



# SENATOR JD VANCE: DRUG POLICY RECORD

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Drug Policy Action believes that drug policy should be grounded in evidence, health, equity, and human rights. The 2024 U.S. presidential election will have critical implications for drug policy nationwide. It's important you know the facts about each candidate's record and history.

## VANCE'S DRUG POLICY RECORD PRIORITIZES PUNITIVE POLICIES

JD Vance, U.S. Senator representing Ohio, has prioritized laws and policies to further entrench the war on drugs through enforcement and criminalization. He has often conveyed misinformation to support his policy positions, particularly when it comes to fentanyl trafficking and the border. Despite his personal experiences with addiction, Vance does not support the full range of overdose prevention and harm reduction services.

## VANCE SENDS MIXED SIGNALS ON MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

Vance supports the rights of states to set their own marijuana laws and has said that marijuana rescheduling has "never been a particular focus...[or] particular cause of concern" of his.<sup>1</sup> Vance has also indicated that he's against incarcerating people over low-level possession, but has concerns about federal legalization.<sup>2</sup> Vance also voted against the SAFER Banking Act, a banking bill that gives financial services to cannabis companies.

## KEY FEDERAL LEGISLATION OPPOSED BY VANCE:

- Voted against [SAFER Banking Act](#) of 2023

## VANCE SUPPORTS "TOUGH-ON-CRIME" APPROACH TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Vance introduced a Congressional resolution condemning the District of Columbia's Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022, a bill that overhauled deadly policing practices in the nation's capital and modified drug paraphernalia laws to support harm reduction.<sup>3,4</sup>

## KEY FEDERAL LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY VANCE:

- Sponsored [S.J. Res.26](#)
- Cosponsored [Back the Blue Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [PRINTS Act of 2023](#)

## VANCE PRIORITIZES CRIMINALIZATION IN RESPONSE TO THE OVERDOSE CRISIS

In 2016, Vance founded a charity, "Our Ohio Renewal," to help address the state's opioid crisis.<sup>5</sup> However, he received criticism for sending an addiction specialist with ties to Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, to Ohio's Appalachian region.<sup>6</sup> The charity was shuttered after Vance won his U.S. Senate seat.<sup>7</sup>

Vance's approach to the overdose crisis has, similarly to his running mate former President Trump, focused on law enforcement, as well as border policies. Vance supports allowing the president to use the U.S. military to go after drug

cartels.<sup>8</sup> In tandem with Vance's public comments on the issue, he has supported legislation that attempts to reduce the presence of fentanyl from abroad, specifically China and Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

In July 2023, he falsely claimed that drug decriminalization increases drug overdose and addiction rates in response to a question about the reform enacted in Portugal and in some parts of the U.S.<sup>10</sup> However, a recent JAMA study found no evidence that Oregon's drug decriminalization law led to an increase in fatal overdose rates in the state.<sup>11, 12</sup>

Vance added, however, that "some harm reduction absolutely matters. Suboxone is a sort of medically assisted treatment for people who are trying to break clean of this stuff. All that's part of the equation. But I think that if we believe we're going to solve the opioid problem by handing out needles, we're going to make the problem worse and in fact, we're already seeing evidence that we've done this."<sup>13</sup> Yet, there is an overwhelming body of evidence on the effectiveness of syringe service access which is proven to curb the spread of blood-borne disease and save lives.<sup>14</sup> Syringe service programs also increase the chances people enter treatment and stop drug use.<sup>15</sup>

### **KEY FEDERAL LEGISLATION SUPPORTED BY VANCE:**

- Sponsored [Dependent Controlled Substance Transparency Act of 2024](#)
  - To allow parents to request information about controlled substances prescribed to adult children on their health insurance

- Cosponsored [FEND Off Fentanyl Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [Combating Illicit Xylazine Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [Protecting Americans from Fentanyl Trafficking Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [S.Res.362](#)
  - to express the sense of the Senate regarding the constitutional right of State Governors to repel the dangerous ongoing invasion across the United States southern border
- Cosponsored [Secure the Border Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [TREATS Act of 2023](#)
- Cosponsored [S.Res.215](#)

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*If you have questions about this information please contact our Director of Federal Affairs Maritza Perez Medina at [mperez@drugpolicy.org](mailto:mperez@drugpolicy.org).*

*Visit [www.drugpolicy.org/OverdosePlan](http://www.drugpolicy.org/OverdosePlan) to learn about our campaign demanding an overdose prevention plan from the presidential candidates.*

*Drug Policy Action works to pass new drug laws and policies grounded in evidence, health, equity, and human rights — and undertakes a wide range of activities including political advocacy and electoral work to support these principles. Drug Policy Action is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit 501(c)(4) organization, and is the advocacy and political partner of the Drug Policy Alliance. Learn more at [drugpolicyaction.org](http://drugpolicyaction.org).*

# END NOTES

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