

Prison Staff Member Hospitalized After Drug Exposure, Highlighting Urgent Need for Mail Screening Reform

THOMSON, IL, UNITED STATES, February 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A correctional officer was rushed to the hospital today after exposure to an unknown substance in inmate mail/property, marking the latest in a series of dangerous incidents plaguing federal prisons nationwide. The staff member lost consciousness and required emergency Narcan administration, highlighting the growing crisis of drug-contaminated mail in federal facilities.



The Lieutenant Osvaldo Albarati Stopping Prison Contraband Act

The exposure follows a disturbing pattern at Thomson Federal Prison, where seven staff members required hospitalization due to drug exposure incidents in early 2024 alone. Most tragically, this ongoing crisis claimed the life of Marc Fischer, a veteran mailroom supervisor at U.S. Penitentiary Atwater and former Coast Guard servicemember, who died last August after handling contaminated mail just months before his planned retirement.

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Another staff member should not have to lose their life before Congress takes action to stop the trafficking of drugs through the mail in federal prisons.”

Jon Zumkehr

“Every day without action puts more lives at risk,” says Jon Zumkehr, President of AFGE Local 4070. “We’re not just talking about statistics – we’re talking about real people with families who deserve to return home safely after their shifts.”

Recent data underscores the severity of the crisis, with prison overdoses increasing by 600% in recent years as drug traffickers exploit mail systems to deliver narcotics

directly to inmates.

A bipartisan solution, [H.R. 1046](#), known as the "Marc Fischer Memorial Interdiction of Fentanyl in Postal Mail at Federal Prisons Act," currently awaits congressional action. The legislation would mandate:

- Advanced mail screening technology deployment across all facilities
- Establishment of dedicated off-site screening centers
- Enhanced resources for drug detection equipment
- Comprehensive protocols for screening legal mail.

The bill, introduced by Representative Don Bacon (NE-02), has gained significant bipartisan support and endorsements from prison staff unions, safety advocates, and lawmakers from both parties. A pilot program has already demonstrated the effectiveness of off-site mail screening but faces termination due to budget constraints.

"The mail system remains the primary route for drugs entering our facilities," says Jon Zumkehr. "Without proper screening measures, we're gambling with our officers' lives."

We are urging Congress and the U.S. Attorney General to expedite the passage of H.R. 1046 and implement comprehensive screening procedures across all federal correctional facilities.

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