



WISCONSIN NARCOTICS OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION, Inc.

P.O. Box 2142, Manitowoc, WI 54221

Web site: wnoa.com

Casey W. Cox

Lieutenant of Prairie du Chien Police Department

Executive Board Member of Wisconsin Narcotics Officers' Association

214 E. Blackhawk Avenue

Prairie du Chien, WI 53821

Ccox@PrairieduChien-wi.gov

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The Honorable Congressman Bryan Steil

1526 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Steil,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the President's FY 2026 Budget proposal, specifically the proposal to move the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to the Department of Justice and to cut the program funding by 35%. I respectfully submit that this proposal will have the unintended consequence of weakening the President's vision to build a coordinated national public safety strategy.

The current structure of the 33 regional HIDTAs under ONDCP leadership is a proven model of collaborative policing that has saved lives, dismantled violent drug trafficking organizations, and built lasting partnerships among federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement. The unparalleled success of the HIDTA program is due to its regional autonomy, impartial executive board governance, and the independent oversight provided by ONDCP. HIDTA provides a unique platform for federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agency partnerships throughout the nation. The record of agency collaboration speaks for itself.

The North Central HIDTA directly supports 17 counties and more than 150 law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin and Minnesota. In 2024, over \$8 million in funding helped our state and local task forces:

- Disrupt or dismantle 80 drug trafficking organizations
- Seize over 2.2 million fentanyl pills, 1,700 kilograms of methamphetamine, 473 kilograms of cocaine, and more than 1,600 crime guns
- Arrest nearly 4,800 traffickers and violent offenders
- Recover more than \$77 million in drug-related assets
- Provided over 16,000 training hours

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National HIDTA Program Impact (2024)

Nationwide, the HIDTA Program has continued to deliver an exceptional return on investment:

- \$17.6 billion in drugs seized
- 3,200 drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled
- Over 40,000 firearms recovered
- Support for more than 30,000 investigations
- A return of \$68.07 for every \$1 invested

FY 2026 Budget Proposal – Concerns

On May 30, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget released its FY 2026 Budget Proposal, which includes two significant changes:

1. **A 35% reduction in HIDTA's national budget**

This would result in an estimated **\$2.8 million reduction** for the North Central HIDTA—drastically impacting our ability to address regional drug threats.

2. **Transfer of HIDTA from ONDCP to the Department of Justice (DOJ)**

The proposed move to DOJ's Office of Justice Programs could severely impact the HIDTA Program's collaborative and locally driven structure. Key concerns include:

- Loss of state and local autonomy in setting priorities
- Disruption of the balanced interagency coordination model
- Reduced operational flexibility and long-term investigative stability
- Risk of weakening public health partnerships, including efforts like the Overdose Response Strategy

Importance of Maintaining ONDCP Oversight

The current ONDCP framework ensures that HIDTA remains neutral, flexible, and responsive to local needs while aligning with national drug control strategy. In FY 2025, HIDTA received \$298.6 million—90% of which went directly to state, local, and tribal law enforcement. These funds support those working on the front lines, to keep dangerous drugs out of our communities. In our region, the vast majority of the \$8 million HIDTA budget is invested directly in our state, local, and tribal partners. These dollars are not simply funding—they are a force multiplier, enabling collaborative, multi-jurisdictional efforts to combat drug trafficking and related violence.

Each HIDTA is led by an executive board that includes the key federal, state, and local law enforcement leaders in the region. This structure is especially important because it provides state and local leaders with an equal voice in designing and implementing the most effective public safety strategies to address the prevailing drug threats and related crimes of violence in their communities.

HIDTA invests in several key public safety partnerships, including disrupting and dismantling the drug trafficking and money laundering organizations and violent gangs; creating an intelligence sharing network for the timely and accurate sharing of information, in particular drug trafficking

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and gun violence intelligence, among law enforcement agencies across the country; apprehending America's most wanted fugitives across the world; providing tactical training for officers to help keep safe; as well as building public safety/public health partnerships to reduce drug overdoses and save lives.

ONDCP leads and coordinates the nation's drug policy so that it improves the health and lives of the American people. The retention of the multi-faceted HIDTA program under ONDCP is essential to achieve the President's key drug policy priorities and public safety vision for America.

Simply put, this is not the time to weaken the nation's most effective multi-agency framework for addressing the threats posed by cartel-driven drug trafficking. Law enforcement professionals across the country—and especially in Wisconsin like ours—urge Congress to preserve ONDCP's authority over HIDTA and fully fund the HIDTA program.

I respectfully request your leadership in advocating for a reversal of this budget proposal. Your support will help ensure that federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies retain the tools, partnerships, and autonomy required to safeguard our communities.

Sincerely,

Casey W. Cox
Investigative Lieutenant
Prairie du Chien Police Department
Historian of Wisconsin Narcotics Officers' Association

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