

KELLYANNE CONWAY IS IGNORING DRUG EXPERTS AS SHE TAKES OVER OPIOID CRISIS: REPORT

BY [JESSICA KWONG](#) ON 2/6/18 AT 12:36 PM

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White House counselor Kellyanne Conway, selected by President Donald Trump to be his “opioid czar,” has reportedly sidelined drug policy experts as she takes control of the government’s efforts to curb substance abuse.

Conway, whose background is in polling and politics rather than public health, is relying on an “opioid cabinet” of political staff instead of the president’s drug policy office to tackle the epidemic, [Politico](#) reported Tuesday. The crisis is reportedly responsible for 64,000 deaths in 2016.

Under Conway’s leadership, efforts have amounted to the promise of a “just say no” campaign and a call for a border wall, which is aligned with Trump’s claim that the opioid crisis was imported.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), which has guided federal drug policy since the Ronald Reagan administration, “has pretty much been systematically excluded from key decisions about opioids and the strategy moving forward,” a former Trump administration staff member told the publication.

Bob Weiner, who served in that office during the George W. Bush and Bill Clinton years, told Politico that the agency “should get maximum support from the White House” because it was created to coordinate efforts among

20 agencies, including some that were reluctant to deal with the drug problem.



Counselor to the president Kellyanne Conway looks on as Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price speaks to the press after President Donald Trump's meeting on the opioid crisis on August 8, 2017. NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An ONDCP spokesperson said the office “works closely with other federal agencies and White House offices, including Conway’s office, to combat the opioid crisis,” but declined to comment on whether its experts have been involved in her “opioid cabinet” meetings, according to Politico.

Conway recently said that her advisers help “formalize and centralize strategy, coordinate policy, scheduling and public awareness” across federal agencies. Some of Conway’s cabinet members have a general health policy background,

but their experience does not come close to that of the drug office's professionals.



[Brianna Ehley](#)

Andrew Giuliani, Rudy Giuliani's 32-year-old son, is among Kellyanne's group working on the major anti-drug media campaign Trump promised <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/06/kellyanne-conway-opioid-drug-czar-325457> ...
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[Kellyanne Conway's 'opioid cabinet' sidelines drug czar's experts](#)

[In Trump's White House, political appointees take control as the opioid epidemic rages.](#)
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A member of Trump's bipartisan opioid commission, former Democratic Representative Patrick Kennedy, last month [called the panel](#) a "charade." "I have to be true to the way I feel—this is essentially a sham," said Kennedy. "It means nothing if it has no funding to push it forward."

In October, Trump declared a 90-day public health emergency over the opioid crisis but did not make new funding available to address it. The budget Trump is set to release February 12 is [expected to slash the drug office's funding](#) and pass much of its responsibilities to the departments of Health and Human Services and Justice.

Link to original:

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