

Senators demand answers after DEA avoids query on enforcement efforts against wholesale opioid distributors

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DEA provided insufficient response to Senators' original query about scaled-back enforcement efforts against violators that allowed more legal controlled substances to enter illicit drug market

WASHINGTON – After the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) failed to answer critical questions about enforcement efforts against wholesale opioid distributors that are violating DEA rules intended to prevent legal controlled substances from entering the illicit market, Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), and five other senators reiterated their call for a detailed response. The Senators noted alarming new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that displays a

worsening of the opioid crisis and increased deaths nationwide due to opioid overdoses. A story in The Washington Post (“The DEA slowed enforcement while the opioid epidemic grew out of control”, October 22, 2016) revealed that, over the last several years, as opioid overdose deaths began to dramatically rise, the DEA was hampered in its enforcement efforts. The Washington Post reported that roadblocks erected by the DEA and Department of Justice, along with other efforts by the industry to circumvent the DEA, led to a drop in civil case filings against distributors, manufacturers, pharmacies, and doctors.

Other Senators signing the letter include Joe Manchin (D-WV), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

“Since we wrote to you, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released new data showing that the U.S. opioid epidemic is growing and that prescription and illicit opioids remain a driving force,” write the Senators in the letter to DEA Acting Administrator Chick Rosenberg. **“Especially in light of this new data, Congress and the American people deserve an explanation of how the DEA is enforcing laws that could help address this public crisis.”**

A copy of the Senators’ letter to the DEA can be found [here](#). A copy of the DEA’s response to the Senators’ original query can be found [here](#).

The senators’ original October 2016 letter to the DEA can be found [here](#).