

they should call small businesses and say: How will this work at your place, or will it work at all?

Fourth, let's deal with old rules. There are lots of regulations out there that are old, that become very complicated for small businesses to be able to maintain, and no one has ever gone back to look at them. Let's create a simple system so that when a rule comes out, it has to be reviewed within 10 years. That way, we have no rule that is 40, 50 years old, and no one has even touched it or looked at it to make sure that it still works, No. 1, and that it is not overcomplicating the process.

Finally, and here is something pretty straightforward, give first-time forgiveness for paperwork violations. When small businesses have a paperwork violation, they have a paperwork violation. They are not trying to break the law. They are not trying to violate regulations. They missed one. Why don't we give first-time grace to small businesses? Now, I wouldn't say that if they are violating health and safety issues. Obviously those are things they should have already taken care of. But just paperwork things—we have so many small businesses that get a fine because they missed a piece of paperwork. Again, so many small businesses don't have compliance people tracking this stuff for them all the time, and occasionally they make a mistake. This is still a government that works for them. They don't work for the government.

My simple recommendation is this: For small businesses, give them first-time paperwork forgiveness rather than a Federal compliance person showing up at their place with a fine. Let's be reasonable about this. That should be a simple, straightforward thing.

Quite frankly, these are all things small business owners have asked for. These were things even in the Obama administration. The chief counsel for the Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy—this is what the Obama administration's small business advocate wanted. I don't understand how this could be a partisan issue. It is simple, straightforward, and clean. There is no hidden anything in the bill. It is trying to actually get regulatory relief and common sense back into the way we do regulations.

Over 200 trade associations representing millions of small businesses have already written me in support of this bill from all over the country—not from Oklahoma, from all over the country.

Many in this Chamber pride themselves on being the advocate for the little guy and standing up for small businesses. I would ask my colleagues if they are ready to actually put feet to those words. This is a straightforward way to do it. We talk about helping small businesses; let's actually do it. I ask my colleagues to be able to walk alongside of us and help us get this bill passed and get some regulatory relief.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise to speak with a lot of my colleagues coming down speaking on the opiate crisis we have in all of our States.

West Virginia has been hit the hardest in the Nation right now, and I want to speak to this because it is something we must address. This has been a silent killer for far too long.

I don't know a person who I have ever met who doesn't know somebody in their immediate family, extended family, or close friends who has not been affected by either prescription drug abuse or illicit drug use. With that, here we are.

I rise with my colleagues who have been coming down—they will be coming the rest of the day—to bring attention to this national crisis that is devastating every community. Many of the Senators you are going to hear from—and have already heard from—are from States that are dealing with an increase in this opiate abuse, just like my State of West Virginia. Just like I have, they have heard from families, community leaders who are on the front lines. They are begging for solutions, funding, and they need facilities to properly combat the scourge we have right now.

Let me say to everybody who is watching, everybody who is listening in any way, shape, or form that you are hearing this: 20 years, 30 years ago, I was as guilty as everybody in the public policy arena in government, in my State government in West Virginia. If you fooled with drugs back then, we thought, well, we will put you in prison; you committed a crime. Well, guess what. We have been putting them away for 20, 30 years, and we never cured a single soul.

Finally, we have come to the realization that addiction is an illness. Any other illness gets treatment. So we need treatment, but we don't have treatment centers. Budgets are tight.

I have a cousin who is a judge. Every day he says: JOE, I sentence people for the crimes they commit every day. He says: I have never had the first person say: Hey, Judge, we don't have a prison cell or a jail cell to put this person in. But if it happens once a day, it will happen 5 or 10 times a day, if I believe someone needs to get treatment because of their addiction, they will say: Well, Judge, I am sorry. We have no place to put them. We have no treatment centers. We will find a jail cell for you, but we will not find a treatment center because we don't have them.

The States don't have the money. Counties don't have the money. Municipalities don't have the money. The Federal Government has never dedicated enough money for this. So we keep talking about everything that happens.

Last year, over 800 West Virginians died of prescription drug abuse. They died of abuse from prescription drugs, and everyone says: Well, how do people get started? I don't know. Most of them have done heavy work in West Virginia. We do mining and manufacturing. That is heavy work, and sometimes they get hurt.

I am going to read a letter later—I do every week try to come down to put real families, real faces, for you all to understand that this is a real issue.

When I have said this is a silent killer, we never talk about it. If you have somebody addicted in your family, you are kind of ashamed of it. You don't want anybody to know because they think that something is wrong with your family if someone has an addiction. They try to take care of themselves and they can't and that person doesn't get the help they need.

So when you look back at the use and the lack of a treatment, let me just tell you about the epidemic we are dealing with. Any other epidemic of this sort—and knowing it is an illness, it can be called a pandemic. Remember the Ebola concerns we had. All of the different things we were concerned about that could turn into a pandemic, we acted immediately. Well, we haven't acted immediately on this. We have had over 200,000 West Virginians die since the turn of the century. That is unbelievable, and to not do anything about it and keep our mouths shut, we have done that for far too long.

Today, 2.1 million Americans abuse or depend on their opiates. According to the CDC, Centers for Disease Control, three out of four new heroin users abuse prescription opiates before moving to heroin. I am told they move to heroin because it is cheaper, but they have already been hooked and addicted. Most of them got hooked and addicted on legal prescription drugs. That means there was some doctor who said: Here is something that is really going to help you, and they write that prescription. They think everything in a bottle is going to heal you.

In the United States of America, less than 5 percent of the world population—7.2 billion people live on planet Earth, less than 330 million in this country—4.6 percent of the world population consumes 80 percent of all the opiates produced and consumed in the world. What in the world happened to us? How did we become so pain-intolerant? How did we become so addicted?

Between 2009 and 2013, only 22 percent of Americans suffering from opiate addiction participated in any form of addiction treatment, and more and more people go without treatment every day.

Misuse and abuse of opiates cost the country an estimated \$78.5 billion in 2013 just in lost productivity. So for those people who don't have compassion, don't think we should be doing these things, and you only look at the bottom line, if you are going to the bottom line, look at this bottom line: \$78 billion of lost productivity, medical costs, and criminal costs.

Talk to any of your law enforcement in any community you live in and ask them: Of all the calls you have gone on, how many have you gone on that are drug-related? A minimum of 80 to 90 percent of everything that they are called in, any type of assistance, any type of a crime that is committed, it is because of drugs. Some form of drugs are involved for our police. So think about what they are doing and how it takes them away from protecting the law-abiding citizens.

I have a bill called—and we will talk about treatment—it is LifeBOAT. I am still waiting for some of my friends and fellow colleagues on the Republican side to look at this bill very seriously. All I am asking for is one penny to charge the pharmaceutical manufacturers—one penny per milligram—that will go toward treatment centers throughout America, and every State needs them.

That one penny, they said: That is a new tax. We can't vote for a new tax. I said: Wait a minute. This opiate arena is pretty profitable, and we are not going to charge people whom opiates were designed for, which are people with severe illnesses, cancer patients. Basically, this is just for opiates, no other pharmaceutical products, just opiates. That is \$1.5 to \$2 billion a year. Can you believe that? That one penny.

Now, when they tell me, I am not going to vote for any new tax. I say: Well, you didn't hesitate to vote for a tobacco tax. You didn't hesitate to vote for an alcohol tax.

We have more people dying of this than anything else, and I am asking for a treatment plan. I can't get one penny, not one penny.

So I am asking for everyone to consider it. I truly believe no one would lose their election over voting to fund treatment centers for people who are desperately in need. That is the LifeBOAT Act.

I want to read you a letter, and I do this every week. It is just heart-breaking, these letters, but it shows real people's lives, and it shows what it has done to their lives.

This letter is from Shadd Baisden. He writes:

My name is Shadd Baisden, and I am from Dingess, WV. I am writing to tell you my story of opioid addiction. I am an out-of-work coal miner with 9 years' experience. I was injured in the mine in 2011. I was dragged down a belt line 200 feet and messed the disks in my back, the L5, S1 in my back. This was how my addiction got started.

I was prescribed painkillers and needed surgery but felt I was too young for that. I was out of work for a year when I decided to settle my compensation claim so I could return back to work. While I was injured, the mine I worked in shut down so I had no job to go back to. I had been on painkillers the whole time I was out of work, but I stopped being prescribed after my settlement.

So when he made his settlement, basically that went away, his healthcare

on that. So he had no other way of getting prescribed medicine.

He continues:

I was buying them off the street just to ease my pain. In 2013, I started using oxycodone and could not stop. I even got my wife hooked on them.

I have three daughters—11, 10, and 3 years of age. My youngest wasn't born at the time. Our addiction became so bad that we would steal things from our family just to get the drugs. I lost my license to drive. I lost my two oldest daughters because of my addiction. That is when I knew I had to have serious help.

I sought counseling and treatment. I took parenting classes, and my wife and I worked our tails off to get our girls back. We have now been clean and sober for 3 years and have custody back of all three of our girls.

I am currently out of work but do lots of odd jobs in my area because I can't afford to get my license back, and the vehicle I own was vandalized 3 months ago because I gave an officer info on a dealer not far from my home, and somehow the dealer found out and beat the windows out of my car while I was working.

I thank God every day for helping me and my wife stay clean.

I thank you for everything you do for the people of West Virginia and hope my story helps someone. I may be out of work right now, but good things will come as long as we stay clean and positive.

Now, the conclusion of this is Shadd and his wife are perfect examples of the people we can help if we made it easier for people dealing with substance abuse to get treatment. Shadd and his wife are the people I am fighting for every day. I will continue to fight for the people and families and children who have lost their way and need our help, and I am not going to stop fighting until they get it.

Every one of you all probably have a story. Every one of our young people—our pages and everybody else, everyone in the audience, whoever it may be, younger people—have probably been approached to try something, have probably been approached in their own schools to try something: Well, this is no problem. It is the hip thing to do in school.

They have recreational marijuana. A lot of people tell me they get started by experimenting, and then it moves into different things.

I don't know what it is. We don't know what our body chemistry is made up of. We don't know why some people are addicted and some people don't get addicted, but we know opiates are extremely addictive. We know that. It affects you. The only thing I can tell you is, it is something we are going to continue to fight. We are going to make people aware. We are starting education classes.

The United States of America should start educating in every class from preschool, kindergarten—you are not too

young to know what this can do to you—all the way up through adulthood. We have to prevent people from getting on these horrific drugs that are killing people. Then we have to treat the people who are addicted and get them back into the workforce.

I ask all of you—and the concern we have, and I know in your beautiful State you have the same challenges we do. We all do. We are willing to fight together. This is a bipartisan effort. This is not one side and the other side taking credit or one side blaming the other side. This is one that we have to rise up as Americans—forget about Democrats and Republicans—and fight this. The U.S. Congress is responsible for fighting it and helping the people all over our country.

I yield the floor to my good friend from West Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from West Virginia who is fighting hard on a lot of different fronts to meet the challenge of this opioid and drug abuse epidemic that is sweeping across the country, and it is really hitting us in the rural areas in West Virginia. I always say our State is just one big small town, and both Senator MANCHIN and I have personal experience with families who have been deeply affected by this. It is destroying families, lives, and futures.

Chances are we all know someone, as I said, who has been affected, but we have been especially hard-hit in the State of West Virginia, and we have seen more than our fair share of devastating consequences: babies born exposed to drugs, families torn apart, children ripped from their parents because of their parents' habits and lifestyle, grandparents raising children when they had no real intention or didn't know that is what was going to happen.

We have the unfortunate distinction as a State of leading the Nation in drug overdose deaths per capita. Ninety-one Americans die each day because of this crisis, and far too many of them are our neighbors, our coworkers, our friends, and our children. No community is immune. That is why this all-hands-on-deck, community-oriented, coordinated, community-focused effort must move forward.

Fortunately, many individuals and organizations—and I get to meet with them regularly. It is inspiring to hear how people in the community are pulling together. They are already working hard educating—as Senator MANCHIN said, you can't start too early educating—treating, and rehabilitating people who are struggling with abuse within their families, helping them and those who are at risk of becoming addicted. From healthcare to law enforcement, we are working to tackle this crisis from all angles.

Drug courts play an important role in that fight. In order to get at the root

of the problem, we must have more recovery and treatment services, and incarceration is not always the right answer. Sometimes treatment, not the criminal justice system, is the answer.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting an incredible young woman—inspirational, really—who knows all of this very well. Her name is Chelsea Carter, and she is from Logan, WV. When she met me yesterday, she said: We met. We met 10 years ago.

I said: Really? Where did we meet?

She said: I did your nails at Spa Bliss.

I said: Oh, well, thank you for that.

But along that journey, Chelsea has had a rough, rough go. At one point, Chelsea was charged with 17 felonies due to her drug habit. She told me her drug habit began when she was 12 years old. She said she was able to continue life through high school. It appeared as though she had a normal life. She was a cheerleader, participated in school, and all the time she was getting deeper and crawling deeper into a drug-addicted hole.

After she faced the criminal justice system, she became committed to getting off drugs and getting clean the very first night she spent in jail, and she has been clean ever since. She went through the drug court system, and, basically, it has saved her life. But that is not the end of the story for Chelsea. She has a bright future ahead of her, and she has moved forward.

She was in town for the annual conference of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. She has committed her life to helping people like her who have had this situation and who have been at the bottom of the pit of hopelessness, bad health, and bad decisionmaking. She is committed to helping her fellow West Virginians crawl out of that pit, like she did, and become productive individuals. This is the world's largest conference on treatment courts and criminal justice reform.

Back home in Logan, Chelsea is the program director at Appalachian Health Services. She just got her master's degree. One of the things that struck me is that, even in a management position, she continues to counsel and treat a full load of patients, and she told me she will always do so.

Chelsea's story is an example of the progress that can be made by fully committing to fighting the drug epidemic. There are victories and programs that work. Drug court is not the only one, but it is one in the spectrum of solutions.

I am committed to the fight and to working with all of our colleagues who are speaking out today. I know many of us are committed to this. It doesn't leave a family or community untouched. I am really inspired by West Virginians like Chelsea Carter who are on the frontlines.

With that, I yield for my colleague from Nevada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Thank you, Mr. President, and I thank my friend from West Virginia.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

While I have an opportunity to take the floor, I want to change the subject, if I may. I want to talk about the concern I have of one of the President's priorities in the 2018 fiscal year budget. That priority is Yucca Mountain.

Specifically, the President included \$120 million in his budget for the Department of Energy to restart licensing activities for the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository.

As a proponent and author of the legislation called No Budget, No Pay Act, which would restore regular order to the budget and appropriations process, I am pleased to see the President did submit to Congress a detailed budget proposal.

As a small government, fiscal conservative, I hoped that this new administration would focus on budget priorities that would reduce duplicative spending and streamline programs in order to save taxpayer dollars. You can imagine my disappointment that they, instead, decided to prioritize funding to restart licensing activities for a failed proposal.

Over the past few weeks, I have outlined on the Senate floor some of the issues with Yucca Mountain, whether it is the crippling effect it would have on Nevada's economy or the public safety issues associated with transportation of this nuclear waste. I will continue to come to the floor to educate my colleagues on the many issues associated with Yucca Mountain, because, plain and simple, it is not a viable option for the long-term storage of our Nation's nuclear waste. Instead of throwing more taxpayer dollars into a failed proposal, we should be working on a real long-term solution rooted in consent-based siting.

You have heard me raise the question that many Nevadans be thinking: Why should a State with no nuclear powerplants of its own be forced, against its will, to house all of the Nation's nuclear waste?

I stand by the Department of Energy's 2010 decision to terminate the Yucca Mountain program, and I stand by its 2015 recommendation for a consent-based siting.

Yucca Mountain is dead. Let me take you through what it would take to put this failed program back on life support. Prior to the suspension of the program in 2010, the Federal Government had spent close to \$15 billion on Yucca Mountain.

Now, I recognize that some of my colleagues might say: Well, the government has already spent this much on the government repository; shouldn't we complete it?

First of all, let me say that restarting the program would need \$2 billion more just to complete the licensing process—\$1.66 billion for the Department of Energy and \$330 million for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

After 3 to 5 years spent on licensing, there could well be another 5 years in legal challenges, and there is no certainty that Yucca Mountain would ever be built.

Second, even if Yucca Mountain were to go forward, it would be an expensive repository project. The Department of Energy's best estimate is that another \$82 billion—let me repeat that; another \$82 billion—would be needed to license, litigate, build, operate, decommission, and eventually close Yucca Mountain. On top of the money that has already been spent, that adds up to more than \$96 billion for what is called the total system life cycle cost.

That leads to my third point. We need to reevaluate the whole nuclear waste cost question. There is a business case to be made against Yucca Mountain. The Department of Energy's own estimates for Yucca Mountain say that the nuclear waste fund will only pay about 80 percent of the total life cycle costs, or about \$77 billion. The remaining \$19 billion would have to come from an annual appropriations voted by this Congress. That means more money for this project paid by taxpayers.

But it does not have to be that way. In 2012, the Department of Energy did its own cost assessment and concluded that all other costs, like transportation, being equal, walking away from Yucca Mountain and starting with a new repository site in a deep salt bed or deep shale formation would actually save between \$12 billion and \$27 billion over the life of the repository.

Before we spend any more taxpayer dollars on Yucca Mountain, we need to ask the Department of Energy experts to come before us and explain what they learned about repository costs in their previous studies. Beyond that, we need new cost studies on geologic disposal in repositories, studies that include the lessons learned from recent progress with repositories in Europe, and new studies that look at the nuclear waste program overall and incorporate the cost of safe on-site reactors, early removal of spent fuel from shutdown reactors, and consolidated interim storage facilities, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future.

It is clear that rather than forcing the State of Nevada to accept nuclear waste at a scientifically unsound site, taxpayer dollars would be better spent identifying viable alternatives for the long-term storage of nuclear waste in areas that are willing to house it. Finding alternatives is the commonsense path forward, as well as the fiscally responsible decision.

I urge my colleagues, as we continue the budget appropriations process for this next fiscal year, to conduct oversight over the life-cycle costs of repositories and to focus on further implementing the Department of Energy's consent-based siting process, instead of wasting more taxpayer dollars on a failed proposal.