



# NNOAC *Insight*

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

*February 2025*

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## **DRUG POLICY & BORDER SECURITY**

Drug seizures, substance use disorder rates and accidental overdose deaths are rising throughout our nation. If our elected leaders and policymakers do not change course, the tragedies caused by substance use disorders and drug trafficking will continue. The National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC) is committed to supporting law enforcement's efforts to combat this devastating epidemic.

The current national drug policy – especially the deemphasis of drug enforcement by many cities, states, and the federal government over the past decade – is failing. Changes to state and federal laws and policies, including the legalization and decriminalization of certain drugs, have made it easier for drug traffickers to avoid arrest and prosecution. Policies ostensibly designed to curb drug use have only encouraged users by enabling their substance use disorders. Millions of American families are victims of these laws and policies.

### **Border Challenges & Holding Drug Offenders Accountable:**

The relative ease with which Mexican cartels and transnational drug trafficking organizations transport drugs across our porous borders is inexcusable. Even more troubling is the level of control these organizations exert over drug distribution and violent crime inside our borders. We must change course and pass laws that hold drug offenders accountable and keep chronic violators and repeat offenders away from the communities they continue to victimize.

Until we secure our borders, sanction source countries complicit in drug trafficking, and ensure trafficking organizations and their actors are prosecuted and punished for their murderous activities, the flow of drugs into the United States will continue and our citizens and their families will continue to needlessly suffer tragic loss of human life. It is time for our government to take control of our borders and stop drug traffickers, their poisons, and their criminal organizations from entering the country.

Our government has the legal authority to take necessary actions to protect our citizens. The Administration and Congress must prioritize resources for this purpose. Policymakers must recognize that the current approach has not worked, and in fact, has made matters worse. Protecting law-abiding citizens and their families must become a greater priority.

### **Marijuana Policy**

Marijuana abuse is an increasing problem, especially among our young people. It is no coincidence that marijuana use by young people is the highest in states that have legalized marijuana for medical and recreational purposes. By promoting marijuana as a "safe" substance, legalizers are downplaying the risks associated with its use, which in turn lowers the perception of harm. This leads many individuals to not only abuse marijuana but also experiment with more dangerous substances. Even social scientists who advocate for various decriminalization policies admit that a reduction in the perceived harm and social disapproval leads to increased use; empirical evidence proves that point.

The truth is undeniable: increased marijuana use has devastating and widespread consequences. It leads to higher substance use disorder rates, increases in workplace accidents and violence, and more calls for public safety services. The increasing costs for emergency medical care, treatment for substance use disorders, public health programs and insurance premiums are putting heavy financial burdens on our citizens and their state and local governments. Moreover, marijuana-related poisonings and hospitalizations are on the rise, and an illegal secondary market for marijuana – often involving foreign drug cartels – continues to thrive.

### **Substance Abuse Epidemic**

While the reduction in annual drug poisoning deaths from over 110,000 in 2023 to 90,000 in 2024 is a sign of progress, it is not yet a cause for celebration. As long as traffickers continue to distribute fentanyl, synthetic opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine, and other deadly poisons, policymakers at all levels must focus on empowering aggressive enforcement. Illegal business enterprises that are manufacturing and distributing those poisons in our communities bear primary responsibility for killing our fellow citizens, and they remain the biggest threat to our collective well-being.

Although policymakers have rightly pushed more resources over the past decade into treating those who suffer from substance use disorders, we still have a skyrocketing death rate. Clearly, drug use prevention and law enforcement – drug law enforcement in particular – must be re-embraced and fully resourced so that we can play a more significant role in curtailing the threat to our country.

### **Resource Needs**

It is time for Congress and our leaders to commit to reinvesting in collaborative law enforcement efforts to stop the needless increases in drug-related deaths.

Lawmakers must pass budgets that enable law enforcement to effectively investigate, interdict, and prosecute traffickers and efficiently share criminal intelligence and information. Aggressive, smart, and targeted drug enforcement is needed now more than ever.

Every day NNOAC members work tirelessly to save lives and protect our communities, often facing criticism by those who oppose the very idea of enforcing laws that are designed to protect our citizens.

We urge Congress step up and support our efforts, pass effective laws and policies to reduce drug deaths, and finally bring an end to the tragic toll that drug trafficking organizations are inflicting on our country.