

Passing this legislation wouldn't make the United States an extreme outlier when it comes to abortion practices. In fact, it would put us in line with international norms. Currently, only seven countries in the world allow elective abortions after 20 weeks. One, of course, is the United States. The other countries on the list should make all of us second-guess allowing abortions beyond 20 weeks—China, Vietnam, North Korea. Countries with a history of human rights violations are hardly the model we should aspire to.

It is time to give every baby a chance to live and stop doctors from performing abortions on infants who feel pain. I am proud to be a cosponsor of both of these bills and stand with my colleagues in the fight for human life.

Our friend from Montana, Senator DAINES, established the first-ever Senate Pro-Life Caucus to fight for the lives of our most vulnerable citizens. A couple of weeks ago, he said: "These back-to-back votes will present an opportunity for Senate Democrats and all of us to show the American people whether there are any limits at all to radical abortion extremism." We will soon learn the answer.

I appreciate our colleagues—Senator SASSE, Senator GRAHAM, and Senator DAINES—for their leadership on this legislation and for consistently fighting for the most vulnerable among us. I will be a proud "yes" vote on both of these bills—yes to protecting newborn babies, yes to equal medical care for all infants, and yes to a fighting chance for all babies.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, we are returning to Washington, DC, from time spent in our States. I was happy, for one, to get time to spend in Texas with constituents. I traveled the State, as I am sure many of us did, traveling from Midland, to Ft. Worth, to Corpus Christi, and a number of spots in between. Texas is a pretty big place, so it takes a little time to move around, but it is really great to be able to hear from the folks I represent—the folks we all represent—about what they care about the most.

One of the most interesting things to me is how little they talk about what is talked about inside the bubble here known as Washington, DC. In San Antonio, for example, I met with State and local officials to discuss their growing concerns over coronavirus. Lackland Air Force Base is one of the designated locations where Americans evacuated from overseas with suspected exposure to coronavirus are being held under the first Federal quarantine in more than 50 years. Folks were naturally concerned about the fact that these evacuees were scheduled to be transported to local civilian hospitals for testing rather than remaining on the base where they are quarantined. In our meeting, we were able to speak with not only the mayor and two council persons, but we were able to speak with officials from the

Department of Health and Human Services and the Defense Department about these concerns, and I am glad we were able to come up with a better solution. The Department of Health and Human Services has now updated their protocol to ensure that testing for coronavirus will be conducted at Joint Base Lackland's quarantine housing, so evacuees will not be sent to hospitals in the area for their tests.

I appreciate my colleagues at the city who have been working overtime to keep their residents there safe. I am grateful to the administration for addressing our concerns and being responsive to those questions.

On the very day we met, 90 evacuees were released from quarantine, and I am happy they are finally headed home. I am sure I am not as happy as they are after being quarantined. We owe a huge thank-you to the medical professionals who have and will continue to care for those in quarantine and to the Bexar County and San Antonio officials who are working to safeguard public health.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Madam President, I traveled up I-35 and was in Ft. Worth at the Northside Community Health Center to hear about an entirely different healthcare challenge, which is high prescription drug costs.

I met with local healthcare professionals, advocates, and patients to hear about their experiences with these rising costs, and I have introduced legislation to address them. For example, we heard from Randall Barker and his daughter Emma, who both have diabetes. They need insulin. They told me that one bottle of insulin costs upwards of \$281. Randall continues to make sacrifices to afford the lifesaving drugs he and Emma need to lead healthy lives.

As I mentioned, to address the high costs of prescription drugs, I introduced a bipartisan bill with our colleague, Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut, called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act. The purpose of the bill is straight forward: to stop drug companies from gaming the patent system to keep their profits high.

Patents, of course, are granted for scientific innovations in order to encourage more of them. What happens under the period of a patent is that whatever the item is—in this case, a drug—that company reserves the right to sell it exclusively, without any competition, in order to recoup its costs and incentivize innovation when it comes to these drugs. But when companies game the system by establishing patent thickets—multiple patents used to unfairly block competition—this prevents new drugs, as well as competing drugs at a lower price, from entering the market.

For example, the most widely prescribed drug in America is called HUMIRA. It has more than 120 different patents, for no real purpose

other than extending that period of exclusivity as long as possible to continue to make money. In Europe, there are five competing products, but in America, there is only HUMIRA. That is a patent thicket. That is gaming the system, and it is hurting American consumers.

I appreciate the support from healthcare providers and advocates and patients I heard from in Ft. Worth. They encourage us to get our work done sooner rather than later.

I have come to the floor twice and asked unanimous consent to pass the bill. It was voted unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee. The Democratic leader blocked it both times. I hope he will reconsider his position. I am sure his constituents in New York would like a little bit of a break when it comes to prescription drug costs. I happen to think it has to do more with the upcoming election than it does the merits of the legislation.

E-CIGARETTES

Madam President, I traveled to a couple of other Texas cities, where I was able to talk to people about the rise of e-cigarette use, particularly among teens. In Corpus Christi along the gulf coast and in Odessa in deep West Texas, I met with a range of local officials, health professionals, and community advocates about the impact of teen vaping.

One study found that in the Permian Basin, in the middle of the Odessa area, about half of high school students used e-cigarettes and 25 percent of them had vaped in the past month. This study found that in schools, the average age of first-time e-cigarette users is just 13 years old. E-cigarettes—even the closed systems, where you can't add other ingredients, like the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, THC—even in the closed systems that are designed to deliver only nicotine, nicotine is an addictive drug. When children get access to these addictive drugs, it may well end up being a gateway to other use—whether it is tobacco or other drug use—later in life. It certainly encourages them to remain a user of this nicotine delivery device.

I have introduced legislation called the Preventing Online Sales of E-Cigarettes to Children Act, which would make it difficult for children to get their hands on these devices, particularly when they buy them over the internet. All it does is apply the same safeguards already in place for online purchases of tobacco—it applies that to e-cigarettes. Customers would have to verify their age at the time of delivery—a practice which, shockingly, does not currently exist.

A recent survey published in the American Journal of Health Promotion found that 32 percent of underage e-cigarette users reported purchasing products online, making online sales the single largest source of purchases for underage users. We recently raised the age from 18 to 21 to get access to these e-cigarettes, but still, as these studies

indicate, use of e-cigarettes and vaping devices is epidemic in our middle schools and our high schools. It is dangerous to the physical and mental health of our children. That is something you would think we would be able to address. If we are going to turn the tide on e-cigarettes and prevent more young people from facing their deadly health consequences, passage of this legislation is a necessary first step.

STATE WORK PERIOD

Madam President, when I was home in San Antonio, I was able to help celebrate the investiture of one of our newest Federal judges, Jason Pulliam, who filled the vacancy in the Western District of Texas. Then I got to spend a little time in Midland with folks and talk about the importance of our oil and gas industry and why innovation in that space and concern about conservation and the environment were not mutually exclusive.

At each step along the way, I was able to hear from countless other Texans about changes they would like to see coming out of Washington. They encouraged us to try to work together and avoid some of the partisan gridlock we have seen that characterized so much of the recent impeachment proceedings. It was a great week recharging at home. I came back ready to get back to work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VETERANS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, the Disabled American Veterans is celebrating 100 years of helping military veterans, and I rise to recognize this remarkable occasion.

Throughout its history, the DAV has been influential in identifying ways to best support our veterans—from pushing for the consolidation of veterans programs, in its early years, to direct outreach to veterans in communities with the launch of the Field Service Unit Program, to pressing for more funding for VA healthcare and benefits.

There has been so much progress in advancing veterans services thanks to the DAV's efforts. The organization's members and partners have a lot to be proud of. DAV members have been leading advocates for injured and ill veterans and their families, which has made a difference for countless wounded warriors. The DAV's advocacy has helped and continues to build better lives for disabled veterans. We are thankful for the more than 1 million DAV members and auxiliary members who are doing great work to ensure our country keeps the promise we made to the men and women who have served in uniform.

This week, members of the DAV Department of Arkansas are visiting the Nation's Capital to share the organization's legislative priorities for 2020. They are part of an extensive network that has been influential in identifying how the Department of Veterans Affairs can strengthen its services. They are among the DAV members from across the country who are in Washington, DC, to advocate on behalf of veterans.

There is simply no substitute for coming to our Nation's Capital and visiting with Members of Congress to let them know of DAV's priorities. These include strengthening veterans mental healthcare and suicide prevention programs, improving benefits and services for women veterans and ensuring veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances receive full and timely benefits. The good news is we are working on these priorities because we all agree that our veterans deserve nothing less than quality care and the benefits they have earned.

Last month, the Senate's Committee on Veterans' Affairs advanced the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act. This comprehensive legislation will strengthen our ability to provide veterans with the mental healthcare they need. It includes language Senator WARNER and I authored to leverage the services of veteran-serving nonprofits and other community networks in our overall strategy to reduce veteran suicides.

VA Ranking Member TESTER and I are also working to improve services to our women veterans. Our Deborah Sampson Act legislation would eliminate barriers to care and services that many women veterans face and would help to ensure the VA could address the needs for women, which is so critical because they are more likely to face homelessness, unemployment, and to go without needed healthcare. We are pleased to have the support of the DAV for this important legislation.

I am proud to cosponsor the Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act, which would allow veterans who suffer from the effects of burn pits to get the benefits and services they have earned.

I encourage my colleagues to support these bills so we can provide the resources that have been promised to our veterans.

For years, the DAV members have supported the passage of the Blue Water Navy bill. Thanks, in part, to their advocacy, Congress approved this critical legislation last year that extends benefits to more veterans who were exposed to toxic chemicals during the Vietnam war.

The DAV's attention extends beyond the Halls of Congress. Its National Service Program helps to direct services to veterans across the country.

I applaud the efforts of the more than 11,000 DAV members in Arkansas whose outreach is helping veterans to understand and access their benefits. They

have spent countless hours in advising fellow veterans about the assistance they qualify for and in helping them fill out the paperwork to secure those benefits through the VA.

One of the well-known services provided by the DAV is the transportation of veterans to VA medical centers and hospitals. In rural States like Arkansas, the services these volunteers offer is critical to meeting veterans' healthcare needs. The Arkansas fleet is made up of 16 vans. Last year, more than 6,600 veterans were driven to medical appointments with the help of volunteers who logged more than 18,000 hours behind the wheel.

I look forward to continuing to work with DAV members as Congress crafts and reforms policies to improve services for veterans and their families.

This country made a promise to our veterans that we must live up to, and I am proud to join with the DAV to ensure we follow through on that commitment. In working together, we can find solutions and take action to deliver the results veterans have earned and expect. We will continue looking to the DAV to understand how we can improve the lives of the men and women who have served in uniform.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and as chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees VA funding, I have seen the dedication of the DAV to support disabled veterans in Arkansas and across the country. I am proud to recognize the DAV on its 100 years of engaging veterans, in its advocating to advance benefits, services, and care, and in its making a positive difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

REMEMBERING CHARLES PORTIS

Madam President, on a separate subject, I also pay tribute to an Arkansas veteran who is one of the State's most famous sons—literary icon Charles Portis. Mr. Portis, the author best known for his 1968 Western novel "True Grit," passed away on February 17, 2020.

Born in December 1933, in El Dorado, AR, Portis spent his childhood in southern Arkansas. He enlisted in the Marine Corps and served as an infantryman and, during the Korean war, reached the rank of sergeant before his discharge in 1955. Following his military service, he attended the University of Arkansas and wrote for the student newspaper, the Arkansas Traveler. He graduated from the university in 1958 with a degree in journalism.

After graduating, Portis began his career as a reporter. He first worked at the Arkansas Gazette and then at the New York Herald Tribune. Though he voluntarily ended his journalism career in 1964, he used the skills and tools he had acquired as a reporter when he returned home to Arkansas to begin writing fiction.

His most celebrated work is the Western classic "True Grit." This book chronicles the efforts of a Yell County