

One alternative would revive legislation that Dave Camp, then chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, proposed in 2014. That plan featured a 25% corporate rate, but it forced companies into longer depreciation schedules, included a bank tax and drew opposition from Republicans and multinational corporations. Mr. Camp's plan gave Mr. Brady and House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin the path to border adjustment—as a way to cut rates without the painful trade-offs that bedeviled Mr. Camp's proposal.

Another option would be to cut taxes and worry less about budget deficits. Messrs. Brady and Ryan say their goal is to craft a proposal that wouldn't increase the budget deficit—after assuming economic growth and excluding the costs of repealing Affordable Care Act taxes. They haven't produced a full bill or estimates showing how their math adds up.

Deep tax cuts face tougher Senate procedural hurdles that would likely require them to expire after 10 years.

Sen. David Perdue (R., Ga.), a former retail executive, said lawmakers should scrap border adjustment, focusing on lower tax rates and counting on economic growth to make up revenue shortfalls.

"Trust the free-enterprise system. Get this tax structure simplified, competitive with the rest of the world and then watch this economy grow," he said.

But Senate Republicans haven't coalesced behind a plan. "What I want to do is succeed. And success means 51 votes in the Senate and a presidential signature over something that makes America more competitive," Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said in an interview this past week.

—Siobhan Hughes
contributed to this article.

Powerful New Narcotic Intensifies Opioid Crisis

By JON KAMP
AND ARIAN CAMPO-FLORES

In a worrisome sign for the U.S. opioid crisis, a synthetic narcotic with terrifying potency has been tied to hundreds of overdose deaths since it first emerged in Ohio in mid-2016.

Authorities have connected the drug, carfentanil, to at least 700 fatalities in states including Ohio, Michigan and Florida, according to data compiled by The Wall Street Journal from county medical examiners and NMS Labs, a private laboratory outside Philadelphia that performs toxicology testing for counties around the U.S.

As of early November, the Drug Enforcement Administration had received notice of 411 drug seizures containing carfentanil from around the U.S. that were analyzed by federal, state and local labs. The agency has confirmed seizures of the drug in at least 10 states, mainly in the Midwest, Appalachia and the South.

Carfentanil is a particular concern because of its extreme potency: It is up to 100 times more powerful than fentanyl, the narcotic blamed for worsening the opioid crisis in recent years. Carfentanil—the legal version is intended to sedate large animals, like elephants—is also about 10,000 times as powerful as morphine, according to the DEA.

There were over 33,000 fatal opioid overdoses in the U.S. in 2015, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Even a minute trace of carfentanil can be deadly. Because it can be absorbed through the skin or accidentally inhaled as



Carfentanil has been connected to at least 700 fatalities.

an airborne powder, law-enforcement personnel face significant peril in investigating scenes where it may be present. Users who overdose on it usually require an especially large amount of naloxone, an overdose-reversal drug carried by many first responders.

Several self-described opioid users have told the Journal they wouldn't intentionally take carfentanil and that it strikes fear in the drug community. One called it a "murder weapon" because it is so powerful.

Dealers often mix carfentanil with heroin and other opioids and sell it to unsuspect-

ing users, the DEA says. Profit is a likely motive since dealers can convert a small shipment of carfentanil into a large amount of retail product.

Authorities first detected carfentanil in Ohio last summer. It hit Akron on the July Fourth weekend, according to local authorities. First responders rushed 15 overdose victims through the doors of Cleveland Clinic Akron General hospital during a single eight-hour shift, an unusually high number, said Nicholas Jouriles, chairman of the emergency department there.

Lakshmi Sammarco, the Hamilton County coroner, said

China Moves to Curb Carfentanil Output

Action comes as U.S. identifies country as major source of bootleg opioids

A crackdown by China on production of carfentanil comes amid pressure from U.S. authorities, who have identified the country as a major source of bootleg, laboratory-made versions of opioids including carfentanil that have made their way into the U.S.

During a visit to China in January, DEA Administrator Chuck Rosenberg pressed authorities there for more rigorous controls of synthetic opioids, stressing the gravity of the public-health crisis in America.

The DEA has worked with China in the past to try to curb flows of illicit drugs into the U.S. After China added controls on 116 chemicals in October

2015, the influx of some of them abated, DEA spokesman Russell Baer said. Alpha-PVP, a stimulant often known as "flakka" that triggered a spate of overdose deaths in South Florida earlier that year, "virtually went away," Mr. Baer said.

Yet fentanyl, which has long been designated a controlled substance in China, continues to stream into the U.S. in large quantities, in part because Mexican cartels are producing it and shipping it north, Mr. Baer said.

The Chinese action to add carfentanil and three other related drugs to a list of controlled substances, effective March 1, aims to close a loophole. While fentanyl is controlled in China, similar compounds have been more loosely regulated and were easier for labs there to export. That contributed to China becoming a factory for some synthetic opioids.

—Arian Campo-Flores
and Brian Spegele

a rash of about 175 overdoses hit the Cincinnati area in just one week last August, many due to carfentanil.

"I was getting panicked phone calls from EMS and police," she said, as emergency medical services personnel and officers responded to one overdose after another.

The medical examiner's office in Summit County, which includes Akron, has counted at least 133 cases in which people died with carfentanil in their systems. The drug was so unusual when it first arrived that the county had to get a reference sample—used to validate tests—from a zoo in Cleve-

land, said Lisa Kohler, the county medical examiner.

In September, the DEA issued a nationwide warning to police and the public about the drug. "Carfentanil is surfacing in more and more communities," DEA Administrator Chuck Rosenberg said. "It is crazy dangerous."

The following month, health authorities in Michigan issued a warning about the drug. The state hasn't tallied carfentanil overdoses yet, but NMS Labs, which works with some of the largest counties in Michigan, has counted 170 cases there, said Donna Pappas, an NMS toxicologist.