

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO SANDY HART

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, every American has the solemn responsibility to show our gratitude to the brave men and women who have answered the call to serve our Nation in uniform. We have an obligation to honor the values for which they fought and praise their efforts to preserve the freedom of this great country and the world.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Allied invasion of the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. With every step onto the European continent, the forces of freedom moved closer to ending the reign of tyranny. Kentucky's World War II veteran community also marks another important milestone this year. Fifteen years ago, Sandy Hart, of Wickliffe, organized a groundbreaking project to honor the service of Kentucky's veterans. Because of Sandy's remarkable leadership, more than 500 World War II veterans traveled to our Nation's Capital in 2004 to visit the new memorial dedicated in their honor.

It is my privilege to recognize Sandy for her many years of dedicated service to American veterans, whom she calls true heroes. For many of the members of the Greatest Generation, a visit to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, simply wouldn't have been possible without her. Through more than a year and a half of hard work, Sandy, the daughter of a World War II veteran, collected the necessary donations to fill 17 busloads and give every veteran the chance to visit their memorial free of charge. Although shy by nature, she is animated by her passion for honoring veterans.

To foster greater understanding and appreciation of the sacrifice veterans made for this country, Sandy and her husband Ray established the Kentucky Veteran and Patriot Museum. With donations of both funds and memorabilia, Sandy hopes the museum can be a meaningful place of engagement and remembrance both for current veterans and for future generations. With focuses on each of the modern American military engagements, Sandy's museum pays tribute to the heroes who defended our Nation.

I am not the only one who admires Sandy for her tireless work in Kentucky. In his series of books entitled "Kentucky's Everyday Heroes: Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things," Steve Flairty profiled inspira-

tional men and women throughout the Commonwealth who, in his words, "go quietly about their daily living, making others' lives better, with little or no thoughts of personal benefit." Sandy's remarkable servant leadership clearly belongs among the ranks of these Kentuckians. Her inclusion in the book is a well-earned tribute to her lifetime spent in service to others.

To celebrate the 15th anniversary, the Wickliffe community will host a parade and a ceremony. They will also unveil new memorials to brave American veterans. This anniversary gathering is the latest opportunity for Kentuckians to honor our heroes that would be impossible without Sandy's committed vision. I am sure she would try to avoid the praise I am offering, but she deserves this and so much more. Sandy is an inspirational woman who has dedicated her life to the benefit of those around her, especially our veterans. So I hope my Senate colleagues will join me in marking this important anniversary and in thanking Sandy Hart for her extraordinary leadership honoring America's heroes.

VACCINES

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my opening statement at the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee be printed in the RECORD.

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

VACCINES SAVE LIVES

Mr. ALEXANDER. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will please come to order.

Senator Murray and I will each have an opening statement, and then we will introduce the witnesses. After the witnesses' testimony, senators will each have 5 minutes of questions.

It was not that long ago that, as a boy, I remember the terror in the hearts of parents that their children might contract polio and my classmates in iron lungs.

The Majority Leader, Senator McConnell, contracted polio when he was young. His mother took him to Warm Springs, because that is where President Roosevelt received treatment for polio. Fortunately, because of her dedication, Leader McConnell is able to walk today, but thousands of others were not as lucky.

Following the introduction of a vaccine in 1955, polio was eliminated in the United States in 1979, and since then, from every country in the world except for three. Polio is just one of the diseases we have eradicated in the United States thanks to vaccines.

Before the vaccine for measles was developed, up to four million Americans each year contracted the highly contagious, airborne virus.

In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared measles eliminated from the United States. And in 1980, smallpox was declared eradicated from the world by the CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO).

This is a remarkable demonstration of modern medicine.

Four years ago, this Committee held a hearing on vaccines, following the 2014 outbreak of measles—the worst outbreak since the disease was declared eliminated in 2000.

And even though 91.1 percent of Americans had been vaccinated for measles in 2017, according to the CDC, we continue to see outbreaks of this preventable disease because there are pockets in the United States that have low vaccination rates.

Last year, there were 372 cases of measles—the second highest number since 2000. And so far this year, there have been 159 cases reported and outbreaks confirmed in Washington State, New York, Texas, and Illinois.

We know that some Americans are hesitant about vaccines, so today I want to stress the importance of vaccines: not only has the Food and Drug Administration found them to be safe, but vaccines also save lives.

Vaccines have been so successful that, until recently, Americans have lived without fear of getting measles, polio, or rubella. We have made significant strides in improving vaccination rates.

In 2009, about 44 percent of Americans had received vaccines for seven preventable diseases: Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Measles, Mumps, and Rubella, Haemophilus influenza type b, Hepatitis B, Chickenpox, and Pneumococcal, according to the CDC.

Today, over 70 percent of Americans are vaccinated against all seven of these diseases.

Vaccines protect not only those who have been vaccinated, but the larger community. This is called herd immunity.

There are some people who cannot be vaccinated—they are too young, or have a weak immune system because of a genetic disorder or are taking medicine that compromises their immune system, like cancer treatment.

Vaccines protect those who cannot be vaccinated by preventing the spread of diseases. However, low immunization rates can destroy a community's herd immunity.

While the overall vaccination rate nationwide is high enough to create this herd immunity, certain areas—the pockets of the country where vaccination rates are low—are vulnerable to outbreaks. There is a lot of misleading and incorrect information about vaccines that circulates online, including through social media.

Here is what I want parents in Tennessee, in Washington, in Texas, everywhere in our country to know: Vaccines are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, and meet the FDA's gold standard of safety. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices makes recommendations on the use of vaccines in the United States and annual child and adult vaccine schedules. This Advisory Committee is made up of medical doctors and public health professionals from medical schools, hospitals, and professional medical organizations from around the country. They are among the best our country has to offer and they have dedicated their lives to helping others. These recommendations are reviewed and approved by the CDC director, and are available on the CDC's website.

There is nothing secret about any of this science. Countless studies have been done to show that vaccines are safe. Charlatans and internet fraudsters who claim that vaccines aren't safe are preying on the unfounded fears and daily struggles of parents, and they are creating a public health hazard that is entirely preventable.

It is important for those who have questions about vaccines, especially parents, to speak with a reputable health care provider. As with many topics, just because you found it on the internet doesn't make it true.

The science is sound: Vaccines save lives—the lives of those who receive vaccines and the lives of those who are too young or vulnerable to be immunized.

Before I turn this over to Senator Murray, I want to add that the National Childhood

Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 required the Department of Health and Human Services to submit a report to Congress within 2 years after the legislation was signed into law.

The HELP Committee has two reports from the Department submitted to Congress dated May 4, 1988, and July 21, 1989.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent that the reports be submitted into the committee record so that they can be more accessible to the public.

THE OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my opening statement at the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee be printed in the RECORD.

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MANAGING PAIN DURING THE OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. ALEXANDER. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will please come to order. Senator Murray and I will each have an opening statement, and then we will introduce the witnesses. After the witnesses' testimony, senators will each have 5 minutes of questions.

Dan, a constituent of mine who lives in Maryville, Tennessee, recently wrote me about his wife, who has a rare disease that causes her chronic pain. Dan is concerned because it has become more difficult for her to access painkillers. Dan wrote, "She is not an abuser, and is doing everything right. Now it's harder for her to get the medicine she needs."

Dan's wife is one out of 100 million Americans who, according to a 2011 report by what was then the Institute of Medicine, now the National Academy of Medicine, are living with some pain—that is about 30 percent of Americans. 25 million of those have moderate or severe pain.

A new report released in 2018, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says that about 50 million Americans have chronic pain, and nearly 20 million of those Americans have high-impact chronic pain.

Here is the reality: we are engaged in a massive effort to make dramatic reductions in the supply and use of opioids—the most effective painkiller we have. But on the theory that every action has an unintended consequence, we want to make sure that as we deal with the opioid crisis, we keep in mind those people that are hurting.

We are holding this hearing to better understand the causes of pain, how we can improve care for patients with pain, and where we are on developing new medicines and ways to treat pain.

We know that pain is one of the most frequent reasons people see a doctor, and, according to the Mayo Clinic, the number of adults in the United States with pain is higher than the number of people with diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined. These Americans need more effective ways than opioids or other addictive painkillers to manage pain. Opioids, which are commonly used to treat pain, can lead to addiction and overdose. More than 70,000 Americans died from drug overdoses last year, including prescription opioids, making it the biggest public health crisis in our country.

Last year, Congress passed comprehensive opioid legislation to combat this crisis, which President Trump called "the single largest bill to combat a drug crisis in the history of our country."

Our legislation included more than 70 ideas from 72 Senators, and eight committees in the House and five Committees in the Senate that included: Reauthorizing training pro-

grams for doctors and nurses who prescribe treatments for pain; increasing access to behavioral and mental health providers; and encouraging the use of blister packs for opioids, such as a 3 or 7-day supply, and safe ways of disposing unused drugs.

We also took steps to ensure our new law wouldn't make life harder for patients with pain, but now we need to take the next step to try to find new ways to help them: first—we gave the National Institutes of Health more flexibility and authority to spur research and development of new non-addictive painkillers. We also asked the Food and Drug Administration to provide guidance for those developing new non-addictive painkillers to help get them to patients more quickly. I'm pleased to see Commissioner Gottlieb's announcement this morning that the agency is developing new guidances on how FDA evaluates the risks and the benefits of new opioid treatments for patients with pain and to help the development of non-opioid treatments for pain.

Sam Quinones, a witness at one of our hearings, called new non-addictive painkillers the "holy grail" to solving the opioid crisis. We have backed up those new authorities with substantial funding—most recently \$500 million to help the National Institutes of Health find a new nonaddictive painkiller.

Second, we included provisions to encourage new pain management strategies, such as physical therapy. Third, the new law requires experts to study chronic pain and report to the Director of the NIH how patients can better manage their pain. And fourth, the new law requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to report the impact on pain patients that Federal and State laws and regulations that limit the length, quantity, or dosage of opioid prescriptions.

Now that we have started to turn the train around and head in a different direction on the use of opioids, everyone—doctors, nurses, insurers, and patients—will need to think about the different ways we should treat and manage pain. There are other things the federal government is doing to better understand what causes pain and how we treat and manage it.

For example, the National Pain Strategy, developed by the Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee, which develops recommendations to prevent, treat, manage, and research pain. Through the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institutes of Health's HEAL Initiative, researchers are working to better understand pain and why some people experience it differently than others. This will help us find more ways to more effectively treat pain and help get people the treatment they need.

For example—physical therapy or exercise may be the best course of treatment for some kinds of back pain. It may also help us understand why some people can take opioids to manage their pain for years without becoming addicted, while others more easily become addicted.

Today, I hope to hear about how close are we to having a non-addictive painkiller, and how doctors and nurses can better treat people with pain.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

• Ms. ERNST. Madam President, today I wish to honor Mr. William "Bill" Armstrong of Mount Ayr, IA. Bill is a lifelong Iowan and outgoing president of the Iowa Funeral Directors Association.

Bill Armstrong has served as one of the most effective advocates for both Iowa morticians and morticians across the country for almost 40 years. He graduated from Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science in 1984 and soon after moved to his current hometown of Mount Ayr, where he accepted a position as a funeral director at Wilson-Watson Funeral Home. His journey was only just beginning.

In remarkably short order, he achieved partnership at the funeral home and ultimately acquired the business from Jay and Donna Watson in 2009, officially making the funeral home, Armstrong Funeral Homes.

This prompted Bill to become an outspoken leader for current and future funeral professionals. He proudly represented morticians on both the local and national level by pioneering annual trips to both Des Moines and to Washington, DC, in order to raise awareness about the profession.

Bill was always forward looking, with a singular objective of training the next generation of funeral home leaders. He worked with the University of Northern Iowa to establish a 4-year degree program for mortuary studies.

These are all amazing accomplishments, and I want to thank Bill again for his service and for helping Iowans through their most difficult life moments. I wish him success in his new endeavors.●

RECOGNIZING BBQGUYS

• Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, as a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, it is my privilege to recognize a veteran-owned Louisiana small business that has not only grown and succeeded but has also steadfastly remained dedicated to their customers, employees, and community. This week, it is my honor to name BBQGuys of Baton Rouge, LA as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 1998, Mike Hackley began what has been an American entrepreneurial success story. After serving over 10 years in the U.S. Air Force and working in the real estate and retail sectors, Mike followed his passion of outdoor living and started his own business, opening a retail location called The Grill Store & More. Recognizing the potential that e-commerce had early on, he founded bbqguys.com in 2001. He started out with single-digit employees. Today, BBQGuys has grown to become one of the largest outdoor living online retailers in the world, employing nearly 300.

With the success of the retail operations, Mike continued growing his business, founding Blaze Grill, and began to design and manufacture premium barbecue grills with manufacturing operations in the United States. In just a few years, Blaze is already one of the top grill manufacturers in the market.

Even with BBQGuys' growth and success, Mike continues to prioritize his