

## MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, equally divided, with Senators permitted to speak therein.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

## ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time of the Republicans and the Democrats be preserved. No one is here, but we should preserve that time.

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

Mr. REID. I think the order already is that the time will be equally divided. If that is not the case, I ask that that be the case.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, on March 10, this body, the U.S. Senate, passed legislation to address what is a growing problem in all of our communities, and that is the heroin and prescription drug epidemic.

On March 10, this body voted for a comprehensive bill called CARA, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. It deals with prevention, treatment, and recovery, helping our law enforcement, getting prescription drugs off the shelves of our bathrooms so they are not being used to get people into this addiction, and helping to stop the overprescribing with a drug monitoring program. This was a comprehensive approach intended to help our communities deal with this growing problem. The No. 1 cause of death now in my home State of Ohio is not car accidents anymore, it is overdoses. It is overdoses from prescription drugs and heroin.

Since March 10, I have come to the floor four times—this is now the fifth time—every week we have been in session since then, to urge the House to act quickly on CARA, because with a 94-to-1 vote, with that kind of consensus built around this place, which is

highly unusual, it shows that this is a problem in all of our communities and all of our States. We spent 3 years putting together the legislation. We worked with experts from all around the country. We sought out best practices. This is not just a matter of throwing more money at a problem, this is a matter of taking the resources in Washington, spending them more wisely and targeting them toward what we know works—toward evidence-based programs, prevention, treatment, and recovery that has actually shown promise to be able to begin to turn the tide on this horrible epidemic.

The House has begun to act, and I am encouraged by that. Obviously, I wish they had taken up CARA right away and sent it to the President. I think it would have been already helping in our communities in significant ways.

During the time between when the Senate acted, March 10 to now, we have lost 7,400 Americans to drug overdoses. We lose a fellow citizen every 12 minutes on average, but the House is moving, and yesterday the House passed, legislation in the form of over a dozen different bills, smaller bills that will help with regard to this problem that I think are steps in the right direction.

Today they are planning to take up a more comprehensive bill, the CARA legislation, that has also been reported out of the Judiciary Committee—as it was in this body—and perhaps a couple other bills as well. I am told that vote is likely to occur today, and that is great. I am concerned the legislation that passed in the House still leaves some gaps, and those gaps are in some significant areas. I am hopeful some amendments will be adopted today to help fill some of those gaps so we can indeed have a comprehensive approach to this issue.

Sadly, this issue is not getting better; it is getting worse. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration just last week conducted their National Drug Prescription Take-Back Day, where you take drugs off the shelf and put them into a disposal unit to get rid of them so that your kid or grandkid or somebody visiting your home doesn't get these prescription drugs and misuse them. They had a record number of drugs turned in, 893,000 pounds of unwanted medicine; that is, 447 tons of prescription drugs that were not needed. I am grateful for those who participated in the take-back program. This is good news, to get these drugs off the shelves and be sure they are not being misused, but unfortunately that is just the tip of the iceberg, and it shows the severity of this problem.

We have continued to see communities throughout my State and throughout the country being torn apart by this issue and families who are being devastated. Last week, a man pled guilty to involuntary manslaughter in Columbus, OH, because his infant son had ingested fentanyl-laced heroin and died. Last week, we also saw the arrest of three people who

drove to Steubenville, OH, to buy heroin, and then while driving they used it in the car with a 4-year-old with them. This all happened in the last week. Last week, a 23-year-old pregnant woman and her unborn child were found dead of an apparent overdose in New Carlisle, OH. Yesterday, an Akron man pled guilty to selling heroin to his uncle who subsequently died of an overdose. In Cleveland, we have lost 148 people to drug overdoses in just the first quarter of this year. That is double—double—last year's rate in Cleveland, OH—one town in one State.

By the way, the plurality of these deaths is that a majority were from fentanyl—fentanyl often laced with heroin. Fentanyl is a synthetic heroin that is about 50 times more dangerous. It is a growing problem in my State of Ohio.

Unfortunately, these headlines are just the tip of the iceberg. We see this death toll rising, and it is tragic, but we also need to focus on the wounded, not just those who overdose but those who, because they have this addiction, have lost their job, cannot get their lives back together, are separated from their families. As one recovering addict told me: The drug was everything. I abandoned my kids, my wife.

These are also people who are ending up in our jail system. Prosecutors back home tell me the majority of the crime—one county prosecutor told me a couple of weeks ago, 80 percent is being committed because of this issue—so theft, stealing in order to pay for a habit, and ending up in the prison system. All of us are paying for that of course.

Everywhere I go in Ohio, people tell me about how this epidemic is affecting them. I had a townhall meeting the week before last, a tele-townhall with 25,000 people on a phone call. We do these once a month. A gentleman called in and he wanted to talk about the CARA legislation. He seemed to know a lot about it. He focused on the treatment part of it. His voice had a quiver.

So I asked him: Would you mind sharing? You are on the line with a lot of people, but would you mind sharing why you are so interested in this issue? Again, he was focused a lot on the treatment side, and there was silence on the line. I knew what he was going to say.

When he came to the point where he could speak, he said: I lost my daughter. Then he proceeded to tell the story. It was of a child who had started with prescription drugs, ended up with heroin, had committed some crimes—probably theft—ended up in and out of prison. She had finally come to the point where she was willing to face up to her addiction. She was ready to go into treatment to start long-term recovery. She had committed this to her parents. He said they took her to the treatment center. There was a 14-day wait. They pleaded: Can she get in someplace else? No; no room at the inn