

U.S. Sen. Johnson: And colleagues introduce SOFA Act to combat opioid epidemic

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Contact:

Aaren Johnson (Johnson)

James Arnold (Cotton)

Ty Bofferding (Cassidy)

Elizabeth Gregory (Blackburn)

Brendan Conley (Ernst)

Christopher Krepich (Sensenbrenner)

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), joined by Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) and Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), introduced the Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues (SOFA) Act Wednesday, legislation to give law enforcement enhanced tools to combat the opioid epidemic and close a loophole in current law that makes it difficult to prosecute crimes involving some synthetic opioids.

“Communities across Wisconsin and America have been devastated by the epidemic of opioid overdoses. The SOFA Act will close a loophole in current law that is being exploited by illegal drug manufacturers. The bill will also give law enforcement the tools to quickly schedule fentanyl analogues as they are identified, preventing these drugs from sneaking around the law,” said Sen. Johnson.

“Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, can be easily changed to form many new opioids known as fentanyl analogues. Unfortunately, current drug laws can’t keep up with the rapid introduction of these dangerous derivatives. Our bill would classify known analogues as Schedule I substances and allow law enforcement to quickly target new ones as they appear,” said Sen. Cotton.

“Drug dealers are creating new chemicals similar to and just as deadly as fentanyl,” said Dr. Cassidy. “The Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues Act gives law enforcement the ability to stop the flow of these new drugs and save lives.”

“Correctly scheduling fentanyl analogues is a necessary part of fighting our country’s opioid crisis because fentanyl now claims more American lives than heroin,” said Sen. Blackburn. “By clearly defining these drugs, we can provide law enforcement officers with another weapon to confront this epidemic and help those struggling with addiction.”

“For years, the opioid epidemic has devastated the lives of too many lowans,” said Sen. Ernst. “While I’m grateful we’ve made real progress to address this crisis, we need to continue doing everything we can to help our families and communities in peril. This legislation will close a loophole in the law and give local leaders and law enforcement resources to more effectively combat this opioid crisis.”

“Way too many Wisconsin families have been forever changed by a surge in overdose deaths stemming from fentanyl and its analogues. Congress must act as the opioid epidemic continues to grow. The SOFA Act will give law enforcement the necessary tools to fight back against the proliferation of fentanyl analogues in our communities, permanently closing loopholes in the law. I thank Senator Johnson, Lauri Badura, and Dr. Timothy Westlake for working tirelessly with me on this issue,” said Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (WI-05), who introduced the companion legislation in the House.

Text of the legislation can be found [here](#).

Sen. Johnson first introduced the SOFA Act in July 2017. In August 2018, the National Association of Attorneys General sent a letter to Senate and House leadership, expressing that the attorneys general of all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico support the SOFA Act and encourage its swift passage.

Background on the SOFA Act:

- The SOFA Act would:

- o Close a loophole in current law by immediately scheduling particular fentanyl analogues known in our communities under Schedule I; and

Provide the Drug Enforcement Agency additional tools to quickly schedule other dangerous fentanyl analogues as they are identified;

SOFA stands for Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues and is the same acronym as an organization started by Lauri Badura of Oconomowoc, Wis. Lauri lost her son, Archie, to an overdose on May 15, 2014 and has worked to raise awareness throughout Wisconsin on the dangers of drug addiction.