

## **State of the Country**

To: Bishop Jeffrey Nathaniel Leath, Presiding Prelate

Dr. Susan J. Leath, MD, Episcopal Supervisor

General Officers, Connectional Officers, Visiting Presiding Elders

Rev. James E. Smith, Host Presiding Elder

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All clergy and delegation of this 150<sup>th</sup> Session of the Kentucky Annual Conference

The Bible tells us in **1 Corinthians 13** **“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.<sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”**

Is this not what we are experiencing in world in which we live? The State of the Country is in dire straits as we look at several key issues that are affecting the poor, the needy, the minority, and the oppressed. The effect is widespread emotionally, physically and spiritually as well as economically, politically, financially and culturally. The world is full of vendettas that are destroying the lives of God’s people. Some of the issues that we suggest are paramount now and in the days ahead are economics, politics, education, police brutality, voter suppression and the drug epidemic. And to no avail the lack of love is the common denominator.

To the casual observer Voter Suppression is a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from voting. Although 2017 marks the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, anti-democratic forces are still hard at work attempting to weaken the provisions and protections codified in the Historic 1965 Act.

Minority groups, particularly African Americans, know intuitively that voter suppression undertakings are directed mostly at people of African Descent. It is, and should be, troubling to all Americans that in the first six months of President Donald Trump’s administration he has chosen disseminate false and baseless allegations of illegal votes cast by millions of undocumented aliens.

This is no doubt the opening salvo from the Trump's Administration to get its hands on voting rolls and voter information with the ultimate aim of suppressing the black vote. The President has already empaneled and empowered a "commission" to look into the millions of illegal votes cast against him in the recent presidential elections.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church of the 13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District is stepping up the plate and letting our voices be heard loudly and forcefully that we reject and will fight all attempts at suppressing the black vote and we will work strenuously to protect the provisions and protections enumerated in the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965.

### Police Brutality

Police brutality is one of the most serious, enduring, and divisive human rights violations in the United States. Police officers have the right by law to legitimate force if it is necessary to make an arrest, maintain order, or keep the peace. Just how much force is appropriate under various circumstances can be debatable. Police brutality can be defined as conscious and deliberate action that a police officer undertakes toward suspects who are usually members of a powerless social group (for example, racial, minorities or homosexuals).

Unjustified shootings, severe beatings, fatal choking's and rough treatment have all contributed to the ever-present problem of police brutality in America. A lot of these incidents go unreported or un-noticed. Hundreds of men and woman are killed by police each and every year across the United States.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) from 2003 to 2009 a reported 4,813 persons died during or shortly after law enforcement personnel attempted to arrest or restrain them. About 60 percent of arrest-related deaths (2,931) were classified as homicides by law enforcement personnel. Today black Americans are 2.5 times as likely as white Americans or any other race to be shot and killed by police.

The Guardian police killing data base shows in 2016, black males ages 15-34 are being killed at the highest rates in the United States. Two-hundred-fifteen black Americans have been killed by police so far this year, at a rate of 5.38 deaths per million. February and March were the deadliest months this year, with 100 people killed by police in each month. A total of 169 unarmed people were killed in 2016 compare with 234 in 2015.

A prime example of that would be the fatal shooting of an unarmed black 18- year-old in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014.

In 2017 the death rates of black American are still climbing. Although it can take place anywhere, police brutality is said, due to reported statistics, to take place more often in

fourteen of America's largest cities. Those cities are Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Boston, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Portland, Providence, Washington D.C and San Francisco. There have been many systems designed to stop brutality in these cities which have unfortunately failed. Many races have been speaking out about "Black Lives Matter". The truth of the matter is "All Lives Matter" according to the word of God. Is there a solution for these unnecessary killings and treatment of the American people? In **John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

State of the Country: Immigration:

The issue of Immigration has been at the center of several congressional and political campaigns and elections cycles. However, there remains a troubling undertone in the discourse on this important issue. Ethnic groups such as Mexicans, Hispanics and religious groups such as Muslims have been singled out either deportation from America or preclusion from into the country. Again, the persecuted groups often share a commonality; they are Non-white and Non-European.

As we stand side by side with both legal and illegal aliens, let remember that we are standing on sacred texts as Children of God. **Deuteronomy 10:19 says, "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."** And **Leviticus 19:34 states, "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."**

It is not and has never been the American way to only welcome the "cream of the crop" as some are currently advocating. This phrase, we know from experience, is code for excluding darker skin peoples from entering the country. The 13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District must continue to speak truth to power and remind the President and the Congress that they should not play God with the lives of God's children.

We demand that immigration to the United States remain a Justice and impartial process, one in which all peoples, regardless of race, color or creed are given a fair to chance to live their lives in freedom and dignity.

Healthcare:

One of the most forceful arguments for universal healthcare is that Jesus provided healthcare to those he ministered to. Jesus, healed the sick, over and over again. He caused the blind to see. And he made the deaf to hear. Healthcare is a universal right. Of all the rich and advance countries in the world, America remains the only country that does not guarantee healthcare to

all its peoples. The 13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District affirms its support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We strongly register our protest against any and all attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. We call upon our members throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District to remain engaged in the fight for universal care by visiting and petitioning local, state and national representatives to keep the Affordable Care Act the law of the land.

#### State of the Economy:

1. Wealth disparity between upper and middle income Americans has hit a record high, according to a new Pew Research Center Report. On average, today's upper-income families are almost seven times wealthier than middle-income ones, compared to 3.4 times wealthier in 1984. When compared to lower income family wealth, upper income family wealth is 70 times larger.
2. Economic Growth: Economists are forecasting modestly improved economic growth in the range of 2 to 2.5 percent in 2017. Inflation will remain subdued this year, perhaps just above the Federal Reserve's target of 2 percent. Therefore, we can expect two or even three additional interest rate hikes from the Fed over the course of the year.
3. Cybersecurity continues to be a major challenge. The potential for disruption is huge. Significant resources are being devoted to equip companies with the tools, advice, and policies they need to protect themselves and their customers.
4. Terrorist Attacks: There is the constant threat of terrorist attacks and geopolitical crises. Any major event could upend agendas and alter economic forecasts overnight.
5. Global Economy: In a global economy, decisions made by leaders in China, India, Japan, Russia, the Middle East, and elsewhere can have a big impact on the prospects of American companies and American workers.
6. Health Care: The business community recognizes that there are many problems with Obamacare. Topping the list is the employer mandate, and all the reporting requirements that go with it. Then there are taxes such as the health insurance tax, the medical device tax, and the so-called Cadillac tax—all which will drive up the cost of health care.

As discussions on a new health care plan takes shape, it is important to remember that things were far from perfect before Obamacare. Repeal alone will not fix our health care system. There should be an adequate transition between the current system and any new plan.

7. Pro-Growth Tax Reform: Our current tax code is suffocating American businesses and frustrating American families. We need to lower the business tax rate, which is now the highest in the industrialized world when you add in state taxes. We need to significantly lower individual tax rates as well. Millions of small businesses file as pass through entities, and their marginal rates can exceed 50 percent in some states. We also need to institute an internationally competitive system of taxation. Currently, when a company based in America earns money overseas, that money gets taxed twice. First in the country where it's earned, and then again by the U.S. government. The U.S. is one of the only major economies that imposes that second tax. Pro-growth tax reform should end the current bias against capital investment.
8. A Competitive Workforce and Immigration: A well-trained, well-educated workforce is also critical to driving economic growth—and to making sure all Americans have a genuine opportunity to share in that growth. We must begin by fixing our K-12 schools—not just with a few adjustments around the edges, but with bold and sweeping reforms.  
We also need new thinking when it comes to training Americans for the jobs of the future. Many of these jobs require specialized training and lifelong learning—but not necessarily an expensive four-year college degree.

#### References:

1. State of American Business 2017 Address by Thomas J. Donohue President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce on January 11, 2017
2. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI). The EPI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank created in 1986 to include the needs of low- and middle-income workers in economic policy discussions. EPI believes every working person deserves a good job with fair pay, affordable health care, and retirement security. To achieve this goal, EPI conducts research and analysis on the economic status of working America. The Economic Policy Institute's mission is to inform and empower individuals to seek solutions that ensure broadly shared prosperity and opportunity.—not just for some of us, but for all of us.

#### State of Country: Education

##### ELEMENTARY and SECONDARY

- I. School Characteristics and Climate:

- A. High-poverty schools, in which more than 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program, accounted for 25 percent of all public schools in 2014–15. In that year, 24 percent of traditional public schools were high-poverty compared with 36 percent of public charter schools.
  - B. Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch In-school year 2014–15, nearly half of Hispanic and Black public school students, one-third of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and one-quarter of Pacific Islander students attended high-poverty schools. In contrast, 17 percent of students of Two or more races, 15 percent of Asian students, and 8 percent of White students attended high-poverty schools.
  - C. School Crime and Safety: Between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of students ages 12–18 who reported being victimized at school during the previous 6 months decreased overall (from 6 to 3 percent), as did the percentages of students who reported theft (from 4 to 2 percent) and violent victimization (from 2 to 1 percent).
  - D. Teachers and Staff: Of the 6.3 million staff members in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2014, half (3.1 million) were teachers. The pupil/teacher ratio in public schools declined from 15.8 in 2004 to 15.3 in 2008. The pupil/teacher ratio then rose, reaching 16.1 in 2014.
- II. Risk Factors and Academic Outcomes:
- A. Students who were living in poverty and who did not have a parent who completed high school tended to score lower in reading, mathematics, and science in each of their first four years of school compared to their peers who had neither risk factor at kindergarten entry.
  - B. Homeless Children and Youth in Public Schools: In 2014–15, some 2.5 percent of students in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools were reported as homeless children or youth (1.3 million students). The largest numbers of homeless students were enrolled in city (578,000 students) and suburban districts (422,000 students), compared to rural (149,000 students) and town districts (139,000 students).
- III. Population Characteristics
- A. Characteristics of Children's Families: In 2015, some 10 percent of children under the age of 18 had parents who had not completed high school, 27 percent lived in mother-only households, 8 percent lived in father-only households, and 20 percent were living in poverty.
  - B. Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools In fall 2014, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools who were White was less than 50 percent (49.5 percent) for the first time and represents a decrease from 58

percent in fall 2004. In contrast, the percentage who were Hispanic increased from 19 to 25 percent during the same period

- C. English Language Learners in Public Schools: The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners (ELLs) was higher in school year 2014–15 (9.4 percent, or 4.6 million students) than in 2004–05 (9.1 percent, or 4.3 million students). In 2014–15, the percentage of public school students who were ELLs ranged from 1.0 percent in West Virginia to 22.4 percent in California

#### IV. Economic Outcomes

- A. Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment: In 2016, the employment rate was higher for people with higher levels of educational attainment than for those with lower levels of educational attainment. For example, among 20- to 24-year-olds, the employment rate was 88 percent for those with a bachelor's or higher degree and 48 percent for those who did not complete high school.

#### V. Participation in Education

- A. Preprimary: In 2015, the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in preschool programs was higher for children whose parents had a graduate or professional degree (48 percent) than for those whose parents had a bachelor's degree (42 percent), an associate's degree (37 percent), some college (37 percent), a high school credential (29 percent), and less than a high school credential (29 percent).
- B. Elementary/Secondary: Between fall 2014 and fall 2026, total public school enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 is projected to increase by 3 percent (from 50.3 million to 51.7 million students), with changes across states ranging from an increase of 42 percent in the District of Columbia to a decrease of 14 percent in Connecticut.
- C. Public Charter School Enrollment: Between fall 2004 and fall 2014, overall public charter school enrollment increased from 0.9 million to 2.7 million. During this period, the percentage of public school students who attended charter schools increased from 2 to 5 percent.
- D. Private School Enrollment: Private school enrollment in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 12 increased from 5.9 million students in 1995–96 to 6.3 million in 2001–02, and then declined to 5.4 million in 2013
- E. Public High School Graduation Rates: In school year 2014–15, the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students rose to 83 percent, the highest rate since the measure was first collected in 2010–11. In other words, more than 4 out of 5 students graduated with a regular high school diploma within 4 years of starting 9th grade. Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest ACGR (90 percent), followed by White (88 percent), Hispanic (78 percent), Black (75 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (72 percent) students.

## POSTSECONDARY

- I. **Post-Secondary Degrees:** Between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of U.S. adults with any postsecondary degree rose to 45 percent, an increase of 7 percentage points.
- II. **Postsecondary College Enrollment Rates:** The overall college enrollment rate for young adults increased from 35 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2015. During this time period, the enrollment rates also increased for Black and Hispanic young adult males, as well as for White and Hispanic young adult females.
- III. **Undergraduate Enrollment:** Between 2000 and 2015, total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 30 percent (from 13.2 million to 17.0 million). By 2026, total undergraduate enrollment is projected to increase to 19.3 million students.
- IV. **Post baccalaureate Enrollment:** Total enrollment in post baccalaureate degree programs was 2.9 million students in fall 2015. Between 2015 and 2026, post baccalaureate enrollment is projected to increase by 12 percent (from 2.9 million to 3.3 million students).
- V. **Youth Neither Enrolled in School nor Working:** In 2016, some 17 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds were neither enrolled in school nor working, compared to 12 percent of 18- and 19-year-olds and 5 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds. In each age group, the percentage who were neither in school nor working was higher for those in poor households than for those in non-poor households. For example, among 20- to 24-year-olds in 2016, some 31 percent of those in poor households were neither in school nor working, compared to 13 percent of those in non-poor households.
- VI. **Postsecondary Environments and Characteristics**
  - A. Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: In academic year 2015–16, some 28 percent of 4-year institutions had open admissions policies (accepted all applicants), an additional 29 percent accepted three-quarters or more of their applicants, 30 percent accepted from one-half to less than three-quarters of their applicants, and 13 percent accepted less than one-half of their applicants.
  - B. Some 10.5 million undergraduate students attended 4-year institutions in fall 2015, while 6.5 million attended 2-year institutions. Some 77 percent of undergraduate students at 4-year institutions attended full time, compared with 39 percent at 2-year institutions.
  - C. Undergraduate Degree Fields: For every racial/ethnic group, business was the most common field of study for bachelor's degrees conferred in 2014–15. Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; health professions and related programs; and business services were the top three associate's degree fields of study for all racial/ethnic groups in 2014–15.
  - D. Graduate Degree Fields: In 2014–15, nearly half of the 759,000 master's degrees conferred were concentrated in two fields of study: business (185,000 degrees) and



- education (147,000 degrees). Of the 179,000 doctor's degrees conferred, almost two-thirds were concentrated in health professions and related programs (71,000 degrees) and legal professions and studies (40,300 degrees).
- E. Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates: About 59 percent of students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2009 completed that degree within 6 years; the graduation rate was higher for females than for males (62 percent vs. 56 percent).
  - F. Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred : The number of postsecondary certificates and degrees conferred at each degree level increased between 2004–05 and 2014–15. The number of certificates below the associate's degree level conferred during this period increased by 35 percent. The number of degrees conferred increased by 46 percent at the associate's level, by 32 percent at the bachelor's level, by 31 percent at the master's level, and by 33 percent at the doctor's level.
- VII. Finance and Resources:**
- A. Price of Attending an Undergraduate Institution: In 2014–15, the average net price of attendance (total cost minus grant and scholarship aid) at 4-year institutions for first-time, full-time undergraduate students (in constant 2015–16 dollars) was \$25,400 at private nonprofit institutions, \$21,500 at private for-profit institutions, and \$13,200 at public institutions.
  - B. Loans for Undergraduate Students: In 2014–15, the average annual undergraduate student loan amount of \$7,000 was 10 percent lower than the 2009–10 average of \$7,700 (in constant 2015–16 dollars). For undergraduate students ages 18 to 24 in their 4th year of college or above, the average cumulative amount borrowed was \$26,600 in 2011–12 (in constant 2015–16 dollars).

#### REFERENCES:

1. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences. NCES fulfills a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; 2017 Condition of Education, a Congressionally-mandated annual report summarizing the latest data on education in the United States. This report is designed to help policymakers and the public monitor educational progress. This year's report includes 50 indicators on topics ranging from prekindergarten through postsecondary education, as well as labor force outcomes and international comparisons.
2. United States Department of Education (ED): ED's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational

excellence and ensuring equal access. ED was created in 1980 by combining offices from several federal agencies. ED's 4,400 employees and \$68 billion budget are dedicated to:

- Establishing policies on federal financial aid for education, and distributing as well as monitoring those funds.
- Collecting data on America's schools and disseminating research.
- Focusing national attention on key educational issues.
- Prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education

### **State of the Country- Drug Epidemic**

The drug epidemic is a national health and safety issue. It is something that has an effect on each and every one of us as we all either know someone or have been a victim to the disease of addiction. The disease of alcohol and drug addiction does not discriminate. It hits all walks of life. It can literally destroy a family in a small amount of time to over years of use.

This disease concept is something that everyone needs to be educated from the White House to the low poverty areas. More prevention and treatment programs need to be instituted to help prevent this plaguing disease. We must crack down on the "pill mills, the drug trafficking from other countries and pose stiffer penalties through the criminal justice system that will deter this destructive behavior. Legislation must be written and passed that will help aid those who are victims and punish the perpetrators.

Drug overdose deaths in 2016 most likely exceeded 59,000, the largest annual jump ever recorded in the United States, according to preliminary data compiled by The New York Times.

The death count is the latest consequence of an escalating public health crisis: opioid addiction, now made more deadly by an influx of illicitly manufactured fentanyl and similar drugs. Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50.

Although the data is preliminary, the Times's best estimate is that deaths rose 19 percent over the 52,404 recorded in 2015. And all evidence suggests the problem has continued to worsen in 2017.

Because drug deaths take a long time to certify, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will not be able to calculate final numbers until December. The Times

compiled estimates for 2016 from hundreds of state health departments and county coroners and medical examiners. Together they represent data from states and counties that accounted for 76 percent of overdose deaths in 2015. They are a first look at the extent of the drug overdose epidemic last year, a detailed accounting of a modern plague.

The initial data points to large increases in drug overdose deaths in states along the East Coast, particularly Maryland, Florida, Pennsylvania and Maine. In Ohio, which filed a lawsuit accusing five drug companies of abetting the opioid epidemic, we estimate overdose deaths increased by more than 25 percent in 2016.

In 2016, Summit County in Ohio had 312 drug deaths, according to Gary Guenther, the county medical examiner's chief investigator — a 46 percent increase from 2015 and more than triple the 99 cases that went through the medical examiner's office just two years before.

There were so many last year, Mr. Guenther said, that on three separate occasions the county had to request refrigerated trailers to store the bodies because they'd run out of space in the morgue. It's not unique to Akron. Coroners' offices throughout the state are being overwhelmed.

**Source: D.E.A. National Forensic Laboratory Information System**

Most of the time, it's sold on the street as heroin, or drug traffickers use it to make cheap counterfeit prescription opioids. Fentanyl's are showing up in cocaine as well, contributing to an increase in cocaine-related overdoses.

The most deadly of the fentanyl analogues is carfentanil, an elephant tranquilizer 5,000 times stronger than heroin. An amount smaller than a few grains of salt can be a lethal dose.

"July 5th, 2016 — that's the day carfentanil hit the streets of Akron," said Capt. Michael Shearer, the commander of the Narcotics Unit for the Akron Police Department.

On that day, 17 people overdosed and one person died in a span of nine hours. Over the next six months, the county medical examiner recorded 140 overdose deaths of people testing positive for carfentanil. Just three years earlier, there were fewer than a hundred drug overdose deaths of any kind for the entire year.

This exponential growth in overdose deaths in 2016 didn't extend to all parts of the country. In some states in the western half of the U.S., our data suggests deaths may have leveled off or even declined. According to Dr. Dan Ciccarone, a professor of family

and community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and an expert in heroin use in the United States, this geographic variation may reflect a historical divide in the nation's heroin market between the powdered heroin generally found east of the Mississippi River and the Mexican black tar heroin found to the west.

This divide may have kept deaths down in the West for now, but according to Dr. Ciccarone, there is little evidence of differences in the severity of opioid addiction or heroin use.

If drug traffickers begin to shift production and distribution in the West from black tar to powdered heroin in large quantities, fentanyl will most likely come along with it, and deaths will rise.

### **Drug overdose deaths in Philadelphia and San Francisco**

Drug overdose deaths since 1980 have surged in Philadelphia despite a shrinking population; most heroin there is powdered. They have remained relatively flat in San Francisco, where most heroin is black tar.

First responders are finding that, with fentanyl and carfentanil, the overdoses can be so severe that multiple doses of naloxone — the anti-overdose medication that often goes by the brand name Narcan — are needed to pull people out.

In Warren County in Ohio, Doyle Burke, the chief investigator at the county coroner's office, has been watching the number of drug deaths rise as the effectiveness of Narcan falls. "E.M.S. crews are hitting them with 12, 13, 14 hits of Narcan with no effect," said Mr. Burke, likening a shot of Narcan to "a squirt gun in a house fire."

Early data from 2017 suggests that drug overdose deaths will continue to rise this year. It's the only aspect of American health, said Dr. Tom Frieden, the former director of the C.D.C., that is getting significantly worse.

Over two million Americans are estimated to be dependent on opioids, and an additional 95 million used prescription painkillers in the past year — more than used tobacco. "This epidemic, it's got no face," said Chris Eisele, the president of the Warren County Fire Chiefs' Association and fire chief of Deerfield Township. The Narcotics Anonymous meetings here are populated by lawyers, accountants, young adults and teenagers who described comfortable middle-class upbringings.

### **About the data**

Our count of drug overdoses for 2016 is an estimate. A precise number of drug overdose deaths will not be available until December.

As the chief of the Mortality Statistics Branch of the National Center for Health Statistics at the C.D.C., Robert Anderson oversees the collection and codification of the nation's mortality data. He noted that toxicology results, which are necessary to assign a cause of death, can take three to six months or longer. "It's frustrating, because we really do want to track this stuff," he said, describing how timely data on cause of death would let public health workers allocate resources in the right places.

To come up with our count, we contacted state health departments in all 50 states, in addition to the District of Columbia, asking for their statistics on drug overdose deaths among residents.

In states that didn't have numbers available, we turned to county medical examiners and coroners' offices. In some cases, partial results were extrapolated through the end of the year to get estimates for 2016.

While noting the difficulty of making predictions, Mr. Anderson reviewed The Times's estimates and said they seemed reasonable. The overdose death rate reported by the N.C.H.S. provisional estimates for the first half of 2016 would imply a total of 59,779 overdose deaths, if the death rate remains flat through the second half of the year. Based on our reporting, we believe this rate increased.

While the process in each state varies slightly, death certificates are usually first filled out by a coroner, medical examiner or attending physician. These death certificates are then collected by state health departments and sent to the N.C.H.S., which assigns what's called an ICD-10 code to each death.

This code specifies the underlying cause of death, and it's what determines whether a death is classified as a drug overdose.

Sometimes, the cases are straightforward; other times, it's not so easy. The people in charge of coding each death — called nosologists — have to differentiate between deaths due to drug overdose and those due to the long-term effects of drug abuse, which get a different code. (There were 2,573 such deaths in 2015.)

When alcohol and drugs are both present, they must specify which of the two was the underlying cause. If it's alcohol, it's not a "drug overdose" under the commonly used definition. Ideally, every medical examiner, coroner and attending physician would fill out death certificates with perfect consistency, but there are often variations from jurisdiction to jurisdiction that can introduce inconsistencies to the data.

These inconsistencies are part of the reason there is a delay in drug death reporting, and among the reasons we can still only estimate the number of drug overdoses in 2016. Since we compiled our data from state health departments and county coroners and medical examiners directly, the deaths have not yet been assigned ICD-10 codes by the N.C.H.S. — that is, the official underlying cause of death has not yet been categorized. In addition, the mortality data in official statistics focuses on deaths among residents. But county coroners typically count up whichever deaths come through their office, regardless of residency.

When there were large discrepancies between the 2015 counts from the C.D.C. and the state or county, we used the percent change from 2015 to calculate our 2016 estimate.

We can say with confidence that drug deaths rose a great deal in 2016, but it is hard to say precisely how many died or in which places drug deaths rose most steeply.

**\*\*Because of the delay associated with toxicology reports and inconsistencies in the reported data, our exact estimate — 62,497 total drug overdose deaths — could vary from the true number by several thousand.\*\***

2016 ESTIMATE BASED ON DATA FROM 2015 deaths in the country.

Alaska

122

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Health Analytics

Alabama

736

Alabama Center for Health Statistics

Arkansas

392

Benton County coroner's office

Arizona

1,274

Arizona Department of Health Services; medical examiners covering Maricopa and Pima counties

California

4,659

Coroners and medical examiners covering Fresno, Kern, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara counties

Colorado

869

Colorado Center for Health and Environmental Data

Connecticut

800

Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Washington, D.C.

125

District of Columbia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Delaware

198

Delaware Department of Health

Florida

3,228

Medical examiners covering Brevard, Broward, Clay, Columbia, DeSoto, Duval, Escambia, Glades, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Nassau, Okaloosa, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Santa Rosa, Sarasota, Seminole, Volusia and Walton counties.

Georgia

1,302

Coroners and medical examiners covering Cobb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties

Hawaii

169

City and County of Honolulu Department of the Medical Examiner

Iowa

309

Iowa Department of Public Health

Idaho

218

Illinois

1,835

Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Health Data and Policy

Indiana

1,245

Indiana State Department of Health

Kansas

329

**Kentucky**

**1,273**

**Kentucky Death Certificate Database, Kentucky Office of Vital Statistics**

Louisiana

861

Louisiana Department of Health  
Massachusetts  
1,724  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
Maryland  
1,285  
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Maine  
269  
Expanded Maine Drug Death Report for 2016  
Michigan  
1,980  
Medical examiners covering Barry, Eaton, Ingham, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Livingston,  
Macomb, Montcalm, Oakland, Shiawassee and Wayne counties  
Minnesota  
581  
Coroners and medical examiners covering Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Scott counties  
Missouri  
1,066  
Coroners and medical examiners covering Jackson and St. Louis counties, and the city of  
St. Louis  
Mississippi  
351  
Pearl River County coroner's office  
Montana  
138  
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services  
North Carolina  
1,567  
North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner  
North Dakota  
61  
North Dakota State Forensic Examiner's Office  
Nebraska  
126  
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
New Hampshire  
422  
New Hampshire Drug Monitoring Initiative, New Hampshire Information & Analysis  
Center  
New Jersey



1,454

Medical examiners covering Camden, Gloucester and Salem counties

New Mexico

501

Nevada

619

Coroners covering Clark and Washoe counties.

New York

2,754

New York State Department of Health

Ohio

3,310

Coroners covering Brown, Butler, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Lake, Lawrence, Lorain, Mahoning, Montgomery, Richland, Ross, Scioto, Stark, Summit, Trumbull and Warren counties.

Oklahoma

725

Oklahoma Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Oregon

505

Pennsylvania

3,264

Overdose Free PA; coroners and medical examiners covering Allegheny, Bucks, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Luzerne, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia and York counties

Rhode Island

310

Rhode Island Department of Health

South Carolina

761

Coroners and medical examiners covering Charleston, Greenville, Horry and Spartanburg counties

South Dakota

65

South Dakota Department of Health

**Tennessee**

**1,457**

**Coroners and medical examiners covering Davidson, Hamilton and Shelby counties**

Texas

2,588

Center for Health Statistics, Texas Department of State Health Services

Utah

646

Violence & Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health

Virginia

1,039

Fatal Drug Overdose Quarterly Report, Office of the Virginia Chief Medical Examiner

Vermont

99

Vermont Department of Health

Washington

1,094

Washington Department of Health

Wisconsin

878

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

West Virginia

725

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

Wyoming

96

In closing let us be reference I Corinthians 13 as it speaks “ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>(b)</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” We must operate on all levels in a spirit of love.

It is time that we put our differences aside and come together and take a stand against the issues that are keeping God’s people oppressed and marginalized. We must stand in unity and on the word of God as we face and conquer the issues of political injustice, brutality, racism, sexism, culturalism, hatred and bigotry. We must live up to what we see scripted on our paper money “In God We Trust”. Stop talking and start walking in love. ....”For love covers a multitude of sins”.

Sources: New York Times