

July 2019 Newsletter
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SENATE FINANCE PRESS FOR ANSWERS ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OPIOID MANUFACTURERS AND TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS

On July 1, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and ranking member Ron Wyden (D-OR) wrote to several pain advocacy groups and medical associations questioning their ties to opioid manufacturers. Read more [here](#).

DOJ HOLDS PRESS BRIEFING ON PERMANENT SCHEDULING OF FENTANYL

On July 1, Justice Department officials held a briefing with reporters to discuss legislation they are pushing on Capitol Hill that would permanently classify all new fentanyl substances as schedule 1 drugs. Read more [here](#).

HHS OIG SAYS OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS TAILING OFF

The number of Medicare Part D beneficiaries receiving opioid prescriptions declined by 700,000 in 2018 according to a report by the HHS Office of Inspector General. Read more [here](#).

BIPARTISAN BILL WOULD EXPAND ACCESS TO MAT

Legislation from Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) includes provisions to repeal the current requirement that doctors prescribing buprenorphine must obtain a waiver from the DEA; make the drug accessible via telemedicine in rural areas where people can't easily see a doctor, and direct HHS to better educate physicians about the drug. Read more [here](#).

SENATORS PRESS HHS ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF FENTANYL-RELATED SCHEDULING

On July 11, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee sent a bipartisan letter to HHS Secretary Alex Azar about their concerns that the DEA and DOJ have not adequately consulted with public health agencies in connection with the Trump Administration's recent request that Congress legislatively place all "fentanyl-related" substances into Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act. Read more [here](#).

FENTANYL DEATHS NEED NEW STRATEGY

The federal government needs a better plan to fight the rise in use of the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, House lawmakers told federal drug enforcement officials on July 16 at a House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing. Read more [here](#).

NEWLY RELEASED FEDERAL DATA UNMASKS OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Newly released federal data shows that six companies distributed and three companies manufactured the bulk of the pills that saturated the nation with opioids from 2006 to 2012. Read more [here](#).

OVERDOSE DEATHS DROPPED LAST YEAR MARKING FIRST DECLINE IN 30 YEARS

According to provisional CDC data released on July 17, fatal drug overdoses fell more than 5 percent last year, marking the first decline since 1990. Read more [here](#).

MEDICAL MARIJUANA RESEARCH ACT INTRODUCED

On July 17, Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Andy Harris, M.D. (R-MD), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), H. Morgan Griffith (R-VA), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), and Rob Bishop (R-UT) introduced the Medical Marijuana Research Act of 2019 to address burdensome processes that currently impede legitimate medical research on marijuana. Read more [here](#).

COURT TOSSES RULING BLOCKING ANTI-ADDICTION DRUG FROM MARKET

On July 23, a federal judge vacated an FDA decision that blocked final approval of the extended-release opioid addiction treatment Brixadi, saying the agency's argument for giving market exclusivity to a similar buprenorphine drug, Sublocade, was inconsistent with its policies. Read more [here](#).

FDA TARGETS CBD

On July 22, the FDA sent Curaleaf Holdings President Joseph Lusardi a letter warning the marijuana company its CBD lotion, pain-relief patch, tincture and disposable vape pen are considered drugs because they claim to treat conditions like pain, anxiety and ADHD, according to language on its website and social media pages. Read more [here](#).

SENATE BANKING COMMITTEE HEARING ON CANNABIS

On July 23, the Senate Banking Committee's held a hearing on cannabis and banking. During the hearing Senator Schatz (D-HI) raised the issue of barriers to research. Read more [here](#).