

Senate rejects adding \$600M to anti-heroin legislation

March 2 2016, by Andrew Taylor

The Senate Wednesday rejected a Democratic effort to add \$600 million to a bipartisan bill targeting heroin and opioid abuse.

Supporters of the immediate funding won a majority of the Senate votes. But the 48-47 tally fell short of the 60 votes required for an attempt by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., to add the money.

Shaheen praised the underlying bill, which has sweeping bipartisan backing, but said "the reality is unless we provide the resources to make these programs work it's like giving a drowning person a life preserver that has no air in it."

Republicans opposed to the proposal said there's plenty of previously approved money in the pipeline and that additional funding can wait until this year's round of regular spending bills.

The underlying bill is a bipartisan response to an epidemic that has seen the drug overdose death rate more than double since 2000, with over 47,000 fatalities in 2014, according to the government. Over 28,000 of those deaths were from misuse of opioids and heroin.

The bill is most visibly supported by several Republicans up for re-election in states carried twice by President Barack Obama, including Rob Portman of Ohio, Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, and Mark Kirk of Illinois. Each supported the immediate funding, though Shaheen's effort was axed by Republicans opposed to breaching budget limits to

provide the funding.

The bill would create grant programs to help states, local government and nonprofit organizations expand drug prevention and treatment programs and bolster some law enforcement efforts.

The measure is expected to pass next week after a procedural vote and action on further amendments. The House is working on similar legislation.

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