

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for a period of up to 10 minutes each.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DRUG ABUSE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I express my deep concern about the developing trends in drug abuse among our kids. As cochairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, I am often confronted with reports about the latest drug trends, but recently I have become more alarmed with what these reports contain. Drug dealers are beginning to market their deadly substances to an increasingly younger crowd so they can become hooked at a younger age.

Young people are the most at-risk populations we have in drug abuse, which is why it is disturbing to see highly addictive drugs such as meth, heroin, even prescription pain killers, antidepressants, and steroids marketed and distributed in new ways—with an emphasis upon new ways—to get a greater number of very young people, particularly elementary children, addicted. I want Congress and the American people to know what is going on with our kids and what we need to do to stop these very dangerous trends.

We have things such as candy-flavored methamphetamine. It is one of the biggest and latest gimmicks that drug dealers use to lure our kids into addiction. Flavors such as strawberry, known as “Strawberry Quick,” and chocolate are clearly being used to make methamphetamine seem less harmful and more appealing. This type of meth is also being marketed in smaller amounts, making it cheaper—because money is an issue—and, hence, more accessible to children. At least eight States have reported cases of candy-flavored meth, and many law enforcement officials are expecting Strawberry Quick to infiltrate their States in the near future.

What is even more disturbing is that many kids may not realize they are using a deadly substance. In fact, that is the motivation behind the drug dealers and distributors. According to my colleague Senator FEINSTEIN, some kids reported that they thought Strawberry Quick was an energy drink and were misled by drug dealers into trying meth for the first time.

Methamphetamine abuse has reached epidemic proportions, and the fact that drug dealers are trying to get children addicted at such a young age underscores the importance of taking quick action to eliminate this danger. That is why I joined my colleague Senator FEINSTEIN in introducing the Saving Kids From Dangerous Drugs Act. This

legislation will double the Federal criminal penalties for drug dealers who flavor or disguise illegal drugs to make them more appealing to people under age 21, and it will triple the penalties for repeat offenders. I hope my colleagues will take a look at this piece of legislation and join Senator FEINSTEIN and me in passing this legislation soon, because we have to end the practice of purposefully altering illegal drugs to make them more appealing to young people in order to get more people hooked at a very early age.

The ongoing revelations of widespread steroid abuse in professional sports, along with the recent suicide of World Wrestling Entertainment superstar Chris Benoit, highlight a disturbing trend in sports and the entertainment world, and it has a lasting impact upon our kids. It is alleged that Benoit killed his wife and 7-year-old son in what is commonly called a “roid rage,” which is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain brought on by steroid abuse. If this is proven true, it will be yet another tragic tale of the destructive nature of steroids.

What is even more tragic is the fact that steroid abuse among high schoolers has been rising. The 2006 Monitoring the Future Survey, a study done annually to monitor drug abuse among middle and senior high school students, shows that the percentage of 12th graders who have admitted trying steroids has increased dramatically. Kids look up to these athletes and performers as role models. We know that. When they see their heroes using these terrible substances, they get the impression that it is okay to use steroids.

Steroids are also marketed to kids. Students who participate in sports are facing enormous pressure to perform at high levels, and we are seeing more and more teens turn to steroids to gain an athletic advantage. You can find Web sites encouraging teens to buy substances called DHEA, which has been declared a steroid by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, as a new way to bulk up. The major sports leagues, with the exception of Major League Baseball, have banned DHEA, even though it remains legal in this country. Though DHEA is used as a legitimate supplement for thousands of people, teens are using it as an alternative to illegal steroids.

I introduced a bill earlier this year that would reinstate the ban that was imposed on DHEA in the 1980s, but I think we can find a way to keep minors from obtaining this substance while allowing adults to use the drug legitimately. GNC, the world’s leading dietary supplement provider, has a policy not to sell DHEA to anyone under 18, and for good reason. We need to pass that legislation as soon as we can.

We should also take note of one of the fastest emerging drug trends among kids today—the abuse of prescription drugs. Most people don’t even realize that their medicine cabinets can contain drugs just as powerful, just

as addictive as meth and heroin. Because they are prescribed by a doctor, and millions of people use them, kids think anti-anxiety drugs such as Xanax and pain killers such as Vicodin and OxyContin are harmless. Several examples of abuse occur every day when kids come home from school and take a pill to relax. But eventually one pill is not enough to make them feel better. Soon these kids take more pills and try different mixtures until they can obtain a sufficient high, and that is often with deadly results.

What is so troubling about this is a significant number of teens are experimenting with prescription drugs. According to a 2005 study conducted by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, one in five teens has admitted using pain killers to get high, and the organization reports it is even getting worse. The 2006 Monitoring the Future Survey shows that the abuse of prescription drugs has doubled since 2002. Access to these drugs is widespread. Not only can teens obtain these drugs from home or in school, they can also get them on line and through “pharm parties.”

Law enforcement officials have increasingly broken up pharm parties where teens grab prescription drugs from home and pass them around to friends. These drugs are often pooled in large bowls and young people take a pill or two, but they have no idea what pill they are taking. There are hundreds of Internet video clips where teens appear strung out on pills and alcohol as a result of pharm parties. We need to do a better job as parents and legislators to educate and prevent these fast-growing trends from reaching epidemic proportions. We have to educate the public about the proper ways to dispose of old medicines, and we need to help law enforcement deal with the large amount of illegal purchases at online pharmacies.

Another sad trend is taking hold in Dallas, TX, where earlier this summer a 17-year-old high school student became the 23rd victim of a drug called “cheese.” “Cheese heroin” is a mixture of black tar heroin and Tylenol PM that is usually smoked or snorted and often very deadly. Because it resembles actual cheese and can be purchased for as little as \$2 a hit, more kids in the Dallas area have been trying the new drug with terrible results. Though cheese heroin has only been seen in the Dallas area, don’t think for a second it is going to stay in the Dallas area. Cheese heroin is cheap and being marketed solely to children.

Law enforcement officials will be the first to tell you that the new drugs tend to emerge in the larger cities and then move out to the suburbs. We should all be concerned about the drug trend in Dallas, because the sooner we can stem it, the better we can prevent it from spreading across the country.

The good news is that the people in the Dallas community are not taking this new drug lightly. We have school