



American Bridge

Trump's Belated Action On The Opioid Epidemic

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TRUMP'S BELATED ACTION ON "THE OPIOID MASSIVE PROBLEM"

Trump Was Expected To Officially Declare The Opioid Epidemic A National Emergency, 2 ½ Months After First Promising To Do So

TRUMP WAS EXPECTED TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC A NATIONAL EMERGENCY ON OCTOBER 26, 2017

Trump Scheduled A Press Event On The Opioid Epidemic For October 26, 2017, At Which He Was Expected To Officially Declare The Opioid Epidemic A National Emergency. According to The Hill, "The White House will hold an event on the opioid epidemic Thursday afternoon, according to an email obtained by The Hill that suggests President Trump will make his announcement about a national emergency this week. The email, from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, is an invitation and a call to RSVP to an event at the White House on the 'nationwide opioid crisis' at 2 p.m. Thursday. It's not clear exactly what the event will be, but President Trump said he planned to declare the epidemic a national emergency this week. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Emergency declarations are typically used to provide short-term help, so there are not any guidelines for what one would look like for the opioid epidemic. Axios reported Monday morning that Trump will officially declare the opioid epidemic a national public health emergency this week and discuss combating the crisis on Thursday." [The Hill, [10/23/17](#)]

Trump, 10/16/17: "We Are Going To Have A Major Announcement, Probably Next Week, On The Drug Crisis And On The Opioid Massive Problem And I Want To Get That Absolutely Right."

According to CNN, "We are going to have a major announcement, probably next week, on the drug crisis and on the opioid massive problem and I want to get that absolutely right,' Trump said, billing the official declaration as a large step that took time." [CNN, [10/16/17](#)]

TRUMP FIRST PROMISED TO DECLARE A NATIONAL EMERGENCY 2 ½ MONTHS EARLIER, IN AUGUST

Trump, 8/10/17: "It's A National Emergency. We're Going To Spend A Lot Of Time, A Lot Of Effort And A Lot Of Money On The Opioid Crisis." According to NBC News, "President Donald Trump threw the weight of the White House behind the fight against the opioid crisis Thursday and declared it a national emergency. 'The opioid crisis is an emergency, and I'm saying officially, right now, it is an emergency,' Trump said at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey. 'It's a national emergency. We're going to spend a lot of time, a lot of effort and a lot of money on the opioid crisis.' Trump's surprise announcement came two days after he vowed the U.S. would 'win' the fight against the epidemic but stopped short of acting on the recommendation of the presidential opioid commission to 'declare a national emergency.'" [NBC News, [8/10/17](#)]

CBS News: Trump Said He Would Declare The Opioid Crisis A National Emergency "More Than Two Months After He First Promised An Emergency Health Declaration For The Most Deadly Drug Overdose Crisis In U.S. History." According to CBS News, "Last week, President Donald Trump said he would finally declare the opioid crisis a national emergency — more than two months after he first promised an emergency health declaration for the most deadly drug overdose crisis in U.S. history." [CBS News, [10/23/17](#)]

TRUMP'S INITIAL PROMISE CAME SHORTLY AFTER HIS "OPIOID COMMISSION" RECOMMENDED HE MAKE AN OFFICIAL NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION

August 8, 2017: Trump's Commission On The Opioid Epidemic Recommended He Declare The Situation A National Emergency. According to NBC News, "President Donald Trump vowed Tuesday the U.S. would 'win' the battle against the heroin and opioid plague, but stopped short of declaring a national emergency as his hand-picked commission had recommended. Instead, Trump promised to 'protect innocent citizens from drug dealers that poison our communities.'" [NBC News, [8/8/17](#)]

The Commission, Led By Chris Christie, Was Established In March 2017

March 2017: Trump Issued An Executive Order Creating A New National Opioid Commission To Be Led By Chris Christie. According to PBS, "New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie will lead a new national opioid commission created Wednesday by an executive order from President Donald Trump that also maps out his administration's latest strategy to combat the public health crisis. The fight against the opioid epidemic is 'one that's incredibly important to every family in every corner of this country,' Christie said Wednesday in an interview with The Today Show, adding he and Trump 'both care passionately about this issue and we want to save lives.'" [PBS, [3/29/17](#)]

Critics Panned The Commission As Redundant And A Waste Of Precious Time In The Fight Against Opioid Addiction

Politico: Public Health Advocates Said Trump's Plan For "Yet Another Big Presidential Commission" Would, At Best, Duplicate Those Of The Obama White House And, At Worst, Set Back Efforts To Combat The Opioid Epidemic. According to Politico, "Trump won many of those communities — often overwhelmingly. But as president, he's proposing deep cuts to research and treatment in favor of funding a border wall to stop drug traffic, while hinting at bringing back policies like criminalization of drug misuse — and announcing Wednesday yet another big presidential commission to study the problem. Public health advocates say those plans at best duplicate those of the Obama White House and at worst could set back efforts to tackle a problem that contributes to more than 47,000 deaths per year." [Politico, [3/29/17](#)]

Baltimore Health Commissioner Dr. Leana Wen: "We Do Not Have The Luxury Of Giving This Commission Months To Rehash Facts That Experts, Including The Surgeon General And Coalitions Of Doctors And Public Health Experts, Already Agree Upon." According to an opinion by Baltimore health commissioner Dr. Leana S. Wen for CNN, "Little is known about the Trump administration's plan to end this public health epidemic of opioid abuse, apart from the creation of a Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. So far, the White House has only said that the commission will produce a report and look for federal funding mechanisms. But that is not nearly enough. At a time when opioid overdose deaths kill tens of thousands of Americans every year -- including more than 33,000 in 2015 -- we do not have the luxury of giving this commission months to rehash facts that experts, including the surgeon general and coalitions of doctors and public health experts, already agree upon." [Dr. Leana Wen – CNN, [4/12/17](#)]

Former Obama Administration Official Who Worked To Address The Opioid Crisis: "These People Don't Need Another Damn Commission." According to Politico, "Public health experts question the value of the commission. It was just last November when Surgeon General Vivek Murthy released his office's first-ever report on opioids and addiction, which included tools and recommendations collected from more than a year of research. The CDC also released prescribing guidelines after thorough study. 'These people don't need another damn commission,' said a former Obama administration official who worked to address

the opioid crisis and asked not to be named. ‘We know what we need to do. ... It’s not rocket science.’” [Politico, [3/29/17](#)]

Longtime Drug Policy Official: “You Know What’s Redundant And A Waste Of Time, Effort And Money? The Commission.” According to Politico, “Another said that the office would be redundant, given the new White House opioids commission. ‘You know what’s redundant and a waste of time, effort and money?’ a longtime drug policy official countered. ‘The commission.’” [Politico, [5/5/17](#)]

The Commission Failed To Meet Its First Two Reporting Deadlines

The Commission Was To Submit An Interim Report To Trump With Its Findings After 90 Days, And Submit A Final Report By October 2017 Unless More Time Was Needed. According to PBS, “According to Trump’s signed order, the commission is designed to: Identify existing federal dollars to combat drug addiction, including opioids; Assess availability and access to addiction treatment centers and overdose reversal and identify underserved areas; Measure the effectiveness of state prescription drug monitoring programs; Evaluate public messaging campaigns about prescription and illegal opioids, and identify best practices for drug prevention. In 90 days, the commission will submit an interim report to Trump with its findings. It will submit a final report by Oct. 1, unless more time is needed, according to the executive order. The commission will dissolve a month later.” [PBS, [3/29/17](#)]

Headline: “White House Opioid Commission To Miss Deadline For Second Time” [CBS News, [7/13/17](#)]

The Commission Missed Both Its June 27th And July 17th Deadlines To File An Interim Report. According to CBS News, “President Trump’s commission to fight the opioid epidemic will miss a deadline to file an interim report on the crisis for a second time, according to a notice set to be released Friday. The Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis was created by executive order in March. Mr. Trump tapped New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie to chair the panel, tasking the commission with studying the federal government’s response to the growing opioid epidemic and offering recommendations to improve efforts to combat its effects. The executive order set a deadline of 90 days, or June 27, for the commission to file an interim report outlining a federal strategy to combat the epidemic. The commission failed to issue the report before the initial deadline, announcing instead it would issue its interim assessment during a conference call on July 17. According to a notice scheduled to appear in the Federal Register on Friday, the commission is rescheduling the July 17 call until 31, missing the extended deadline.” [CBS News, [7/13/17](#)]

AN ESTIMATED 6,000 AMERICANS HAVE DIED OF OPIOID OVERDOSES SINCE TRUMP FIRST PROMISED TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY

An Estimated 6,000 Americans Died Of Opioid Overdose In The 2.5 Months Trump Took To Formally Declare A National Emergency. According to USA Today, “President Trump first promised to declare a national emergency to confront the epidemic 68 days ago. Since then, statistics show more than 6,000 Americans have died of opioid overdoses waiting for federal action.” [USA Today, [10/17/17](#)]

Dr. Rahul Gupta, West Virginia Commissioner Of Health And Human Resources: “If This Was Happening In Real Time, When People Are Seeing Boeing 737s Crash Every Day, We Wouldn’t Wait This Long.” According to CBS News, “Several state and local officials are growing impatient with the delay in implementing federal solutions that they say are well-established and necessary. ‘In 2016, every day we had 140 Americans die,’ Dr. Rahul Gupta, the Commissioner of West Virginia’s Department of Health and Human Resources told CBS News. ‘So, if this was happening in real time, when people seeing are seeing Boeing 737s crash every day, we wouldn’t wait this long.’” [CBS News, [10/23/17](#)]

TRUMP EVEN CONSIDERED TOM MARINO, A REPRESENTATIVE WHO SPONSORED LEGISLATION EXACERBATING THE CRISIS, FOR WHITE HOUSE DRUG CZAR IN OCTOBER

Trump Considered Rep. Tom Marino For Drug Czar, Who Sponsored Legislation That Hindered The DEA's Ability To Stem The Pharmaceutical Company's Flow Of Opioid Painkillers Into Communities Suffering From The Crisis. According to The Washington Post, "In April 2016, at the height of the deadliest drug epidemic in U.S. history, Congress effectively stripped the Drug Enforcement Administration of its most potent weapon against large drug companies suspected of spilling prescription narcotics onto the nation's streets. By then, the opioid war had claimed 200,000 lives, more than three times the number of U.S. military deaths in the Vietnam War. Overdose deaths continue to rise. There is no end in sight. A handful of members of Congress, allied with the nation's major drug distributors, prevailed upon the DEA and the Justice Department to agree to a more industry-friendly law, undermining efforts to stanch the flow of pain pills, according to an investigation by The Washington Post and '60 Minutes.' The DEA had opposed the effort for years. The law was the crowning achievement of a multifaceted campaign by the drug industry to weaken aggressive DEA enforcement efforts against drug distribution companies that were supplying corrupt doctors and pharmacists who peddled narcotics to the black market. The industry worked behind the scenes with lobbyists and key members of Congress, pouring more than a million dollars into their election campaigns. The chief advocate of the law that hobbled the DEA was Rep. Tom Marino, a Pennsylvania Republican who is now President Trump's nominee to become the nation's next drug czar. Marino spent years trying to move the law through Congress. It passed after Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) negotiated a final version with the DEA." [Washington Post, [10/15/17](#)]

The Administration Has Failed To Fill Other Key Posts That Would Deal With The Opioid Epidemic As A National Emergency

Peter Lurie, Former Associate Commission For Public Health Strategy And Analysis At The FDA: "It Is Very Difficult To Make A Big Change In Direction When The Heads Of Almost Every Relevant Agency Are Either Not Appointed Or Been Forced To Quit." According to Politico, "'It is very difficult to make a big change in direction when the heads of almost every relevant agency are either not appointed or been forced to quit,' said Peter Lurie, most recently the associate commissioner for public health strategy and analysis at the Food and Drug Administration." [Politico, [10/20/17](#)]

- **As Of The Time Of Trump's Declaration, Nobody Has Filled The Seat Vacated By Former Health And Human Services Secretary Tom Price.** According to CBS News, "The Trump administration is also scrambling to fill top posts that would typically be involved in the coordinating the response to the opioid crisis — on top of large existing staffing gaps. [...] And last month, Price was forced to resign after spending more than \$1 million dollars of taxpayer money for travel on private jets." [CBS News, [10/23/17](#)]
- **As Of The Time Of Trump's Declaration, The DEA Lacked A Director.** According to CBS News, "The Trump administration is also scrambling to fill top posts that would typically be involved in the coordinating the response to the opioid crisis — on top of large existing staffing gaps. [...] And Mr. Trump also has not named a director for the DEA. The acting director resigned last month." [CBS News, [10/23/17](#)]
- **At The Time Of Trump's Declaration, The DHS Lacked A Secretary.** According to Politico, "Complicating the administration's announcement are the vacancies at the top of four key health and law enforcement agencies that would execute the plan: [...] And his nominee to lead the Department

of Homeland Security, which the president says will play a critical role in stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the country, hasn't been confirmed." [Politico, [10/20/17](#)]

- **As Of The Time Of Trump's Declaration, The Office Of Science And Technology Policy Lacked A Chief Technology Officer.** According to CBS News, "The Trump administration is also scrambling to fill top posts that would typically be involved in the coordinating the response to the opioid crisis — on top of large existing staffing gaps. [...] Another key job that's unfilled is chief technology officer for the Office of Science and Technology Policy. This office helps identify new science and technology that can be deployed during public health emergencies." [CBS News, [10/23/17](#)]

WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS WERE "BLINDSIDED" WHEN TRUMP SAID HIS OFFICIAL DECLARATION WAS JUST A WEEK AWAY

Politico: "Blindsided Officials" Were "Scrambling To Develop Such A Plan" After Trump Said He Would Declare The Opioid Crisis A National Emergency The Following Week. According to Politico, "President Donald Trump overrode his own advisers when he promised to deliver an emergency declaration next week to combat the nation's worsening opioid crisis. 'That is a very, very big statement,' he said Monday. 'It's a very important step. ... We're going to be doing it in the next week.' Blindsided officials are now scrambling to develop such a plan, but it is unclear when it will be announced, how or if it will be done, and whether the administration has the permanent leadership to execute it, said two administration officials." [Politico, [10/20/17](#)]

Senior Health Official Specializing In Drug Policy: "The Reaction Was Universal: Believe It When We See It." According to Politico, "By mid-October, with no commitment from the White House, Christie publicly needled Trump for not declaring the drug crisis an emergency, saying it was 'not good.' A few days later, Trump resurrected his promise. 'The reaction was universal,' said a senior health official specializing in drug policy. 'Believe it when [we] see it.'" [Politico, [10/20/17](#)]

THE ADMINISTRATION IS LIKELY UNPREPARED TO DEAL WITH A CRISIS OF THIS MAGNITUDE WITH JUST ONE WEEK'S NOTICE

Opioids Killed Nearly 100 Americans Per Day As Of June 2017, And Could Kill More Than 650,000 Over The next 10 Years

According To Data Compiled By STAT News, Opioids Could Kill Almost Half A Million People Across The Country Over The Next Ten Years. According to STAT News, "Opioids could kill nearly half a million people across America over the next decade as the crisis of addiction and overdose accelerates." [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

As Of 2017, Drug Overdoses Were The Leading Cause Of Death For Americans Under The Age Of 50. According to STAT News, "Deaths from opioids have been rising sharply for years, and drug overdoses already kill more Americans under age 50 than anything else." [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

As Of June 2017, Opioids Killed Nearly 100 Americans Per Day. According to STAT News, "There are now nearly 100 deaths a day from opioids, a swath of destruction that runs from tony New England suburbs to the farm country of California, from the beach towns of Florida to the Appalachian foothills." [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

Experts Predicted That As Many As 250 Americans Per Day Could Die Of Opioid Overdoses If The Rapid Spread Of Drugs And Long Wait Times For Treatment Continued. According to STAT News, “In the worst-case scenario put forth by STAT’s expert panel, that toll could spike to 250 deaths a day, if potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil continue to spread rapidly and the waits for treatment continue to stretch weeks in hard-hit states like West Virginia and New Hampshire.” [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

- **At That Rate, Over 650,000 People Could Die From Opioid Overdose Over The Next Decade.** According to STAT News, “In the worst-case scenario put forth by STAT’s expert panel, that toll could spike to 250 deaths a day, if potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil continue to spread rapidly and the waits for treatment continue to stretch weeks in hard-hit states like West Virginia and New Hampshire. If that prediction proves accurate, the death toll over the next decade could top 650,000.” [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

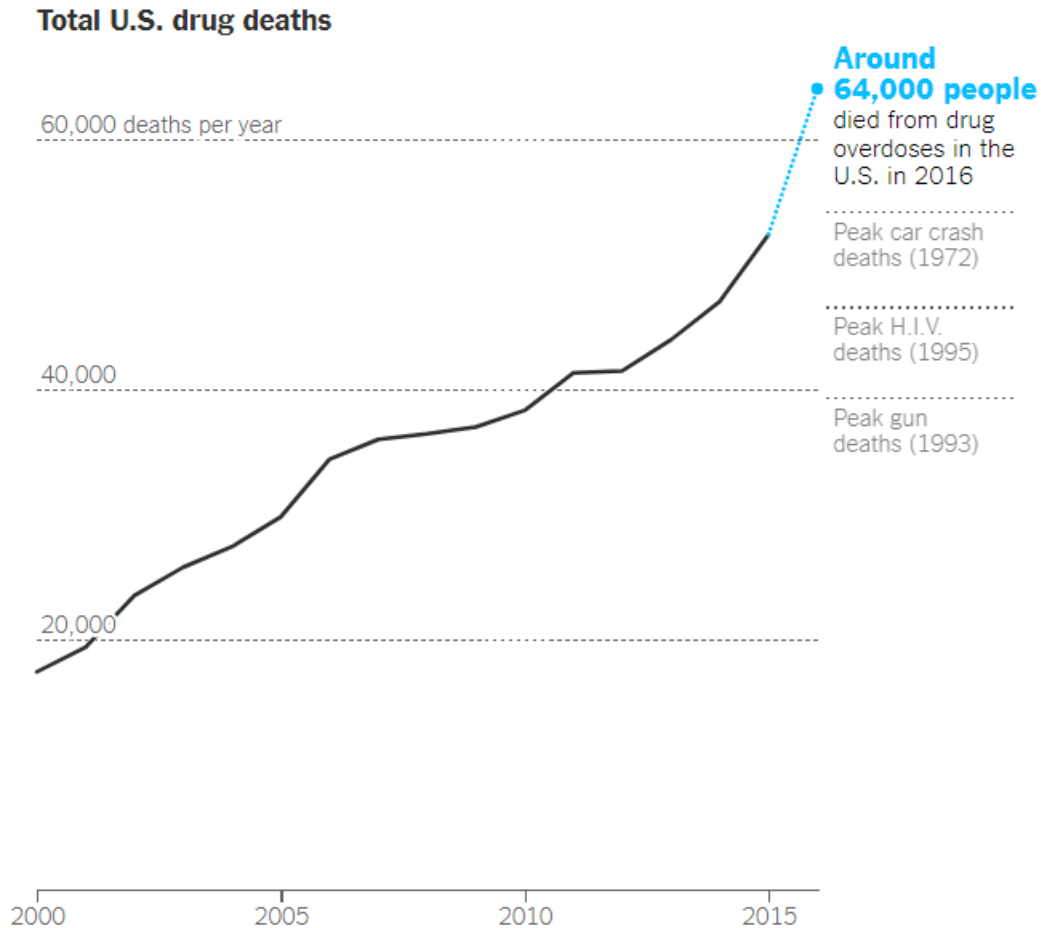
There Were 22 Percent More Drug Overdose Deaths In 2016 Than In 2015. According to The New York Times, “Drug overdoses killed roughly 64,000 people in the United States last year, according to the first governmental account of nationwide drug deaths to cover all of 2016. It’s a staggering rise of more than 22 percent over the 52,404 drug deaths recorded the previous year — and even higher than The New York Times’s estimate in June, which was based on earlier preliminary data.” [New York Times, [9/2/17](#)]

The Opioid Epidemic Is Poised to Kill As Many Americans As Gun Violence, Breast And Prostate Cancers, And The Entire Span Of The HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Opioids Could Kill As Many Americans In 10 Years As HIV/AIDS Killed In 35 Years. According to STAT News, “In the worst-case scenario put forth by STAT’s expert panel, that toll could spike to 250 deaths a day, if potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil continue to spread rapidly and the waits for treatment continue to stretch weeks in hard-hit states like West Virginia and New Hampshire. If that prediction proves accurate, the death toll over the next decade could top 650,000. That’s almost as many Americans as will die from breast cancer and prostate cancer during that time period. Put another way, opioids could kill nearly as many Americans in a decade as HIV/AIDS has killed since that epidemic began in the early 1980s.” [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

650,000 Deaths Per Year Would Approach The Number Killed By Breast And Prostate Cancers. According to STAT News, “In the worst-case scenario put forth by STAT’s expert panel, that toll could spike to 250 deaths a day, if potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil continue to spread rapidly and the waits for treatment continue to stretch weeks in hard-hit states like West Virginia and New Hampshire. If that prediction proves accurate, the death toll over the next decade could top 650,000. That’s almost as many Americans as will die from breast cancer and prostate cancer during that time period. Put another way, opioids could kill nearly as many Americans in a decade as HIV/AIDS has killed since that epidemic began in the early 1980s.” [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]

Conservative Estimates Projected That By 2027, The Annual Death Toll From Opioids Would Surpass The Worst Year Of Gun Deaths On Record. According to STAT News, “Even the more middle-of-the-road forecasts suggest that by 2027, the annual U.S. death toll from opioids alone will likely surpass the worst year of gun deaths on record, and may top the worst year of AIDS deaths at the peak of that epidemic in the 1990s, when nearly 50,000 people were dying each year.” [STAT News, [6/27/17](#)]



[New York Times, [9/2/17](#)]

Approximately As Many Americans Died Of Opioid Overdoses In 2016 As Would Take To Fill The Chicago Bears' Stadium

Approximately As Many Americans Died Of Opioid Overdoses In 2016 As Would Take To Fill The Chicago Bears' Stadium. According to The Washington Post, “In June, the New York Times predicted that the number of overdose deaths would exceed 60,000 in 2016, based on data it compiled from hundreds of state health departments and county coroners and medical examiners. If true, that number would mark the sharpest annual increase ever recorded. The death rate released by the National Center for Health Statistics for the 12 months ending last September would equate to 59,520 deaths. That is nearly the number of people it would take to fill Chicago’s Soldier Field, where the NFL’s Bears play football.” [Washington Post, [8/8/17](#)]

TRUMP’S OWN OPIOID COMMISSION HAS LITTLE FAITH IN THE ADMINISTRATION’S WILLINGNESS TO DO WHAT IS NEEDED

Washington Post’s Greg Sargent: Commission Member Patrick Kennedy “Candidly Described The Mood On The Commission As One Racked By Pessimism About The President’s Willingness And Ability To Follow Through With A Response That Matches The Scale Of The Human Disaster That Has Unfolded.” According to Greg Sargent in The Washington Post, “In a surprisingly blunt interview with

me, Patrick Kennedy, the former congressman from Rhode Island who is a member of the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, candidly described the mood on the commission as one racked by pessimism about the president's willingness and ability to follow through with a response that matches the scale of the human disaster that has unfolded." [Greg Sargent – Washington Post, [10/23/17](#)]

Chris Christie, Head Of The Commission, Reportedly Said That If Trump “Doesn’t Recognize This As The Issue Of Our Time, His Presidency Is Over.” According to Greg Sargent in The Washington Post, “The commission is set to release a final report of recommendations for combating the crisis on Nov. 1, and ‘the worry is that it won’t be adopted,’ Kennedy tells me. This apparently includes the head of Trump’s commission: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R), whom Trump picked for the role. Kennedy told me that Christie has confided to him that he thinks failure on the opioid crisis could deal a debilitating blow to Trump’s presidency. ‘Christie doesn’t mince words,’ Kennedy said. ‘He said, ‘If he doesn’t recognize this as the issue of our time, his presidency is over.’ ‘ Kennedy added that Christie, an early supporter of the president, said he had conveyed a variety of this sentiment to Trump himself.” [Greg Sargent – Washington Post, [10/23/17](#)]