

# Kaine and Ernst will seek to add fentanyl provision to defense policy bill

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Sens. [Tim Kaine](#) (D-Va.) and [Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) plan to ask fellow senators on the Armed Services Committee to add a provision to the National Defense Authorization Act naming fentanyl trafficking a national security threat, Kaine told POLITICO on Friday.

Kaine and Ernst plan to propose their [Disrupt Fentanyl Trafficking Act](#) as an amendment to the defense bill in an attempt to elevate fentanyl trafficking as a Pentagon priority, Kaine said.

The military only has resources to interdict about one-fifth of fentanyl coming out of Latin America, Kaine said, citing information provided to him by U.S. Southern Command.

“That’s just malpractice,” he said.

The amendment would also direct the Pentagon to develop a counterdrug strategy. And it would task Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin with seeking more cooperation from the Mexican military.

“My experience in working with Mexico is that while at the political level, sometimes there's disagreements, our military relationship is pretty good,” Kaine said.

Ernst told POLITICO in an emailed statement that the bill is “a real solution to the deadly fentanyl crisis with bipartisan, bicameral support.”

Reps. [Stephanie Bice](#) (R-Okla.) and [Salud Carbajal](#) (D-Calif.) have introduced [a companion bill](#).

**Why it matters:** Congress has passed a defense authorization bill [for 62 consecutive years](#), so if Kaine and Ernst are successful their amendment is likely to become law.

Kaine’s involvement indicates there is support among at least some Democrats for getting the military more involved in the fight against fentanyl.

GOP lawmakers have introduced legislation that goes further, [proposing to bomb fentanyl labs](#) in Mexico.

Fentanyl has shot to the top of the political agenda because it continues to kill tens of thousands of Americans each year, according to the CDC.

The drug is now the top killer of people ages 18 to 45 in the U.S.

**What’s next:** The Senate Armed Services Committee plans to mark up its version of the defense authorization bill next month in a closed session.