

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Chief of Staff Clay Armentrout  
**From:** Ella Painter  
**Date:** March 22, 2023  
**Subject:** How to Improve Public Perception of Your Response to AL Fentanyl Crisis

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**Issue/Purpose:** In recent months, Alabama constituents have criticized Senator Katie Britt and her administration for lacking empathy for victims of the ongoing fentanyl crisis in the state. This options memo will describe several directions of action that can be taken by Senator Britt and her administration to improve public perception.

**Background:** Pharmaceutical fentanyl is a synthetic opioid used to treat severe pain and is often prescribed to cancer patients. Yet most cases of fentanyl-related overdoses, injuries or deaths are linked to illegally-made fentanyl. Often mixed with cocaine or heroin without the user knowing, fentanyl increases euphoric effects and makes a drug more addictive. The number of people who died from fentanyl poisoning in Alabama more than doubled from 2019 to 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Additionally, in the United States as a whole, over 70 thousand Americans died from fentanyl overdoses in 2021. This issue is becoming more heated at home and actions need to be taken to improve the situation.

**Option 1: Endorse the “Odds Are Alabama” campaign.**

- The “Odds Are Alabama” is a public awareness campaign started by mental health professionals concerned with the opioid crisis.
- Endorsing this campaign and encouraging constituents to use its resources will help spread awareness of the issue to Alabama voters.
- This option allows you to consult mental health professionals in charge of the campaign and to get more insight into the crisis.
- For more information: <https://vitalalabama.com/odds-are-alabama/>
- **Potential risks/consequences:** Constituents may feel like simply endorsing this campaign is lazy. Constituents may also view this as a way to distract them.

**Option 2: Appoint a response team to research the issue and devise an in-depth plan.**

- Appointing a response team could allow your team to research the issue in depth and develop a proper plan for the issue.
- Several members of your team are experts in current events happening in different parts of Alabama and already have a thorough understanding of the issue.
- This team’s plan-of-action could include a variety of steps, for example: creating a page on the Senator’s website where constituents can submit their concerns about the opioid crisis, Britt and her family participating in a fundraiser for victims and releasing a statement addressing the situation.

- **Potential risks/consequences:** This option could take more time and the effects of the response team won't be immediate. The public may grow impatient and the situation could get worse.

**Option 3: Hold a press conference to address the issue.**

- Discuss your involvement on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee and inform constituents that you will propose legislation to the subcommittee.
- Detail a plan of action and let constituents know that you do not mean to come off as apathetic toward the situation.
- This would allow you to address your constituents almost immediately.
- **Potential risks/consequences:** Senator Britt may be asked uncomfortable questions that she is unprepared for. The media may spin some questions and answers in a negative light.

**Option 4: Britt travels back to hometown to meet with victims of the opioid crisis.**

- Senator Britt could return to her hometown to meet with victims and their families.
- Speaking with victims first hand would allow her to gain direct insight into the situation and help her offer her sympathy in-person.
- **Potential risks/consequences:** Constituents might think that Britt is using the victims for her own personal and political gain.

**Next Steps/Conclusion:** Senator Katie Britt and her administration need to determine her next steps quickly, as the fentanyl crisis in Alabama continues to mount daily. All of these viable options should be considered personally by Senator Britt as it is important for her to make a genuine decision. The secretary can conduct more information on the fentanyl crisis in Alabama and the entire country as needed.