

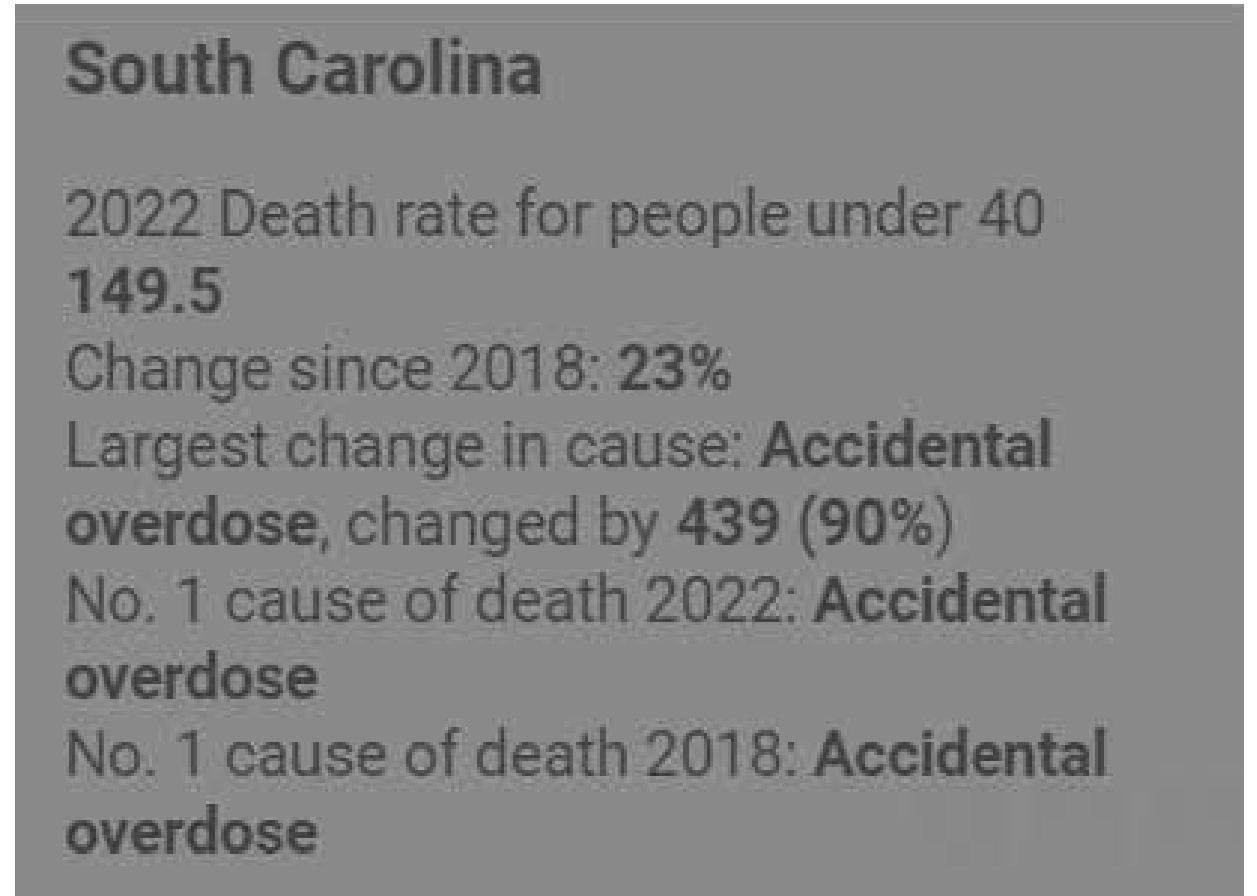
South Carolina - Overdose is now the No. 1 cause of death for people under 40 in most states. Street fentanyl is mostly to blame

In most states, the number of Americans under 40 who died from accidental drug overdoses has exceeded any other cause of death. "It's now the top cause in 37 states," a new Stateline analysis shows. Death rates for Americans under 40 "were up by nearly a third in 2021 over 2018, and last year were still 21% higher," reports Tim Henderson of Stateline. "Covid-19 was a small part of the increase, causing about 23,000 deaths total between 2018 and 2022 in the age group. . . . Vehicle accidents and suicide (about 96,000 each) and gun homicide (about 65,000) all took a cumulative toll from 2018 to 2022, according to a Stateline analysis of federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. . . . Overdose deaths, however, took almost 177,000 lives in that time."

A lethal dose of fentanyl (FDA fentanyl fact sheet photo) The number of unintentional overdose deaths shows fentanyl's deadly presence in U.S. street drugs. The "fresh wave of overdose deaths is different from the first three," Henderson writes, . . . "driven by drugs spiked with powerful fentanyl." Daliah Heller, vice president of drug use initiatives at Vital Strategies, an international advocacy group that works on strengthening public health, told Henderson: "Somebody might think they're getting a Xanax [for anxiety], or methamphetamine or cocaine. . . . They have no experience with opioids; it's not what they're expecting, and now they have a much higher risk of overdose and death." According to the Food and Drug Administration, fentanyl is approximately 100 times more

potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin.

To lessen fentanyl's impact, states "are responding with 'harm reduction' strategies that can include warning of the new danger of recreational drugs laced with deadly fentanyl, training and equipping people to counteract overdoses when they see them," Henderson explains. "Nationally, accidental overdoses dominated the increase in deaths in residents under 40 across racial and urban-rural divides, but many disparities exist. The increase in young overdose death rates was 154% for Black Americans, 122% for Hispanic residents and 37% for white people, yet even for white residents, they represented the largest increase. . . . The largest urban areas saw increases in overdose death



rates of 70%, and rural areas 64%—the largest increases

in both areas for any cause of death."

Written by Heather Close The Rural Blog

Statement From U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) made this statement and held a media availability today in Westminster, South Carolina.

"As the then-Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I had to decide whether to hold a hearing regarding the allegations of election misconduct in Georgia and other locations, as well as whether to certify the election results.

"I had questions, as did many others, about how the mail ballot process worked in Georgia and other locations. I did my due diligence. At the end of the day, I voted to certify the election results from every state including Georgia.

"It should never be a crime for a federal elected official, particularly the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who will have to vote to certify a presidential election, to question and ensure the integrity of that election."

Transcript of Senator Graham's media availability today in Westminster, South Carolina

Reporter: What do you think of the report being released today, its contents and what the recommendation was from the Special Grand Jury?

Senator Graham:

I'm very worried about the country right now. I was the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. This election was contested in courts and multiple states. I had to explain to the people of South Carolina my vote. I had to decide whether or not to have a hearing about the allegations in Georgia and other places. I called around different states, including Georgia.

As a sitting United States Senator and then-Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I eventually certified the election in all states including Georgia. I didn't find any evidence of mass voter fraud, but I did have concerns about the mail-in ballots systems in Georgia and other places. This is troubling for the country.

We can't criminalize senators doing their job when they have a constitutional requirement to fulfill.

It would be irresponsible for me, in my opinion, as Chairman of the committee not to try to find out what happened.

It would be irresponsible for me to tell the voters of South Carolina what I did without actually trying to find out what the right answer was.

We're opening up Pandora's Box here.

Fulton County is one of the most liberal jurisdictions in the country. I fear this will spread. That in the next election - Dem-

ocrats may be on the other side of this.

So at the end of the day, nothing happened.

What I did was consistent with my job as being a United States Senator, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. But it was just not me - three United States Senators [were recommended for charges].

We're opening up Pandora's box.

I think the system in this country is getting off the rails and we have to be careful not to use the legal system as a political tool.

Reporter: How would you describe your conversation with Raffensperger? Were you surprised when he reportedly said it made him feel uncomfortable? What do you call that conversation?

Senator Graham:

I called him from my office with my staff on the phone. Yeah, I was surprised.

I asked him hard questions and I got very, sometimes not reassuring, answers.

But two sitting United States Senators from Georgia called for him to resign.

So I've tried to figure it out, well, that's a pretty stunning statement....I asked him questions about the mail-in voting process. I never asked him to set aside ballots or anything else.

After the conversation, I decided it was best for me to vote to certify the election because I didn't have enough confidence in my own mind to overturn it, but I can't speak for him.

But the phone call I had with him was made from my office in Washington with my staff on it.

Reporter: How would you describe your testimony in front of the special grand jury? And how did you feel about that? And how long was it?

Senator Graham:

It was a couple hours. I told people the truth as I knew it to be. And all I can say is that what I did in Georgia was explained to the grand jury, the process that I followed to make a decision as United States Senator, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I voted to certify the election.

To suggest I'm part of some grand scheme to overturn the election makes no sense, given my actions. It speaks to where we're at more than anything else.

It's me today. It could be somebody else tomorrow.

So I would urge the country to understand that political differences are real. Let's calm down a bit here. And all I can say is



that as a United States Senator, you owe it to your constituents, to be able to explain yourself in one of the most high profile elections made in US history.

So I feel comfortable with my vote to certify the election. I feel comfortable with the questions I asked. At the end of the day, I did my job.

And the day that that becomes criminalized is very bad for the country.

Reporter: Senator, some might say that you know, you hitched your wagon to Donald Trump and his party. And you've been pulled into this because you follow him. Are you still hitching your wagon to him, to Donald Trump...?

Senator Graham:

You know, I think a lot of this efforts is to try to marginalize Donald Trump as a political figure.

But what I am trying to tell people, that the election was contested by President Trump and others, and I had to vote. I did my job to figure out what's best for me, as a Senator, how to vote: Whether or not I should have the hearing?

There are many people in this country who believe the law has become a political weapon. We'll see what happens in these cases. At the end of the day, it's over for me.

But what I do worry about is if this becomes the norm, then it's going to be very difficult for this country to move forward. Where you have county prosecutors that can potentially bring charges against federal officials who are clearly doing their job.

Reporter: So how do you move forward and make it not politicized and make sure that the country gets back?

Senator Graham:

Well, the way I can move forward is trying to solve problems, not get distracted, and

rates of 70%, and rural areas 64%—the largest increases

in both areas for any cause of death."

Written by Heather Close The Rural Blog

Senator Graham: Well, you know, kind of cuts both ways.

There are some people, and I understand, believe the election was stolen. I've got questions about the election. But I don't say that.

Some people believe that Mike Pence should have not certified the election. I disagree. He had a constitutional duty and he fulfilled that duty.

Some people think that January 6 was a patriotic event. The attack on the Capitol, I do not believe falls in that category.

So there are some on each side that I think we have to deal with here, but I am comfortable with my vote to certify the election. I am comfortable with the questions I ask. And as long as I'm a Senator, I'm not going to be deterred from doing my job.

It's not my job to give support to every idea out there. It's my job to find the truth as I believe it to be. And the truth is, I voted to certify the 2020 election that had a lot of issues. But I thought it was best for the country to end it and move forward.

I was there on January 6, the people who defiled the Capitol should be prosecuted. I think Mike Pence did his job. And I think there's an effort in this country to weaponize the law.

We should all be worried because you're opening Pandora's box here.

Reporter: Did you read the report today and any confidence...?

Senator Graham: No, I just I saw what was on television.

I know that it's over for me. You know, you had three United States Senators caught up in this special grand jury. And again, you got to be careful where we go as a nation here.

Reporter: Were you surprised that these charges were recommended against you?

Senator Graham:

Yeah, I was totally surprised.

Yeah, because I thought I made it pretty clear that my phone call was to find out what I should be doing as a senator.

I never suggested anybody set aside the election. I never said go find votes. I never said anything other than trying to find out how the mail-in balloting system worked. I was really confused, and I still am quite frankly.

I'm not so sure on the mail-in side everything was done the best it could in Georgia. But at the end of the day, I didn't have enough to overturn anything.

But yeah, me, Senator Purdue and Loeffler. I talked to them, they were concerned about it.

Reporter: Have you had any interaction with DA Willis' office?

Senator Graham:

No, I haven't heard from them since. Again, I was you know, but they were very respectful to our conversation. And I told them what I did and why and you know, here we are.

The case will move forward without me. And the country is going to have to make some soul searching here. Where do we want to go? If it ever becomes impossible or politically dangerous or legally dangerous for a United States Senator, to call up people to find out how the election was run, God help us all.

The next election, if I have questions, I'll do the same thing.

Reporter: What kind of questions would you asked on the Special Grand Jury in Georgia?

Senator Graham:

Just basically, who did you call? Did I think the election was stolen? It was a two hour conversation. I answered the questions as honestly as I could.

I made the phone call from my office with my staff on it, trying to figure out what I should do as Senator Graham.

Reporter: At that point in time, when you were making the call, did you think the election had been stolen?

Senator Graham:

I didn't know. I had all these allegations. I didn't know the state of play of the fraud allegations. And I actually asked about, did dead people vote? Did people underage vote? I was convinced there was no widespread situation like that.

In terms of how the mail-in voting process worked, I'm still confused about what happened in Georgia. But I think they've changed their laws.

So you know, I did my job. I wouldn't change anything I did. Because I owe it to the people in this state, and really the country at large, to figure out -- accusations are being made, they're flying. Just to sit by and do nothing, which a lot of people on the left would like us all to do. Just shut up and be quiet, not ask questions?

I think I made a responsible decision. I think I made a responsible decision to call around and ask what happened. I talked to people in Arizona, talked to Governor Ducey in Arizona.

I felt comfortable with my vote to certify the election. It's not saying there weren't issues. There were.

I felt comfortable that I was doing what I needed to do. I decided not to have a hearing because I didn't think the upside would be greater than the downside for the country.

So thank you very much.