

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Helps Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Address the Opioid Crisis

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Contact: press@baldwin.senate.gov
(202) 224 - 6225

The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018 is the result of seven committee hearings

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In continuing her efforts to combat the opioid epidemic that is devastating Wisconsin communities, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, joined Senate colleagues in introducing bipartisan legislation to help address the urgent opioid crisis and save lives. Major provisions of Senator Baldwin's [Opioid Response Enhancement Act](#) and her bipartisan [Eliminating Opioid-Related Infectious Diseases Act](#) are included in the *Opioid Crisis Response Act*.

“The opioid epidemic continues to devastate families and communities across Wisconsin,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Washington needs to step up with a stronger federal investment to support local prevention, treatment and recovery efforts. This crisis is not going away, and this legislation takes an important step to extend and improve critical programs, and to open up new resources to help states and tribal communities continue to have the tools they need to save lives. I look forward to continuing my bipartisan work to build on this measure and enact it into law.”

The *Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018* will improve the ability of the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Health Resources and Service Administration

(HRSA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to address the crisis, including the ripple effects of the crisis on children, families and communities, and improve data sharing between states.

The legislation, which is composed of 40 different proposals mostly from Republican and Democratic members of the Senate HELP Committee, is the result of seven bipartisan hearings over several months and feedback from the public to hear input on ways the federal government can be a better partner for states and communities on the front lines of the opioid crisis.

HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said: “Our goal is to move urgently, effectively, and in a bipartisan way. This is a broad-based set of 40 different proposals to address the opioid crisis. The bill could help states and communities begin to bring an end to the opioid crisis by reducing the number of prescription opioids, stopping illegal drugs at the border, and accelerating research on non-addictive pain medicines. We will consider and seek to approve this bill next Tuesday, so we can get it to the Majority Leader and to the Senate for prompt consideration, along with other important proposals that may be coming from other committees.”

Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) said: “I’m grateful to members on both sides of the aisle for their strong work on the policies in our bill, which will offer families and communities much-needed tools and resources as they continue working to stop this epidemic and rebuild. The work isn’t over, and I look forward to more bipartisan progress in support of those we’ve heard from over the last several months, who are on the frontlines of the opioid crisis and are looking to Congress for support.”

On October 5, 2017, the Senate health committee [held](#) the first hearing of the series which focused on the federal response to the opioid crisis, and on November 30, 2017, the committee [heard](#) from witnesses representing states, communities, and providers on what they are doing and what, if any, new authorities they need from the federal government to fight the crisis. On January 9, the committee [heard](#) from author Sam Quinones, who has extensively researched and written about the opioid crisis. On February 8, the committee [held](#) a hearing focused on listening to the needs of children and families affected by the opioid crisis. On February 27, the committee [held](#) a hearing on the role technology and data play in responding to the crisis. On March 8, the committee [heard](#) from some of the nation’s governors about how they are coming up with innovative solutions

and leading the fight against the unique problems their states face in the midst of the opioid crisis. On April 10, the committee [held](#) a hearing to examine the discussion draft of the *Opioids Crisis Response Act*.

The *Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018* will:

- Reauthorize and improve grants to states and Indian Tribes for prevention, response, and treatment of the opioid crisis, authorized in 21st Century Cures, for three more years.
- Spur development and research on non-addictive painkillers, and other strategies to prevent, treat, and manage pain and substance use disorders through additional flexibility for the NIH.
- Clarify FDA's regulatory pathways for medical product manufacturers through guidance for new non-addictive pain and addiction products.
- Encourage responsible prescribing behavior by clarifying FDA authority to require packaging and disposal options for certain drugs, such as opioids to allow a set treatment duration—for example “blister packs,” for patients who may only need a 3 or 7 day supply of opioids—and give patients safe disposal options.
- Improve detection and seizure of illegal drugs, such as fentanyl, through stronger FDA and Customer Border Protection coordination.
- Clarify FDA's post-market authorities for drugs, such as opioids, which may have reduced efficacy over time, by modifying the definition of an adverse drug experience to include such situations.
- Provide support for states to improve their Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) and encourage data sharing between states so doctors and pharmacies can know if patients have a history of substance misuse.
- Strengthen the health care workforce to increase access to mental health services in schools and community-based settings and to substance use disorder services in underserved areas.
- Authorize CDC's work to combat the opioid crisis, including providing grants for states, localities, and tribes to collect data and implement key prevention strategies.
- Address the effects of the opioids crisis on infants, children, and families, including by helping states improve plans of safe care for infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome and helping to address child and youth trauma.
- Authorize the Department of Labor to address the economic and workforce impacts for communities affected by the opioid crisis, through grants targeted

at workforce shortages for the substance use and mental health treatment workforce, and to align job training and treatment services.

- Improve treatment access to patients by requiring the Drug Enforcement Administration to issue regulations on how qualified providers can prescribe controlled substances in limited circumstances via telemedicine.
- Allow hospice programs to safely and properly dispose of unneeded controlled substances to help reduce the risk of diversion and misuse.

Click [here](#) for the text of the legislation, and [here](#) for a detailed summary of the legislation.