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**Sent:** Wednesday, April 25, 2018 1:28 PM

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**Subject:** Buchanan Opioid Bill

Dear Commissioners:

Congressman Buchanan introduced legislation last week to address the opioid drug abuse problem. I have attached a press release regarding the bill. The text of the bill is available at the following link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5531?r=78>. It would be helpful for the Congressman to show broad community support. Please consider a resolution or letter in support of the Congressman's bill. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Sally Dionne*  
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April 16, 2018

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## Buchanan Unveils 7-Point Drug Plan

*Endorsed by Community Leaders and National Groups*

*Drug Overdoses Leading Cause of Death of Americans Under 50*



*Congressman Buchanan announces a 7-point anti-drug plan today.*

**BRADENTON** – U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, flanked by leading anti-drug experts in Southwest Florida, unveiled today a 7-point legislative plan to address the growing drug epidemic. Buchanan said he will introduce the bill this week in the U.S. House.

The *Opioid Emergency Response Act* draws on some of the best ideas already introduced in Congress and adds an innovative new plan incentivizing the use of alternatives to addictive prescription opioids.

The bill targets the epidemic through greater research and prevention efforts, expanded access to treatment for those in recovery and better screening to catch illegal drugs before they enter the country.

“Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50,” Buchanan said, noting that life expectancy is projected to decrease for the third straight year – an alarming phenomenon unseen since the deadly Spanish flu 100 years ago.

“Those statistics are shocking, unacceptable and tell me we need to do much more to address this epidemic. Drugs are destroying lives and families not only in our backyard here in Southwest Florida but everywhere throughout the country.”

Buchanan was joined at the press conference by treatment providers, local sheriffs and anti-drug leaders at Centerstone Hospital & Addiction Center in Bradenton. Also in attendance was Ruth Lyerly of Bradenton and Cindy Bales of Sarasota who tragically lost sons to the opioid epidemic and have become advocates for action to fight drugs. The bill has been endorsed by Centerstone, Drug Free Manatee, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the National Board for Certified Counselors, the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, the Manatee, Sarasota and Hillsborough County Sheriffs, Manatee Memorial Hospital, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, and the Manatee Chamber of Commerce.

Specifically, the *Opioid Emergency Response Act* includes:

- The *Alternatives to Opioids Prescribing Act*, a bill sponsored by Buchanan to reduce opioid use among Medicare patients in hospital emergency rooms by incentivizing alternatives such as a high-dose combination of Tylenol and Advil, which studies have shown could achieve the same pain-reducing result as low-dose opioids.
- H.R. 4733, the *Opioids and STOP Pain Initiative Act*, introduced by Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) that will provide additional resources to NIH to research pain, addiction, and non-opioid treatments for these medical conditions.
- An extension of the grants created in the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act* that will provide significant opportunities for states to improve access to treatment, support people in recovery, and prevent overdoses.
- H.R. 3032, the *Mental Health Access Improvement Act*, introduced by Rep. John Katko (R-NY) that will expand seniors' access to treatment by allowing new types of providers to join Medicare.
- S. 372, the *STOP Act*, introduced by Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) that will help stem the flow of dangerous drugs like fentanyl and carfentanil by requiring more intensive screening at U.S. Postal Service facilities
- H.R. 2851, the *SITSA Act*, introduced by Rep. John Katko (R-NY) that will make it easier to outlaw deadly synthetic drugs and properly sentence convicted dealers.

- S. 788, the *Veteran Overmedication Prevention Act*, introduced by Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) that will require the VA to study the link between prescription opioids and an alarmingly high rate of suicides among veterans

Centerstone Florida CEO Melissa Larkin-Skinner: “We thank Congressman Buchanan for working closely with behavioral health providers such as Centerstone, and support his bill – the Opioid Emergency Response Act. As the title suggests, our country is in a state of emergency when it comes to opioid use, so the federal response must be a strong and comprehensive one.”

Manatee County Sheriff Rick Wells: “Vern recognizes that Manatee County is at the epicenter of the drug crisis here in Florida and he has come up with a thoughtful plan to address the problem. I strongly support his bill and hope that Congress will approve it.”

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight: “Congressman Buchanan’s bill is a serious proposal to attack this public health emergency from all angles and will help protect our community.”

Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister: “The grip that Opioids have on our nation and this state can only be broken through a unified and combined effort between local, state and federal agencies. That is why I am so encouraged by and supportive of the effort put forth in this proposed legislation by Congressman Buchanan. I am pleased to see local leadership leading the way on the national stage in this effort and I applaud the Congressman’s courage in taking on such an important task.”

Buchanan has long championed raising awareness of the drug problem and taking forceful steps to address it. His legislation to address child abuse and child neglect due to substance abuse was signed into law in February, and he was successful in securing millions of dollars in anti-drug funding for our region last year.

Buchanan also chaired a congressional hearing examining the impact of addiction on families and children; hosted a roundtable in Bradenton with local police officers, medical professionals and stakeholders; and led a meeting of the bipartisan 29-member Florida congressional delegation in Washington, DC where members heard testimony from anti-drug experts.

In 2014, the Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration adopted Buchanan’s proposal to make it more difficult for abusers to obtain certain highly addictive narcotics.