Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise in recognition of National Infant Immunization Week, which is being held this year from April 21-28. In Nevada and throughout the country, State and local health departments, health care providers, parents, and other partners will be working together to make sure that all infants are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. This week is also an opportunity for all of us to spread the message about getting immunized. Not only do immunizations give our children a healthy start to life, they also save lives and protect the American public's health.

Immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases is a tremendous success story. Due to the development of vaccines and immunization campaigns, infectious diseases that used to devastate entire communities have been reduced to record lows or eradicated outright. Thanks to immunizations, few Americans today have any direct knowledge of once commonplace scourges like polio, smallpox, measles, and diphtheria. For most of us, the deaths, suffering, and disability associated with these diseases are now known only through textbooks and old newspaper accounts.

The National Infant Immunization Week is a time to reflect on these achievements. More importantly, this week is also a reminder that we cannot lose ground by becoming complacent or taking the benefits of immunizations for granted. Approximately 1 million children in this country are not fully immunized by age two and many regions of the country have disturbing rates of immunization. In my home State of Nevada, the immunization rate for infants and young children is ranked last in the country.

Fortunately, there are Federal and State programs that work to provide financial assistance to those who would otherwise have to go without. During this year's National Infant Immunization Week, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to support these efforts. By promoting access to immunizations against serious but preventable diseases, we can work to ensure that all Americans will benefit from this invaluable public health tool for generations to come.

Mr. CASEY assumed the Chair.