of opioid-related drug deaths last year. The state currently estimates nearly 2,000 people died because of opioids in 2016, more than double the number from 2013, the year authorities believe fentanyl trafficking became a resurgent national problem.

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