

United States Senate

May 6, 2022

The Honorable Joe Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The unprecedented amount of illegal drugs flowing through our southern border calls for a unified course of action. From 1993 to 2009, the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) served on the president's Cabinet. This important statutory position, the president's principal adviser on all drug policy matters, was downgraded in 2009 when you were vice president.¹

The ONDCP's position in the White House has been limited since the downgrade in 2009. With more than 100,000 Americans dying last year from opioid overdoses², it is time the ONDCP director be elevated back to a Cabinet-level position. Given the unique role of the ONDCP to assess threats both domestically and internationally, the ONDCP director should lead the National Strategy on combatting this epidemic. Returning the director to the Cabinet would help improve information sharing and coordination between departments that is already required by law,³ and allow the ONDCP to have better oversight of the National Drug Control Budget.

In addition to returning the ONDCP director to the Cabinet, I urge you to use this opportunity to prioritize combatting the rise of fentanyl and its analogues as they flood through our southern border.⁴ Fentanyl has become the leading cause of death among Americans aged 18-45, above both suicide and COVID-19.⁵ Since 2018, the dramatic rise in synthetic opioid overdoses has sent a wave of grief through American communities. Your administration has shown a shocking lack of will to stop this flow of dangerous drugs, and the traffickers who bring them into our communities. You have a

¹ <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-lz1e31hatch194129-downgrading-drug-czar-and-his-of-2009mar31-story.html>

² https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm

³ 21 USC §1704

⁴ <https://rollcall.com/2021/06/11/bidens-border-policies-are-worsening-the-opioid-crisis/>

⁵ <https://www.gbhoh.com/fentanyl-becomes-leading-cause-of-death-for-ages-18-45/>

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duty to the American people – not the illegal aliens that are flagrantly ignoring U.S. law and trafficking children and drugs, and committing crimes.⁶ It is time to take action to protect our families.

Recently, ONDCP released the National Drug Control Strategy. I am glad to see that the administration is considering the rising deaths associated with fentanyl to be of national importance, but the lack of reference to the issues faced at the southern border and the need for increased presence and support at the largest points of entry is alarming. Fentanyl is pouring across the border, and until the strategy addresses that, it is incomplete. We cannot ignore that Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) continue to traffic drugs while our border agents are overwhelmed by the massive influx of illegal immigrants that your administration is welcoming with open arms. Until our border is secured, America lives will continue to be lost to this epidemic.

As we continue to see the epidemic take a toll on families everywhere, I remain committed to finding ways to ensure public safety and fight crime. Elevating the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy back to its rightful spot on the Cabinet is an important step in curbing the opioid epidemic. I urge you to consider this and recognize the important role they play in fighting this public health emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Rick Scott
United States Senator

⁶ <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/commentary/federal-report-shows-open-borders-bring-increased-crimes-and-costs-taxpayers>