

Federal Prison Staff Still at Risk as Drugs Continue Flooding Through the Mail

THOMSON, IL, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Does another staff member have to die before the Federal Bureau of Prisons finally takes the crisis of drugs entering prisons through the mail seriously? It's now been a year since Marc Fischer—a longtime mailroom supervisor at U.S. Penitentiary Atwater and former Coast Guard member—lost his life after being exposed to contaminated mail, just before his planned retirement. Since then, nothing has changed. Dangerous substances continue to pour into federal prisons weekly, and staff are left to fight this epidemic with outdated technology and little support from the Bureau.



The Lieutenant Osvaldo Albarati Stopping Prison Contraband Act

This week alone, multiple drug-laced mailings were intercepted. Just two weeks ago, fentanyl was discovered again at Thomson Federal Prison. In a recent incident, [seventeen officers at Thomson](#)

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It's time for the federal Bureau of Prisons to act before another staff member loses their life because of drugs being trafficked through the mail.”

Jon Zumkehr

were hospitalized after exposure to dangerous substances in the mailroom and required Narcan to survive. Days earlier, ten staff members at FCC Victorville suffered exposures over a four-day stretch. Union leaders warn these are not isolated events—they point to a growing national safety crisis.

Since January 2024, Thomson has seen eight separate incidents where staff needed hospitalization after handling drug-tainted mail. The same risks that killed Marc Fischer

last August are still present, with no meaningful improvements made to protect staff.

“The Federal Bureau of Prisons cannot continue to stand by while drug traffickers exploit our mail systems and put our staff at risk,” said Jon Zumkehr, President of AFGE Local 4070. “These

aren't just statistics—these are real people with families who deserve to come home safe after work.”

The situation is only getting worse as the Bureau moves to cut staff positions due to budget constraints. Local 4070 has reached out to Director William Marshall about the ongoing staffing cuts under the Biden administration, which have forced Thomson to reduce visitation from five days to just two days per week and to lock down the prison an average of nine times a month. Leaders warn these cuts undermine safety and increase the burden on already stretched staff.

Local 4070 is calling for every piece of incoming prison mail to be scanned off-site for drugs—a measure that has already proven effective. Federal prison overdose rates have soared by 600% in recent years, mainly because traffickers use the mail to smuggle drugs into facilities.

Bipartisan legislation—H.R. 1046/S.1295, the “Marc Fischer Memorial Interdiction of Fentanyl in Postal Mail at Federal Prisons Act”—would require comprehensive screening of all legal mail. The bill, introduced by Representative Don Bacon (NE-02) and Senator Justice (R-WV), enjoys strong bipartisan support.

A pilot program has already shown off-site mail screening works, but it was cut due to lack of funding. “The mail system is still the main route for drugs entering our prisons,” Zumkehr said. “Without proper screening, we’re gambling with the lives of our officers.”

Local 4070 is calling on Congress to immediately pass H.R. 1046/S.1295 and ensure comprehensive mail screening at every federal correctional facility.

Letter from [Illinois Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge](#)

On August 11, 2025, the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge—representing more than 34,000 members—formally urged Chairman Jordan and Representative Raskin of the House Judiciary Committee to consider and advance H.R. 1046, the “Marc Fischer Memorial Interdiction of Fentanyl in Postal Mail at Federal Prisons Act.” The FOP called for urgent action to protect correctional staff and stop the flow of deadly drugs into America’s federal prisons.

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