

Testing, Rapid Analysis, and Narcotic Quality (TRANQ) Research Act

Countering the spread of novel synthetic opioids

Dangerous new synthetic opioids are spreading across the country:

- The development and distribution of novel synthetic opioids continues to threaten the health and safety of communities across the United States.
- A new fentanyl analogue (Tranq) containing a veterinary tranquilizer, xylazine, is plaguing the East Coast and has begun to spread across the country.
- The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reports skyrocketing detections of xylazine, with growth between 2020 and 2021 at 61% in the Northeast, 198% in the South, 7% in the Midwest, and 112% in the West.
- According to the DEA, “the presence of xylazine in illicit drug combinations and its detection in fatal overdoses may be more widespread than reported as a number of jurisdictions across the country may not include xylazine in forensic laboratory or toxicology testing.”
- Tranq, also known as the Zombie Drug, has gruesome side effects, causing large wounds that won’t heal, and is resistant to standard opioid overdose treatments.

NIST has unique capabilities to analyze and combat synthetic drugs:

- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has unique analytical capabilities in the safe handling and identification of illicit drugs.
- For instance, spectrometry techniques developed by NIST can detect trace amounts of fentanyl which can help prevent the drug from entering the country and create safe handling procedures to protect first responders and law enforcement.
- This legislation would direct NIST to take steps to enhance our understanding of Tranq and other novel synthetic opioids, develop new analytical capabilities for novel synthetic opioids, and establish new partnerships with front-line entities that are oftentimes the points of first contact for new opioid variants.

Key Provisions in the TRANQ Research Act:

- Supports science and research to advance:
 - Analytical methods to identify and distinguish illicit drugs
 - Technologies to increase drug identification efficiency
 - New tools and techniques to identify new drugs and make the public aware of them
- Expands real-time analysis capabilities for front-line entities
- Brings together public and private entities to improve interdiction best practices
- Establishes collaborative partnerships between agencies, non-profits, and education institutions
- Does not increase spending, expand authorizations, or compel cooperation by private entities