



# NNOAC *Insight*

*The Official Position of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition*

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## DRUG POLICY & BORDER SECURITY

The drug crisis in the United States remains one of the most serious threats to public health, public safety, and national security. While recent federal data indicate an encouraging decline from the unprecedented overdose death peaks of recent years, overdose fatalities remain historically elevated. These losses represent lives cut short, families devastated, and communities under constant strain. NNOAC remains committed to advancing a balanced, evidence-based national drug strategy that integrates prevention, treatment, and recovery with effective law enforcement efforts to interdict dangerous substances, dismantle trafficking networks, and protect communities.

### **Emphasize Border Security & Enhance Trafficking Investigations**

Transnational drug trafficking organizations exploit global supply chains, precursor chemical networks, and sophisticated smuggling methods to move illicit drugs into the United States. These criminal networks and their global partners are the primary source of fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and other illicit drugs devastating American communities. NNOAC supports federal efforts to strengthen border security, interagency coordination, and international cooperation to disrupt these networks. Border enforcement - paired with intelligence-led investigations, coordinated prosecutions, and accountability for traffickers and repeat offenders - is essential to stopping illicit drugs and protecting the public.

### **Marijuana Policy & Federal Rescheduling**

Marijuana abuse remains a growing public safety concern across age groups. National data show marijuana use among young adults at record levels, and states that have legalized marijuana consistently report higher overall use and declining perceptions of harm - factors associated with increased consumption and progression to other substances.

NNOAC has serious concerns about efforts to reschedule marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act. Rescheduling risks sending a powerful and misleading signal that marijuana is safe. Narcotics officers nationwide are already seeing the consequences of expanded availability and normalization, including addiction, impaired driving, mental health impacts, and the continued growth of illicit marijuana markets tied to organized criminal activity. Rescheduling would also further complicate enforcement efforts, particularly in the absence of a scientifically established THC impairment standard, making detection and prosecution of marijuana-impaired driving more difficult and undermining roadway safety.

NNOAC urges policymakers to ensure that any rescheduling action is accompanied by clear public education on marijuana's risks, enhanced tools and resources for drug-impaired driving enforcement, robust efforts to combat illicit marijuana trafficking, and sustained investment in prevention, treatment, and recovery.

### **Address Emerging Synthetic Drug Threats**

Drug trafficking organizations are rapidly introducing new synthetic substances to evade detection and enforcement. Synthetic opioids remain the deadliest drugs on the illicit market. Passage of the *HALT*

*Fentanyl Act* was a major NNOAC priority and a critical step in strengthening fentanyl enforcement. Enacted in 2025, the law permanently schedules fentanyl-related substances under Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, closing loopholes traffickers exploited and strengthening authority to investigate, interdict, and prosecute fentanyl-related offenses.

As traffickers adapt to fentanyl controls, additional threats have emerged. Xylazine (“tranq”), a veterinary tranquilizer increasingly mixed with fentanyl, is now frequently encountered by narcotics officers in overdoses and drug seizures. Its presence complicates overdose response, increases officer safety risks, and fuels illicit drug markets. The bipartisan *Combating Illicit Xylazine Act* would place xylazine on Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act, giving law enforcement clear authority to investigate, seize, and prosecute illicit xylazine trafficking. The bill would also enable the DEA to track manufacturing and distribution to identify diversion into the illegal drug supply and require reporting on the scope and risks of xylazine use. NNOAC supports this legislation because it closes a gap traffickers are exploiting and provides concrete tools to address a rapidly expanding drug threat.

Traffickers are also introducing entirely new synthetic opioids into American communities. Nitazenes, often more potent than fentanyl, represent one of the most serious emerging opioid threats facing law enforcement. NNOAC supports passage of the bipartisan *Nitazene Control Act*, which would permanently schedule the entire class of nitazenes under Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act and prevent traffickers from exploiting chemical modifications to evade enforcement. The detection of medetomidine and other novel analogues further underscores the need for proactive scheduling authority, advanced forensic detection, and rapid intelligence sharing to keep pace with evolving synthetic drug threats.

### **Support Strong Federal Policies to Address the Substance Abuse Epidemic**

Expanding access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services is essential to reducing overdose deaths and helping communities respond to substance use disorders. Although overdose deaths have declined from recent peaks, tens of thousands of Americans continue to needlessly die each year from illicit drugs, underscoring the need for stronger and more sustained investment in evidence-based care, workforce development, and overdose response in addition to robust law enforcement efforts.

The *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act*, signed into law in 2025, provides a critical foundation by renewing federal prevention, treatment, recovery, workforce, and overdose response programs - but it does not fully meet the scale or complexity of the current crisis. Additional resources and sustained attention are needed to expand access to care and close persistent treatment gaps.

### **Address Resource Needs & Focus on Strategic Priorities**

To reduce drug-related deaths and protect communities, Congress and federal leaders must continue investing in law enforcement and prosecution resources, collaborative task forces integrating federal, state, local, and tribal partners, information sharing platforms like RISS, technology and intelligence-sharing tools to identify emerging threats, and balanced prevention, treatment, and recovery programs coordinated with enforcement strategies.

Every day, NNOAC members work tirelessly to save lives and protect communities. We urge Congress to support effective laws, provide the necessary resources, and continue advancing policies that reduce drug abuse, disrupt trafficking, and bring an end to the tragic toll inflicted by drug trafficking organizations across the nation.