

Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of H.R. 4152, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 689; that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week I had the privilege of chairing a field hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee in Rutland, VT. The committee received powerful testimony about community solutions to breaking the cycle of addiction to heroin and other opioids. The hearing marked the fourth time in the past 6 years that the Judiciary Committee traveled to Vermont to explore issues related to drug abuse. As in many States, opioid addiction has ripped through parts of Vermont. Overdoses have reached record levels, while communities have struggled to keep pace with the demand for treatment. Sadly, this story is not unique. We are confronting a localized problem with regional echoes and national implications. Some of what we face is similar to the addiction outbreaks in large cities, and other aspects are particular to rural areas.

What struck me in Rutland last week is how Vermonters have worked together—and are continuing to work together—to get ahead of this problem, with innovative prevention, treatment, and law enforcement strategies.

The city of Rutland has an important story to tell. Its addiction crisis has received national attention. But I brought the Judiciary Committee to Rutland not to explore the horrors the city once faced; rather, I wanted us to

learn how the people of Rutland are reclaiming their community, block by block. One effort that has shown great promise is Project VISION—Viable Initiatives and Solutions through Involvement of Neighborhoods—developed by city and community leaders to address the many issues related to opioid abuse: addiction and treatment, prevention, quality of life, and crime and safety issues.

The chief of the Rutland Police Department, James Baker, testified at the hearing. Chief Baker explained that the police department for the first time is housing social workers, a domestic violence advocate, a mental health specialist, an early intervention coordinator, an assistant attorney general, a school resource officer, a crime analyst, and a building inspector. All are working in concert toward one goal: “Not on our streets; not in our town.” When Chief Baker asked how many in the audience were connected with Project VISION, over half of the standing-room-only audience raised their hands. Project VISION has proven adept at pursuing emerging, community-driven strategies. Just this week, community leaders and police in Rutland are considering implementing drug market intervention. This is a promising tactic designed to clear neighborhoods of nonviolent street-level dealers by bringing them in front of community leaders and giving them a stark choice: Stop selling today or go to jail tomorrow. Rutland has clearly risen to the challenge of combatting heroin and opioid abuse.

Other witnesses at the hearing described communities in action, working together to find inventive and tailored solutions. The U.S. attorney for Vermont, Tristram Coffin, who has had remarkable success leading enforcement efforts in the State, described how he has taken the message of prevention to Vermont schools, partnering with the father of a young man who tragically died of a heroin overdose. Dr. Harry Chen, the Vermont Department of Health commissioner and a career emergency room physician, described what it means to recognize addiction as a public health issue, expanding access to prevention and treatment services to all corners of the state. Mary Alice McKenzie, director of the Boys & Girls Club in Burlington, made clear how important it is to provide young people early and safe alternatives to drug use. The director of the Vermont State Police, Colonel Tom L'Esperance, described how State police will soon carry naloxone, a drug that immediately reverses the effects of a heroin overdose. Addicts in Vermont now know that police are not just there to arrest but to save lives.

It is important that the Judiciary Committee hear about a range of experiences, as opioid addiction has plagued communities large and small, rural and urban. This is why I encouraged all Vermonters to submit testimony on strategies to curb addiction, which will

be incorporated into the permanent record of the U.S. Senate. The response was remarkable. We received testimony from law enforcement officers, first responders, substance abuse counselors, doctors, public health officials, mental health practitioners, professors, school counselors and teachers, concerned parents, Governor Peter Shumlin—who is sharply focusing his administration on these problems—and many, many others.

Taken together, the testimony submitted to the committee offers a blueprint for communities ready to get ahead of addiction. It is clear that success requires community investment. Only after a community identifies addiction as a problem can it commit to defeating it. This is where Vermont is ahead of the curve. We tend to come from close-knit communities in Vermont. When we hear about victims of overdoses, and concerns about a growing problem, nearly all Vermonters can name someone who is affected. I suspect that is why we have had a number of excellent initiatives already enacted—it did not take long for heroin and opioid abuse to affect all Vermonters. And it did not take long for Vermont to take steps to resolve the problem. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rutland.

It is equally clear from the submitted testimony that success requires close collaboration among prevention, treatment, and law enforcement efforts. From my years as a Vermont prosecutor, I recall how important such collaboration is, but never have I seen a law enforcement community as committed to prevention and treatment efforts as I do now. We know we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. If the underlying cause of criminal behavior is an addiction, treatment is often a more humane and cost-effective alternative to arrests and prison.

As we continue to review testimony submitted to the committee, I look forward to working with other members of the Judiciary and Appropriations Committees to ensure that these community-driven responses receive the support necessary to succeed. I will continue to work to fund youth mentoring and prevention organizations on the front lines, like the Boys & Girls Clubs, and I will continue to work to fully fund Byrne-JAG and COPS grants to enable law enforcement agencies to devote the necessary time and resources to develop durable solutions with community partners. We also need to continue to support drug court and diversion models to substitute treatment for prison when appropriate. Many programs funded through the Second Chance Act provide offenders a real opportunity to succeed once released from prison by ensuring they have the resources to become productive members of their community.

I also look forward to discussing effective law enforcement strategies and partnerships with Michele Leonhart,

Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency, when she comes before the Judiciary Committee next month.

We all understand that the ability of the Federal Government to provide any assistance is increasingly challenged in light of our burgeoning prison population, which is largely driven by inflexible and unfair drug mandatory minimums. Federal prison and detention costs have risen to account for nearly one-third of the budget for the Department of Justice. This unsustainable growth in our prison costs siphons resources from other crucial law enforcement priorities every year. It is vital that Congress pass our bipartisan Smarter Sentencing Act, which would make modest reductions to mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses and help preserve funding for assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies and to victim services.

Addiction to heroin and other opioids is a community problem, demanding community solutions. I can report that Vermonters have stepped up to this challenge. Obstacles remain, but Vermont communities have rallied to develop lasting solutions and get ahead of addiction. After seeing this commitment firsthand, I left Rutland hopeful. And very proud.

DEVELOPING EUROPE'S ENERGY SUPPLIES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to call for new aid to Eastern Europe to strengthen our allies in the face of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that we can do this by immediately increasing our export of domestically produced and processed liquefied natural gas. I have been cautiously optimistic on the domestic production of this energy source, relying heavily on the need for the environmental regulation of such activities. But in the case of Eastern Europe there is little that we can do domestically to quickly help their situation.

For more than a century, America's real power has been exporting the keys to economic growth and security. Therefore, it is time to do something real to bolster Europe's energy security by helping them develop Eastern Europe's substantial natural gas reserves and reduce the leverage Russia has over its energy dependent neighbors.

The most powerful tool the United States can give Eastern Europe is not exported natural gas that will not get to Europe for years, if ever. It is empowering our European allies to develop their own energy resources, like the major shale gas deposits in Poland.

It is clear that energy—and natural gas in particular—is at the very heart of Russia's influence over that part of the world. Europe is dependent on Russia for nearly one-third of its natural gas. And while countries in Western Europe have had some success in diver-

sifying their energy supplies, as former State Department Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs David Goldwyn testified yesterday, Eastern Europe is still heavily dependent upon Russia for energy.

Russia is not above using that dependence as a hammer and has been eager to remind us of that fact. For instance, Moscow shut off the gas lines in 2006 and again in the winter of 2009, leaving millions temporarily without heat. In 2013, when the country of Moldova sought to pursue stronger ties with Europe, Russia's deputy prime minister issued a barely veiled threat to the Moldovans, saying "we hope you will not freeze."

As I noted, some have suggested the answer to this problem is to automatically approve natural gas exports from the United States.

This position simply ignores the facts about how the gas market actually works.

U.S. LNG facilities are not slated to come online until the end of next year, at the earliest, while any new approvals would not provide any natural gas exports for at least several years. Further, unless Congress directed exports to go to Ukraine, the gas would go to the country paying the highest price, which would likely be in Asia.

I support the Energy Department's current, measured process for considering export requests. The Energy Department has already approved more than 9 billion cubic feet per day of exports, which exceeds what most analysts believe is the current international market for U.S. natural gas. It is helping our European allies bolster their energy security by developing the major shale gas deposits in Poland and elsewhere.

United States entrepreneurs triggered the shale revolution with a combination of innovation and technical know-how. This created tens of thousands of jobs and produced stable energy supplies that are 50 percent cleaner than traditional fossil fuels. It helped us with our energy security and it can do the same for Europe.

That is exactly what we should be doing to help NATO allies that are justifiably worried following Russia's illegal actions in Ukraine.

So what I am proposing today is to increase funding for a State Department program that helps spur natural gas development abroad. My common-sense amendment would direct \$10 million within the Economic Support Fund toward the Unconventional Gas Technical Engagement Program to help Eastern European countries develop the regulations and technical expertise they need to access their own gas.

Let me be clear—this assistance would go to countries, like Poland, that have asked for American help to harness their own gas reserves. I am aware that Europe is having its own debate about shale gas, and this amendment would not force any nation

to participate. In doing so, it will help our European allies throw off the yoke of dependence on Russian gas.

I want to be clear that this amendment cannot free Eastern Europe from Russian influence. Russia has other ways of bullying its neighbors economically. Moscow temporarily banned imports from Ukraine, for example, and it also banned imports of Moldovan wine—a very significant part of Moldova's economy.

This is clearly only one step of many needed to send a message to President Putin. But as the former chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee I know that a stable energy supply is the lifeblood of any economy and a very important component to a secure nation.

I believe there is bipartisan support for America to give our allies the tools they need to become more secure and less dependent on the whims of Mr. Putin.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. MURRAY W. WEST

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Baltimore physician Murray W. West, a valued member of Maryland's medical community. At the end of this month, Dr. West, a family physician, will retire from clinical practice after more than 30 years.

Born in Washington, DC, on September 11, 1954, Murray West moved to Philadelphia at age 10. From 1975 to 1976, he attended Queen Mary College in London, and he was awarded a bachelor of science degree from Antioch College in 1977.

A 1981 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Dr. West completed his residency in family practice at the Georgetown University Department of Family Medicine here in Washington, DC. After 3 years with the Indian Health Service in Yuma, AZ, Dr. West moved to Maryland, where he earned a master of public health degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in 1993. Since 1986, he has treated patients exclusively at nonprofit health centers in our State—Arundel Village, Washington Village, Peoples Community, and the Belair-Edison Family Health Center, where he served as medical director from 2001 until 2007.

On Thursday, March 28, family members, colleagues, and friends will gather to celebrate this committed practitioner whose career epitomizes dedication to public health and quality care. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. West all the best in his retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT SAMUEL L. JOHNSON

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and pay tribute to