

Trump Turns Clock Back With Border Wall, Drug War Talk

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When Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump launched his campaign, he famously, or infamously, declared: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”

Despite the furor over his statement, little attention has been paid to Trump’s drug policy and how it echoes past policies that have violently wreaked havoc on both sides of the border. Trump has stated that his proposed border wall would stop the flow of drugs fueling the heroin epidemic gripping the Northeast, as well as communities throughout the U.S. also experiencing the effects.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection found most of the heroin is seized at the southern border, and only a small amount is stopped near the U.S.’ border with Canada. A significant percentage is tracked via airplanes, and increasingly more creative methods, like drones and submarines are being implemented.

However, for the last 30-years of the so-called “War on Drugs,” it’s been proven that attempting to cut off the supply of drugs is ineffective if the demand remains high. In fact, the percentage of Americans using heroin hasn’t changed very much since 1979, despite constant efforts to stop its import into the U.S., The Washington Post reported.

Policy and law enforcement have consistently failed to keep up with the constantly-evolving trafficking methods of all drugs, including heroin. Trump’s proposal echoes the message of William J. Bennett, the U.S.’ first Drug Czar, who advocated for harsh tactics during the start of the drug war in the 1980s.

Trump recently sought advice from Bennett regarding the heroin epidemic and in a speech with Maine’s Republican Gov. Paul LePage on March 3, Trump told the crowd, “The wall is going to stop drugs coming into Maine, New Hampshire.”

Trump’s reversion to this 1980s-and-beyond mentality of attempting to prevent drugs from entering the country, regardless of how effective enforcement is or isn’t, is something of a change for him in terms of drug policy. Trump recently voiced support for medical marijuana

and said that states should have the right to individually decide on the issue of recreational medical marijuana.

“That actually puts him on the liberal wing of Republican presidential candidates in terms of drug policy,” David Boaz, executive vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute, told *The Daily Beast*.

However, Trump had even more radical ideas about how to handle the drug war in 1990, long before he proposed a border wall. “We’re losing badly the war on drugs,” he said at a luncheon hosted by *The Miami Herald*. “You have to legalize drugs to win that war. You have to take the profit away from these drug czars.”

Regardless of his past stances, Trump has promised that the border wall will improve national security and reduce the influx of drugs and undocumented immigrants, but it remains to be seen how rooted in reality these claims are.