

Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. "Multivitamins are a safe and effective tool for the promotion of health and prevention of chronic disease."

Multivitamins and Public Health: Exploring the Evidence, a two-day meeting held October 1-2, 2003, in Washington, D.C., brought together leading health and nutrition experts from government agencies, top research universities and health advocacy organizations to examine the state of the science supporting daily multivitamin use and help chart the course for future research. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition and was supported by a grant from Wyeth Consumer Healthcare.

The Lewin Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Quintiles Transnational, is a nationally recognized health care and human services consulting firm in Falls Church, Va. The firm specializes in helping public and private sector clients solve complex problems in healthcare and human services with policy analysis, research and consulting.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as we near the end of the 108th Congress, I must express my disappointment that this Congress has failed to pass sensible gun safety legislation. By ignoring these bills we are missing opportunities to increase the security of our families, communities, and particularly our police officers.

The greatest of these missed opportunities has been the failure to reauthorize the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban. On September 13, 2004 this legislation expired, allowing 19 previously banned assault weapons, as well as firearms that can accept detachable magazines and have more than one of several specific military features, such as a folding/telescoping stock, protruding pistol grip, bayonet mount, threaded muzzle or flash suppressor, barrel shroud or grenade launcher to be legally sold again. Common sense tells us that there is no reason for civilians to have easy access to guns with these features.

Earlier this year, I joined with the majority of my Senate colleagues in passing an amendment to reauthorize the assault weapons ban for another 10 years. However, the bill to which it was attached was later derailed. Despite the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, the ongoing threat of terrorism, bipartisan support in the Senate, and the pleas of Americans who have already lost loved ones to assault weapons tragedies, the ban was allowed to expire, as the President and the Republican congressional leadership were unwilling to act.

We also missed the opportunity to close the gun show loophole. Under current law, when an individual buys a handgun from a licensed dealer, there are Federal requirements for a background check to insure that the purchaser is not prohibited by law from purchasing or possessing a firearm. However, this is not the case for all

gun purchases. For example, when an individual wants to buy a handgun from another private citizen who is not a licensed gun dealer, there is no requirement that the seller ensure the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. This creates a loophole in the law, making it easy for criminals, terrorists, and other prohibited buyers to evade background checks and buy guns from private citizens. This loophole creates a gateway to the illegal market because criminals know they will not be subject to a background check when purchasing from another private citizen even at a gun show.

I cosponsored an amendment offered by Senators REED and MCCAIN which would have closed the gun show loophole because I believe it is a critical change needed to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals and other ineligible buyers. This amendment would have simply applied existing law governing background checks to individuals buying firearms at gun shows. Like the amendment to reauthorize the assault weapons ban, the bill to which the amendment was attached was later defeated, and despite the fact that a bipartisan majority of Senators voted in support of closing the gun show loophole, Republican leadership has refused to schedule another vote on the issue.

This Congress has also failed to consider several other pieces of sensible gun safety legislation which would make it more difficult for convicted criminals to gain access to firearms. One such bill, the Military Sniper Regulation Act, would change the way .50 caliber guns are regulated by placing them under the requirements of the National Firearms Act. This would subject these weapons to the same regimen of registration and background checks as those weapons regulated under the National Firearms Act. These powerful weapons can accurately hit targets a mile away and tighter regulation is needed to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands.

Another bill not considered in the 108th Congress, the National Instant Criminal Background Check Improvement Act, would have provided funding to fix the hole in the current NICS background check system caused by the failure of many states to computerize and update their criminal history records. This failure can result in delays for some who lawfully seek to purchase a gun as well as an inability to block gun sales to some unlawful purchasers. To fix this problem, States need adequate funding to input and update criminal history data. This bill would have authorized \$1 billion to help states do just that.

Unfortunately, the 108th Congress has retreated from the goal of creating a safer nation by keeping dangerous guns off of our streets. Instead of strengthening laws that would help prevent future gun crimes and terrorist attacks, Congress has allowed legislation like the assault weapons ban to

expire, giving potential criminals and terrorists easier access to powerful weapons. The 108th Congress's record on gun safety is not one of which to be proud. I will continue to work toward passing sensible gun safety legislation to help make our communities more safe. I hope that next year in the 109th Congress, the Republican congressional leadership and the President will begin to work with the bipartisan majority who want to enact sensible gun safety legislation.

WHERE TO NEXT?

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, in the next several weeks I will be visiting Europe to meet with government and business leaders in London, Paris, and Brussels. I believe the United States' relationship with the European Union and the states of Europe is of supreme importance. America's economic, security, political, and institutional links with Europe are stronger and deeper than with any other region of the world. Recently, the importance of this relationship was explained very well in an article written by the Honorable James Elles, who is a Member of the European Parliament.

I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Elles's article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ON EU/US RELATIONS: WHERE TO NEXT?

Once the race for the US Presidency is finally over, the new President and his advisors will move from reflecting on the results of a successful campaign and will look for the conduct of policy in the months ahead.

What are the immediate priorities with which to deal on both the domestic and foreign fronts? How, for example, should economic growth best be fostered? How are priorities to be handled in far away places such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine? What is to be the real objective of the four-year mandate by which he would like to be judged as being a truly successful President?

As these questions are being mulled over between now and the Inaugural address early next year, he might reflect that thinking is taking place across the other side of the Atlantic on many of the same issues. Although the incoming Commission President has not yet got the approval of the European Parliament for his new team, he will be also considering how to answer a similar set of questions.

How similar are the policy challenges for the incoming EU and US administrations? Is it correct that Europe is swamped, as many would have us believe, by a huge anti-American wave generated by hostility to the Iraq War? Or is there an extensive common agenda which could be drawn up in the next few weeks and serve as a basis for joint action over the period 2005-2008?

Certainly, there is no shortage of potential flash points in external policy which the pessimists can draw attention to and which are already on the transatlantic agenda. The war against terrorism will certainly be at the top of the US agenda, in its continued search for ensuring domestic security.

In this context, the run-up to elections in IRAQ will require steel nerves. So will their aftermath, in particular, determining what

role European Governments will wish to play in a military and financial capacity. Hot on the heels of this dilemma will be the question of IRAN. How will the new US administration wish to address this issue? Will it be happy to let the Europeans take the lead or will it wish to take a more active approach as some suggest should be done?

Linked to both these questions is the overall pursuit of peace in the MIDDLE EAST. What has become of the initiative to bring European and American involvement together to make progress in the Broader Middle East? Should for example the roadmap be resuscitated?

Last but not least is the question of ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE to both Afghanistan and Africa (a potential priority for the G8 next year). How should this best be coordinated by the two major global donors—the EU and the US—who contribute about 80% of the world's assistance programmes?

This is all enough to cause indigestion. Certainly more questions are posed than answers are available. Even if cooperation is seen to be highly desirable, with the aim of moving from a transatlantic community of values to a community of action, how can it be done?

The best chance available to the incoming administrations is, as they say, not to start from here. These problems have been around for many months and will be around for many more.

A recently released document published by the Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN) lays the groundwork for a potentially successful approach to deepening joint cooperation between the EU and the US.

At the outset, it recommends a strategy which articulates a common purpose, building on strengths and reinforcing linkages while accommodating differences. This is based on the recognition of growing linkage between the partners' economic, defence and security, and political interests.

In short, should strengthened partnership be a shared goal, if so a bold new agenda for economic collaboration needs to be linked with a commitment to enhanced joint action on the highest shared political priorities.

What does this mean? Avoid well known areas of dispute such as a free trade area (FTA) and focus instead on what already exists to a large degree—the transatlantic market. The TPN document recommends deepening and broadening the transatlantic market, with a view to its completion by 2015.

An accelerated 2010 target date should be set for financial services and capital markets; civil aviation; the digital economy; competition policy and regulatory cooperation.

Furthermore, there should also be provision for a broad security partnership between the EU and the US, together with a mutually reinforcing interface between the EU and NATO.

Last, but not least, there should be put in place, by 2007, an enhanced basis for cooperation between the two partners—a transatlantic partnership agreement—building on the 1995 New Transatlantic Agenda and reflecting the strategy proposed.

Is this approach realistic and practical? Maybe surprisingly, the broad outlines of this approach have already been approved by the European Parliament in May 2004.

The economic option has the great advantage that most of the elements are already in place: the administrations are jointly consulting stakeholders as to how to remove the remaining barriers to trade and investment. Given the more than quadrupling of cross investment over the past 10 years, the process of interdependence between the EU and the US is not likely to slacken.

The vital ingredient for the success of this proposal is the factor of political will. Will

transatlantic leaders take a fresh look at how to bring the EU and the US together before getting sucked into the daily grind of politics?

Perhaps the best advice for the incoming Commission President would be to pay a short informal visit in early January to Washington. This should be not just to compare notes but also to put forward a joint plan which will allow Europeans and Americans to work as closely as possible in the interests of their peoples in the years ahead.

H.R. 5365

Mr. GRAHAM of Florida. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5365, a bill that will ensure the continuation of YMCA pension plan that has provided participants retirement security for more than 80 years. The Senate passed a bill, S. 2589, that Senator BUNNING and I worked to move earlier this year. The House of Representatives has now sent over a bill introduced by Representatives ENGLISH and POMEROY that closely follows the intent of the Senate bill. I am pleased that this effort has been a bipartisan one in both bodies of Congress. I hope this legislation will be enacted promptly.

I also thank Finance Committee Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member BAUCUS for their assistance in bringing this bill to the floor today. The YMCA pension plan is an excellent example of how retirement security can be provided through employer-sponsored plans.

This is a bill about protecting the retirement security for thousands of YMCA employees and retirees. There are 27 YMCA's in Florida, over 977,843 members and over 4,400 plan participants and retirees. The retirement security provided by the YMCA pension plan is critical to these people and their families, as well as over 80,000 plan participants across the country.

This country could learn much from the retirement security provided by the YMCA pension plan. As I have stated, the YMCA pension plan is a very significant part of each YMCA employee's compensation package, most of who are modestly paid. The YMCA pension plan exemplifies how our Nation should think about providing solid, substantial retirement security.

I also want to extend my thanks to the Treasury Department and IRS, for their patience while the Congress worked through finding a solution to ensure the YMCA pension plan could continue to offer the benefits to its participants and retirees.

In closing, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Senate to support this bill, and I am pleased that we are moving forward with this legislation today and look forward to its enactment soon.

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, much of the Senate's attention this week was

consumed with completing lingering business, be it, appropriations bills or debt extension. In contrast, I rise today to ask my colleagues to cast their eyes forward to a new matter that we must focus on when Congress reconvenes in January—the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. As most know, I consider the Violence Against Women Act the single most important legislation I've championed during my 30-year tenure in the Senate. I care deeply about this law, and take seriously my responsibility to ensure it is funded and renewed.

After more than 5 years of hearings, and legislative drafts and redrafts, in September 1994, the Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law the Violence Against Women Act. The Violence Against Women Act created new Federal criminal laws addressing domestic violence and rape, and established discretionary grant programs within the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services for State, local, and Indian tribal governments and non-profit service organizations. The Violence Against Women Act of 2000 renewed these programs, made targeted improvements to certain provisions and introduced new initiatives.

Since the bill was enacted, we've witnessed an incredible transformation in State and Federal criminal and civil law enforcement, communities' victim services, and societal attitudes towards domestic violence and sexual assault. In 2004 alone, Congress spent \$520 million for Violence Against Women programs. Over the past decade, nearly \$3.8 billion has been appropriated to make women's homes and communities safer.

We've made extraordinary progress in ending violence against women and its devastating impact on families. With the passage of the Violence Against Women Act we started talking about that dirty little secret that no one wanted to say out loud. A rape victim or battered wife can now turn to a trained police officer, an emergency room nurse, or a 1-800 Hotline operator. We transformed private "family matters" into public crimes with true accountability and meaningful victim services.

The Violence Against Women Act is working. Since its enactment, domestic violence has dropped by almost 50 percent. Incidents of rape are down by 60 percent. The number of women killed by an abusive husband or boyfriend is down by 22 percent. More than half of all rape victims are stepping forward to report the crime. Over a million women have found justice in our courtrooms and obtained domestic violence protective orders. The signs of success abound.

But progress is not enough. Sadly, domestic violence and sexual assault persist. As more and more brave women are stepping forward to report a rape or seek a restraining order against an abusive husband, more demands are