

Administration. That is because under President Trump, the FDA decided to delay regulation of these products for years. And while the FDA dithers, children get addicted. As a result, it is the Wild Wild West out there with respect to unapproved, unregulated, dangerous, and addictive vaping products, and it is our kids who are paying the price.

Despite what Big Vape says, these products are not safe. In recent months, we have seen thousands of illnesses and 42 deaths associated with vaping, including four in Illinois.

Two weeks ago, a woman came up to me and said: You don't know me. I am a nurse. And she gave me the name of the hospital. She said: I just want to tell you, I was there when that 22-year-old man died last week from vaping. He had been in our hospital for months waiting for a lung transplant because of the damage he had done to his lungs by vaping. He couldn't find a donor, and he died.

There are other known dangers associated with e-cigarettes and nicotine. Nicotine is a toxic, highly addictive substance that raises blood pressure and spikes adrenaline, increasing the risk of heart disease. Nicotine can have short- and long-term negative health impacts on the developing brain. Kids who use e-cigarettes are more likely to transition to tobacco cigarettes, and those kill 480,000 Americans each year. There is hardly a family in this country who hasn't been touched by tobacco-related death and disease.

A Dartmouth study shows that e-cigarette use leads to 81 new smokers for every 1 smoker who quits. Don't buy the pitch from JUUL that you ought to be vaping so that you can get off of tobacco cigarettes. It is running just the opposite—kids starting on vaping and converting to tobacco cigarettes.

What do we know about e-cigarettes? They are predominately used by our children. Flavors play a major role in hooking kids on nicotine. Nicotine use harms the developing brain, and kids who vape are more likely than their peers to transition to tobacco cigarettes.

Now let's consider what we don't know about e-cigarettes. We don't know whether they are safe. We don't know whether they actually help adult smokers quit. We often don't know what the ingredients are in those devices.

E-cigarette flavors need to come off the market unless or until they can prove they have a public health benefit—and good luck to that.

The President of the United States, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the head of the Food and Drug Administration all told us on September 11 that they were on the side of kids and families and public health, and they promised us they were going to do something about it. Today, I am sending the President a letter asking him to keep his word, to ban e-cigarette flavors, which threaten our kids with a lifetime of nicotine addiction, illness, and, sadly, even death.

Along with families nationwide, I am hoping the President cares more about children than he does about the lobbying pressure from big tobacco and big vape companies. Just because they can buy an ad on FOX TV does not mean they are right.

For goodness' sake, Mr. President, stick with your promise of September 11. Protect our kids from this vaping epidemic.

I ask unanimous consent that my letter to the President be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, November 19, 2019.

Hon. DONALD J. TRUMP,  
President of the United States,  
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: As President of the United States, you have a responsibility to put the health and safety of our people—especially our nation's children—above all else. On September 11, 2019, you were poised to do just that, announcing a long-overdue plan from the Oval Office to quickly ban all non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes, including flavors such as cotton candy, sugar cookie, fruit medley, cool mint, and menthol. Sitting alongside the First Lady, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, and then-Acting Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner, it had all the trappings of a made-for-television event you seem to relish.

Along with all major public health, education, and parent organizations, I praised this move because e-cigarettes—and their accompanying kid-friendly flavors—are reversing decades of hard-fought progress our nation has made in reducing youth smoking rates. And now, along with all major public health, education, and parent organizations, I have watched in horror over the past two months as you have seemingly caved to Big Tobacco and Big Vape lobbying pressure, breaking your promise to address our nation's youth vaping epidemic.

Here is what we know about e-cigarettes:

We know that, in the past two years of your presidency, our nation has experienced a 135 percent increase in youth use of e-cigarettes.

We know that five million children are now vaping, including more than one in four high-school students and more than one in ten middle-school students.

We know that nearly 30 percent of children under the age of 18 are now vaping, compared with less than 4 percent of adults.

We know that JUUL has fueled this youth public health "epidemic," as it has been defined by every major federal health official in your Administration.

We know that e-cigarette flavors—including mint and menthol—are why children first try and become addicted to e-cigarettes.

We know that more than 2,000 Americans have recently been sickened as a result of vaping. We also know that, to date, 42 people have died—including four in my state.

We know that not a single e-cigarette product available for purchase today is on the market with authorization from the FDA.

Finally, we know that your Administration has completely abdicated its duty to protect the public health by repeatedly delaying and refusing to regulate any of these dangerous and addictive products.

Here is what we do not know about e-cigarettes:

We do not know the short- or long-term health impacts of using these products, espe-

cially in children (though we do know that use of nicotine in the developing brain has many negative and long-term health consequences).

We do not always know what ingredients—beyond nicotine—are in e-cigarettes and the accompanying flavors, nor do we know the short- or long-term health impact of the use of those ingredients. We do not if e-cigarettes and flavors actually help adult smokers quit cigarettes (though we do know that e-cigarette use leads to 80 new smokers for every one smoker who reports quitting).

We do not conclusively know why so many people who vape are getting sick and dying.

We do not have answers to these questions because the tobacco and vaping industries—shrouded in secrecy and deception—have refused to conduct the much-needed clinical trials and studies, instead preferring to keep the health consequences a secret. Perhaps even more concerning is that your FDA—the federal agency responsible for regulating tobacco products—has not required them to do so.

More than two months ago, when you announced the impending e-cigarette flavor ban, you stated, "We have a problem in our country . . . It's a problem nobody really thought about too much a few years ago, and it's called 'vaping'—especially vaping as it pertains to innocent children . . . And we're going to have to do something about it . . . We're looking at very strong rules and regulations."

You further stated, "Vaping has become a very big business, as I understand it—like a giant business in a very short period of time. But we can't allow people to get sick, and we can't have our youth be so affected."

During your September Oval Office press conference with the First Lady, you made big promises that you now appear to be breaking. Children and families nationwide are still hoping that you will reverse course and quickly implement an e-cigarette flavor ban that protects our next generation from a lifetime of nicotine addiction, illness, and death.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. DURBIN,  
U.S. Senator.

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, 20 million Americans have health insurance, including more than 1 million in my State of Illinois. Why is it so important? Let me tell you the story of Stefanie from Oak Park, IL. Recently, Stefanie wrote about her son, who has a history of mental health and substance abuse issues. Because of the Affordable Care Act, her son will be able to stay on her health insurance plan until he reaches the age of 26.

The Affordable Care Act also required that all health plans cover mental health and addiction treatment. It is hard to imagine that people were selling health insurance in America that did not cover mental health and addiction.

Two Senators on the floor of the Senate—Paul Wellstone, who stood right over there, and Pete Domenici, who stood there—teamed up to require that every health insurance plan in America cover mental illness. It is so obvious. It is an issue many families face. But health insurance plans were excluding it. Why did these two Senators who were wildly different politically decide they would team up for this? Paul

Wellstone had a brother and Senator Domenici had a son who were struggling with mental illness, and they didn't have protection in their health insurance, so the Senators fought to include it.

Thank goodness they did. Because of that health law, insurance companies cannot discriminate against Stefanie's son because of his medical history. Her son just graduated college. She is thankful he can stay on her company's policy until he gets a job, and she is thankful her premiums are not higher due to her son's health needs. Stefanie is afraid that if these protections go away because of a court case that is currently pending or the actions of the Republican majority in this Senate, her son will be uninsurable or face enormous medical bills that he will be unable to pay. Stefanie wrote to me, and she said that if the Affordable Care Act were to be eliminated, they are "contemplating leaving this country to seek manageable health care."

Democrats are fighting to keep healthcare protections for people like Stefanie and her son. Because of the Affordable Care Act, people with pre-existing conditions can no longer be denied coverage or charged higher premiums. Is there anyone among us who doesn't know someone with a pre-existing condition? I have one. This protects 5 million people in Illinois who have a preexisting condition.

Insurance companies are no longer allowed to impose annual or lifetime caps on benefits or to deny coverage for mental health, substance abuse treatment, prescription drugs, or hospitalizations, and young people are allowed to stay on their parents' plan until they reach age 26.

Despite the Republican and Trump administration's continued efforts to repeal these protections both in Congress and in the courts, health insurance under the Affordable Care Act is open for business. If you are interested and want to know the policies available, [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov) is the website to visit.

Open enrollment for 2020 health plans began on November 1 and ends on December 15. If you can, sign up. It is a protection that you hope you will never need, but if you need it, it is good to have it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, beginning with Russia's interference in our 2016

national elections, to the recent withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria, President Trump has made multiple statements and decisions that serve only to benefit Vladimir Putin's agenda to undermine democracy and expand Russia's influence around the world.

Taken together, these actions aren't just a threat to U.S. national security, but they also undercut and diminish some of the core tenets and values of American democracy and global leadership. The U.S. Senate, as part of a co-equal branch of government, must recognize this threat and act as a body to ensure our institutions at home and interests abroad are protected. Thus far, we have not lived up to this solemn responsibility.

Let me start with a seminal news article from the Washington Post, just recently. White House reporter Anne Gearan, in her October 15, 2019, article, catalogs how the Trump administration has allowed Russia to assert dominance globally. The headline reads: "Trump's moves in Ukraine and Syria have a common denominator: Both help Russia."

Anne Gearan writes as follows, and I will quote in pertinent part.

... President Trump has taken action that has had the effect of helping the authoritarian leader of Russia.

... [The President's] actions in Syria and Ukraine add to the list of policy moves and public statements that have boosted Russia during his presidency, whether that was their central purpose or not, confounding critics who have warned that he has taken too soft a stance toward a nation led by a strongman hostile to the United States.

Anne Gearan goes on to discuss how President Trump's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria has allowed Russia to assert a more dominant role in the region. She also discusses how the President's intimidation of Ukraine's recently elected President Zelensky has become the subject of a domestic impeachment inquiry and distracted from actual engagement and support to Ukraine as it continues to grapple with Russian aggression.

Anne Gearan also notes:

[President] Trump has publicly questioned the usefulness of NATO—the post-World War II military alliance established as a bulwark against first the Soviet Union and now Russia—as well as the utility of the European Union, a political and economic alliance Putin would love to weaken.

This is all written by Anne Gearan.

These actions have led to a growing consensus among the national security community that the President is not serving the national interest. Let me move to a second part of this.

Sadly, President Trump's recent actions with regard to Syria and Ukraine are, unfortunately, not isolated. President Trump has been consistent in taking actions that favor Russia. As early as April of 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump vowed to pursue closer ties to Russia if elected to the Presidency. Even before he took office, by way of Twitter and other platforms he was signaling to Vladimir Putin his def-

erence to a Putin-driven U.S.-Russia dynamic.

From there, the American people have only learned more about the Trump campaign's ties to Russia and Russia's interference in the 2016 Presidential election.

The intelligence community's unclassified report concluded:

We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.

The interference with our election process by a hostile government was an attack on our democracy and a threat to our national security carried out by Russian operatives at the direction of Vladimir Putin himself.

Since Special Counsel Robert Mueller's appointment as special counsel to investigate Russia's attack, 34 indictments have been returned in connection with the investigation, including indictments against Russian individuals and Russian companies, as well as former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and deputy campaign manager Rick Gates, who were charged with "conspiracy against the United States." Special Counsel Mueller also secured guilty pleas from other campaign advisers, including George Papadopoulos and Michael Flynn.

Despite this ample evidence of wrongdoing, the President attempted to impede the Russia probe at every step of the way. The U.S. intelligence community, the Senate Intelligence Committee, and Robert Mueller and his team of investigators have done a great service to our Nation in investigating the Trump campaign's ties to Russia and Russian interference in our election. The findings further confirm that President Trump not only benefitted from Russian interference but, as Anne Gearan wrote in the October 15 Washington Post story, President Trump "has also disputed, at times, the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to boost his candidacy, and he only reluctantly signed a bill imposing sanctions on Russia for the transgression after weeks of resisting the measure, which he called, 'seriously flawed.'"

Anne Gearan is referencing the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, known by the acronym CAATSA, or C-A-A-T-S-A. That is legislation that I supported, and it passed both Houses of Congress with bipartisan support to impose sanctions on U.S. adversaries, including Russia, for its incursions into Ukraine and Syria and interference in our elections.

I believe it is likely that if CAATSA did not clearly prohibit it, President Trump would have removed preexisting Russia sanctions by now.

So the evidence is clear. By interfering in our national elections and