# Do not deliver: Postal Service must do its part in opioids war

By the Editorial Board / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Solving the opioid crisis will not be simple or quick. But the most straightforward and commonsense strategy so far has to be thwarting drug dealers from using the United States Postal Service to ship their poison.

So, why has that been so tough to do?

Experts believe that prescription reforms and other efforts have been helpful in getting a grip on the opioid epidemic. However, the fight against opioids has gotten more difficult because of fentanyl.

The synthetic opioid, 50 times more powerful than heroin, often finds its way to America’s streets from China via a surprising route — it is delivered unwittingly by USPS mail carriers.

This happens because unlike private package-carrier companies like FedEx and UPS, the postal service was not required until last year to track international packages from their source with data including names, addresses and package contents.

The database with that information helps Customs and Border Patrol agents intercept packages filled with deadly drugs. Because of this, international drug smugglers have made the USPS their carrier of choice, says Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio.

His Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act was signed into law last year. It requires the USPS to begin using the tracking technology that will help law enforcement stop packages full of synthetic drugs before they reach buyers in America.

Inexplicably, the USPS fought Mr. Portman’s bill. And now, Mr. Portman is warning that the service is dragging its feet implementing the tracking technology.

As of the end of last year, the STOP Act requires the postal service to provide tracking data on 70 percent of all packages mailed from foreign locations and on 100 percent of all packages mailed from China.

In January, however the USPS was only obtaining that tracking data on 76 percent of packages shipped from China and only 57 percent of packages from all foreign locations.

The Senate subcommittee on which Mr. Portman serves has demanded that the postal service begin giving it regular briefings on progress toward complying with the law, including details of the agency’s plan to implement the tracking technology.

The USPS should find new enthusiasm for the STOP Act’s requirements. If not, the Senate ought to consider an amendment to the law that includes stiff penalties for the officials who fail to do their part to stop the flow of fentanyl into the U.S.