

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