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Rep. Carbajal Joins Ventura and Santa Barbara Law Enforcement to Highlight Bipartisan Legislation Poised to Become Law that He Co-Led to Increase Federal Efforts to Combat Fentanyl Trafficking

Carbajal was joined by head law enforcement officials for Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties to emphasize need to crack down on deadly flows of fentanyl, which new law will declare a national security threat



The top law enforcement officials from Santa Barbara and Ventura counties and the Ventura County Chief Executive Dr. Sevet Johnson joined Rep. Carbajal to emphasize the impact that fentanyl trafficking has had on the Central Coast, including the deadly rise in opioid-related overdoses in recent years.

VENTURA, CA – Today, Congressman Salud Carbajal highlighted recently-passed bipartisan legislation [that he co-led in Congress](#) to combat the trafficking of deadly fentanyl into the United States, and the impact the new law will have on curbing overdose deaths on the Central Coast.

The **Disrupt Fentanyl Trafficking Act** passed both chambers of Congress this week and is poised to become law before the end of the year, as the Biden Administration earlier this month [expressed support for the defense policy package](#) containing Carbajal's measure.

A recording of the event can be viewed [here](#) and downloaded [here](#).

"The legislation that I co-led in the House is asking our Department of Defense to treat fentanyl for what it is: a national security threat. Our bipartisan bill that passed Congress last week requires the Pentagon to develop a specific counter-drug strategy for dealing with fentanyl and the cartels that are trafficking and smuggling this drug," said Rep. Carbajal. "For the sake of the hundreds of families on the Central Coast that have lost a loved one to fentanyl, we owe it to them to ensure that bureaucracy and interagency coordination are not getting in the way of our counter-drug efforts."

The bill will increase federal attention on fentanyl trafficking by utilizing the tools of the Department of Defense (DoD) and involving Mexico as an active partner to combat the flow of the illicit opioid and disrupt drug cartel and trafficking activity.

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"Interdicting and disrupting the flow of this deadly poison into Ventura County is critical to the public safety of our residents," said Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. "I want to thank Congressman Carbajal and his colleagues for championing a bipartisan bill that will devote greater equipment, attention, and resources to this multinational crisis, and I urge President Biden to sign the bill into law."

"Despite the efforts of law enforcement and government agencies to combat its distribution to prevent further tragedies, fentanyl has increasingly had a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities; evidence of which can be found in the countless stories of family members who have lost their loved ones to this deadly toxin," said Ventura County Sheriff James Fryhoff. The Sheriff continued, "No one should want a permissive approach towards fentanyl enforcement, and this bill, which has bipartisan support, will help the efforts of law enforcement to reduce the trafficking of fentanyl."

"The illegal use and distribution of fentanyl has created a public health crisis which requires a response that utilizes public awareness, harm reduction, treatment, and law enforcement strategies working in conjunction. The new bipartisan measure sought by Congressman Carbajal will save lives by reducing the amount of illegal fentanyl available to potential victims of fentanyl's deadly effects," said Santa Barbara District Attorney John Savrnock.

"Fentanyl does not discriminate in who it kills. Its victims include people of all ages, races, religions, educational levels and social status. Defeating the scourge of fentanyl is not a partisan issue. It is a life-and-death issue," said Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown.

"We are grateful to Congressman Carbajal's ongoing support and the attention he is bringing to the need to address the opioid crisis at the local, state, and federal level," stated Ventura County Executive Officer Dr. Sevet Johnson. "A coordinated approach to addressing the presence of fentanyl in our community is key to our work to tackle the issue through the efforts of our first responders, law enforcement agencies, and health care system."

Fentanyl is a leading cause of death for Americans aged 18-45, and an estimated 196 Americans are dying every day due to fentanyl.

Of the 168 overdose deaths in [Santa Barbara County in 2022](#), 115 were fentanyl related, compared to 75 in 2021 and 32 in 2019.

In Ventura County, fentanyl-related overdose deaths have [risen more than 800%](#) in recent years – with 181 deaths in 2022 compared to 22 in 2017.

In San Luis Obispo County, overdose deaths involving fentanyl climbed from [9 in 2019 to 74 in 2021](#).

The Department of Defense plays a crucial role in the nation's counter-drug intelligence and monitoring operations, and these operations are meant to provide federal law enforcement with actionable intelligence to further investigations. However, a lack of interagency cooperation has hampered our government's counter-fentanyl efforts.

Specifically, the **Disrupt Fentanyl Trafficking Act of 2023** will work to strengthen these efforts by:

- Declaring fentanyl trafficking a national security threat stemming from drug cartels and smugglers,
- Directing the Pentagon to develop a fentanyl-specific counter-drug strategy, including enhanced cooperation with foreign nations,
- Requiring the Secretary of Defense to increase security cooperation with the Mexican military, and
- Addressing coordination efforts between the military and federal law enforcement agencies.

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Rep. Salud Carbajal represents California's 24th Congressional District, encompassing Santa Barbara County and portions of San Luis Obispo County and Ventura County. He is a member of the Agriculture and Armed Services Committees, as well as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he serves as the top Democrat on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee.