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Cantwell, Tester, Baldwin, Rosen, Luján Introduce Bill to Prevent Fentanyl Trafficking Through U.S. Transportation Networks

(<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2024/9/cantwell-tester-baldwin-rosen-luj-n-introduce-bill-to-prevent-fentanyl-trafficking-through-u-s-transportation-networks>)

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Legislation would boost detection of illegal drug smuggling by air, sea, rail & road

Bill gains backing by Narcotics Officers, Major City Chiefs, Forensic Science Labs, State Criminal Investigative Agencies, HIDTA Leaders

Commerce Committee Democrats U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) and Ben Ray Luján. (D-N.M.) introduced legislation to crack down on the trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs, like fentanyl, using the U.S. transportation network. The bill would create first-ever inspection strategies to stop drug smuggling by commercial aircraft, railroads, vehicles and ships. The legislation would boost state, local and tribal law enforcement resources, deploy next generation non-intrusive detection technologies and increase inspections at ports of entry.

"Drug traffickers should not be allowed to exploit the U.S. transportation system to smuggle fentanyl and precursor chemicals to make illicit synthetic drugs," **Sen. Cantwell said**. "Our bill equips federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement with the tools they need to curb drug smuggling by accelerating the development of non-intrusive technologies to inspect our commercial aircraft, trucks, trains and ships – while boosting resources to deploy this technology and drug-sniffing dogs, improving forensic science at crime labs, and building a better system to share intelligence and information between federal authorities and the private sector."

"The deadly flow of fentanyl into Montana communities is tearing families apart and it's making our state less safe," **said Sen. Jon Tester**. "If we're going to end illicit drug trafficking, we're going to have to come at this issue from all sides, and that means strengthening our southern border, funding law enforcement, and securing the transportation systems allowing bad actors to get these drugs into our communities. I'm proud to have introduced this bill to give our law enforcement agencies the tools they need to combat illicit drug trafficking and make our transit systems safer for all Montanans."

"I've heard from parents who lost children, law enforcement fighting on the front lines, and advocates – all demanding we do more to stop the scourge of fentanyl," **said Sen. Baldwin**. "I'm fighting this crisis on all fronts – from stopping the precursor chemicals being manufactured in China, to boosting access to overdose reversal drugs, and everything in between. I'm proud to lead this legislation to give our law enforcement the tools they need to stop drug traffickers from using American airports, railways, ports, and roads to smuggle fentanyl into our communities."

"Most synthetic fentanyl is smuggled into our country, making its way to communities across Nevada and destroying families," **said Sen. Rosen**. "I'm doing everything I can to stop the flow of illicit drugs and support law enforcement. That's why I'm proud to introduce this bill to develop a national strategy to prevent fentanyl smuggling and increase inspections at Ports of Entry on our border."

"The flow of fentanyl into the country has devastated far too many communities across New Mexico and the United States," **said Sen. Luján**. "This bill would crack down on the trafficking of deadly drugs by implementing innovative inspection strategies for U.S. transportation networks and provide law enforcement with the tools they need to combat fentanyl smuggling. It is time for Congress to act to keep our communities safe and put an end to the fentanyl crisis."

According to U.S. Government authorities, drug traffickers exploit the U.S. transportation network to smuggle fentanyl, precursor chemicals and other illicit drugs into and throughout the country. Once drugs have entered the country, drug traffickers continue to rely on the national transportation network—trucks, trains and commercial aircraft—to move their product to its final destination.

The Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act of 2024 (S.5285

(<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/5285?s=1&r=2>) would:

Read the summary here (<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/services/files/C89A0E26-8FEE-4C01-B1AB-9903FC23A7CE>) and bill text here (<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/services/files/32171F24-3548-4125-A3C1-E96BDD2438FD>) or here (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/5285?s=1&r=2>).

- **Create a National Prevention Plan:** Directs the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to develop a comprehensive national strategy that examines the entire U.S. transportation network and ports of entry to prevent the smuggling of illicit synthetic drugs.
- **Boost Illegal Drug Detection by Air, Sea, Rail and Road:** The bill establishes four new transportation-specific inspection programs—private and commercial aircraft, railroads, commercial vehicles and maritime vessels—to expand detection across all transportation modes and prevent interstate smuggling. State, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement would carry out inspections using non-intrusive technologies and canines, in coordination with federal law enforcement authorities – and without unduly delaying the movement of goods or interrupting interstate commerce.
- **Deploy High-Tech Detection Tools:** Directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the ONDCP to accelerate new emerging, non-intrusive technologies, including integrating AI and quantum, to detect illicit synthetic drugs. National laboratories, including Pacific Northwest National Laboratories, are already developing next-generation technologies for fentanyl detection. AI could help increase capacities to integrate multiple sources of data and overcome challenges in identifying fentanyl when it is mixed with other opioids to evade detection.
- **Increase Port of Entry Drug Detections:** Currently, only 1-2 percent of passenger vehicles and 15-17 percent of commercial vehicles are scanned at U.S. ports of entry. The bill requires Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to inspect 100 percent of motor vehicles and railroads entering the country through a port of entry within five years, and all civil air cargo and maritime cargo within ten years.
- **Support Law Enforcement Workforce, Technology and Training:** Authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to provide grants to state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement to acquire new technology and canines and support overtime and other program-related expenses. It would also increase federal support to state and local crime scene investigators and forensics laboratories to process evidence related to fentanyl crimes and deaths.
- **Improve Data and Information Sharing to Prevent Drug Trafficking:** Requires the Director of ONDCP to create a public-private task force to improve intelligence and information sharing among federal, state and local authorities and the private sector to combat drug trafficking.

[Read the bill text here](#)

[Read the summary here](#)

"The National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition applauds Senator Cantwell for her work on the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act. The surge in drug poisoning deaths, especially from fentanyl, shows that more needs to be done. We know that a large portion of illegal narcotics are trafficked through our transportation

systems, and this legislation will provide the needed resources such as advanced detection technology and canines to enhance law enforcement's ability to conduct inspections on our nation's transportation systems," **said Eric Brown, President of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition.** (<https://www.nnoac.com/>)

"The Major Cities Chiefs Association thanks Senator Cantwell for taking an innovative approach to fentanyl interdiction with the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act. In cities across the country, resources are strained and the fentanyl crisis is a factor. Federal support is welcome as MCCA member agencies work to curb this crisis and promote safer communities and public health. We look forward to additional engagement on the matter as it moves forward in Congress," **said Laura Cooper, Executive Director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association** (<https://majorcitieschiefs.com/>).

"The Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA) strongly supports the *Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act* of 2024. This vital legislation will equip law enforcement with effective tools to combat drug smuggling and the fentanyl crisis, while also enhancing data sharing in the fight against drug trafficking. We extend our gratitude to Senators Cantwell, Tester, Baldwin, Rosen, and Luján for their leadership in advancing this important initiative," **said Megan Noland, Executive Director of the Major County Sheriffs of America** (<https://mcsheriffs.com/>).

"The spread of deadly fentanyl and other illicit drugs has taken an immense toll on American families. The trucking industry touches every corner of the country, and we are proud to join leaders like Chair Cantwell who are spearheading innovative solutions to intercept these dangerous chemicals before they reach communities. We commend Chair Cantwell and the sponsors of this bill for taking a collaborative, proactive approach to developing legislation that will help us win this important fight and save countless lives," **said Henry Hanscom, Senior Vice President of Legislative Affairs of the American Trucking Associations** (<https://www.trucking.org/>).

"Deaths and adverse events from illicit synthetic drugs continue to be at epidemic proportions, yet funding for forensics labs remains stagnant. This bill prioritizes resources for the professionals on the front lines of the fight against illicit drugs, including fentanyl and other novel psychoactive substances. We commend members of the Commerce Committee for taking this approach to ensure our forensic experts have the necessary resources and data to combat this epidemic," **said Matthew Gamette, Chair of the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations** (<https://thecfso.org/>).

"The Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies (ASCIA) appreciates Senator Cantwell's introduction of the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act of 2024. While recent figures show progress in reducing drug poisoning deaths in the U.S., we are nowhere near where we need to be to protect Americans from the ongoing threat. This bill would strengthen the ability of agencies at all levels of government to detect and disrupt drug trafficking," **said Drew Evans, President of the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies** (<https://www.ascia.org/>).

"The National High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Directors Association appreciates Senator Cantwell's efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis and her support for providing critically needed tools and resources for state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement to interdict fentanyl shipments before negatively impacting the communities across the country. Given the profound impact fentanyl has had on families, schools, and communities, this bill will be instrumental in enabling law enforcement agencies participating in the HIDTA program to develop new and innovative strategies to tackle this crisis," **said F. Mike McDaniel, President of the National High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Directors Association** (<https://hidtdirectors.org/>).

"The Airforwarders Association supports Senator Cantwell's thoughtful and integrated national strategic approach to interdicting illicit drugs put forward in the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act of 2024. This bill contains all the components we know are most effective in combating this illicit trade - continued improvement in the deployment of non-intrusive technologies, further utilization of canines, and improving intelligence and information sharing among federal, state and local authorities and the private sector. We also thank Senators Tester, Baldwin, Rosen, and Lujan for their co-introduction of this bill, and we look forward to remaining engaged with Congress on this issue," **said Brandon Fried, Executive Director of the Airforwarders Association** (<https://www.airforwarders.org/cpages/homepage>).

"The fentanyl crisis hitting American cities is unlike any scourge previously seen by law enforcement, destroying families, decimating communities, and straining resources. This bill would significantly enhance our shared efforts to prevent fentanyl from entering our cities and provide welcome relief to local law enforcement agencies who see, daily, the death and suffering of those preyed upon by those who traffic in fentanyl and related substances," **said Seattle Police Chief Sue Rahr.**

"As the police chief in Spokane, WA., I wholeheartedly endorse the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on US Transportation Networks Act of 2024 (S. 5284). This critical legislation addresses the urgent need to combat the trafficking of dangerous synthetic drugs that threaten our communities. By enhancing our combined law enforcement capabilities across the country and improving coordination across transportation networks, this act will protect individuals and communities from the devastating impacts of substance abuse. We can build a safer environment and future locally and nationally with the thoughtful application and funding provided by this legislation," **said Kevin Hall, Chief of Police, Spokane Police Department.**

"The infiltration of fentanyl into the United States has become untenable. We need to make this as difficult as possible for drug traffickers every step of the way. I thank Senator Cantwell and her co-sponsors for working to give law enforcement agencies the tools necessary to prevent these deadly drugs from making their way into our country, the communities, and the families we serve and protect," **said King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall.**

"We need to take on the epidemic of fentanyl and synthetic opioids from all angles – using public health strategies to help those in need recover and deploying a public safety approach to disrupt distribution and stop the flow of poisonous drugs. This legislation would provide needed focus and federal action to reduce the trafficking of these deadly drugs through new programs, local partnerships, and technologies," **said Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell.**

"I laud Senator Cantwell's work on the Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act," **said Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste.**

"Senator Cantwell introducing this important bill, Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act of 2024, will further support the development of strategies that call for increased collaboration and leveraging advanced technologies. We applaud the introduction and will continue to support the vital work underway," **said Jonathan Weiner, Executive Director of the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.**

"Illicit, highly addictive drugs like Fentanyl and Methamphetamine have brought unspeakable harm to Washingtonians and people across the U.S. These drugs have devastated friends, neighbors, and family members and diminished livelihoods through substance use disorder and related behavioral health conditions. The members of the Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association fully support the efforts of Senator Maria Cantwell to curb the import and trafficking of these drugs and the substances used to create them. The Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on U.S. Transportation Networks Act of 2024 will bring meaningful resources to bear to stem or eliminate the transport of these drugs and their precursors. We urge the adoption of this Act to improve livelihoods and reduce the horrible effects of these drugs in our communities across our nation. Thank you to Senator Maria Cantwell for her efforts to provide drug interdiction resources to our federal, state and local partners," **said the Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association (<https://www.wsnia.org/>) Executive Board.**