

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Senate Confirmation Hearing to be Secretary of HHS Day 2

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Speakers:

Bill Cassidy - 68.38%

Senator

Robert F. Kennedy Jr - 31.62%

Nominie for HHS

Notes:

No notes.

Bill Cassidy

00:00:01

Thank everybody for being here. Bobby, I see your family behind you and I like your family. Except for the nephew who's a Florida gator, we'll let that go. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, labor and Pensions will please come to order. Again, Senator Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy, I'm sorry. Thank you for appearing before the committee and for your willingness to serve our country as your family has served our country.

You and I have talked at length about a variety of issues impacting Americans health. These have been candid conversations and I very much appreciate your willingness to engage. And there are many things you and I agree on. We're in total agreement on the need to address ultra processed food to reduce obesity and obesity of course, the leading cause of chronic disease and therefore of shorter lifespans.

Bill Cassidy

00:00:48

And this will be a priority in this committee and I look forward to collaborating with you if you are confirmed. But it's no secret I have some reservations about your past positions on vaccines and a couple other issues. And so we know a lot about you. I'll tell you a little bit about myself.

Bill Cassidy

00:01:08

Before I entered politics or even thought about running for office, I practiced medicine for 30 years, working in public hospitals in California and Louisiana, specializing in liver disease, caring for those who otherwise would not have had a specialist, if you will. Dedicating my life to saving lives, that is being a doctor. Now there is a moment in my career that really informs me now.

Bill Cassidy

00:01:32

In the early 2000s I was loading a patient onto an air Ambulance, an 18 year old young woman to go to get a liver transplant from acute liver failure due to hepatitis B. Barely an adult, her entire life ahead of her, all the hopes and dreams she might want. The children, the grandchildren, the future generations wiped away if she did not get to the LSU hospital in Shreveport for an emergency transplant.

Bill Cassidy

00:02:04

Now the transplant, an invasive in 2000, quarter of a million dollar surgery that had a 5 to 10% mortality rate. But even if she survived, would leave her with a liver transplant and hospital bills every year of \$50,000. And as she took off, it was the worst day of my medical career because I thought \$50 of vaccines could have prevented this all.

Bill Cassidy

00:02:33

And that was an inflection point in my career. And since then I've tried to do everything I can to make sure I never have to speak to another parent about their child dying due to a vaccine preventable disease. So I worked with community and business leaders to form a public private partnership in the capital region of Louisiana.

Bill Cassidy

00:02:54

We vaccinated 36,000 children for hepatitis B. And since the CDC and the ACIP have recommended universal vaccination for children. The number of acute hepatitis B cases in our country has declined by almost 90%. So as a physician who's been involved in immunization programs, I've seen the benefits of vaccinations. I know they save lives.

Bill Cassidy

00:03:19

I know they're a crucial part of keeping our nation healthy. Now, Bobby, I've learned you got a tremendous following. My phone blows up with people who really follow you. And there are many who trust you more than they trust their own physician. And so the question I need to have answered is, what will you do with that trust, whether it's justified or not?

Bill Cassidy

00:03:50

And you may not want this to be the case, but I have constituents who partly credit you for their decision to not vaccinate their child. Now, that's a real conversation. And I'm hearing from them, and they want you confirmed. Now, you're going to tell us this week, as you did, I think you'll tell us today, as you did in Finance Committee yesterday, that you're pro vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

00:04:16

So what will you tell the American mother? Will you tell her to vaccinate her child or to not or to have a conversation with her doctor? But for many, that that will be permission to not vaccinate their child. We know that to be the case. So your past of undermining confidence in vaccines with unfounded or misleading arguments concerns me.

Bill Cassidy

00:04:44

Can I trust that that is now in the past? Can data and information change your opinion, or will you only look for data supporting a predetermined conclusion? This is imperative. You will have the responsibility to restore trust in our public health institutions in this position you have. Now, let's turn a little political.

Bill Cassidy

00:05:11

I want President Trump to be successful. It's important for our country. Any action you take as HHS secretary will shape his legacy, and we both want that legacy to be positive. So thank you for coming before the committee, for being willing to serve, and I look forward to today's conversation. And with that, I yield to my ranking member, Senator Sanders.

Bill Cassidy

00:05:36

Thank you, Senator Cassidy, chairman, and Mr. Kennedy. Thanks for being with us. I'm

going to discuss later the issue of vaccines, which Senator Cassidy raised. And it's of concern, I think, to all of us. But before I go there, I wanted to congratulate you, in a sense, for the phrase make America healthy again.

Bill Cassidy

00:05:58

I think that is a cry that all of us, a goal that all of us share, because, as you have indicated, we are a very unhealthy society. We are the richest country in the history of the world. And yet we rank far below every other major country in terms of our life expectancy.

Bill Cassidy

00:06:17

That's outrageous to me. Equally outrageous is if you're working class in this country, you're going to live six or seven years shorter lives than if you are rich. In America today, 68,000 people die every year because they can't get to a doctor. They can't afford to get to a doctor. You pointed out yesterday the outrageous cost of health care in America.

Bill Cassidy

00:06:42

Two or three times more than other industrialized countries are paying. Unbelievably. In this country, hundreds of thousands of people deal with cancer, struggling for their lives. You know what happens to them? They go bankrupt. They deplete their lives savings. In other words, when we talk about making America healthy, you got to talk about a broken, corrupt health care system.

Bill Cassidy

00:07:12

Your uncle, President Kennedy, your father, Bobby Kennedy, great senator from New York, your uncle sat right now where Senator Kennedy is. Senator Cassidy is sitting chairman of this committee. All of them did what I think is the right thing. They said health care is a human right. They looked all over the world, they saw every other major country guaranteeing health care to all people, whether they're rich or poor, young or old.

Bill Cassidy

00:07:40

So I'm not quite sure how we can move to making America healthy again unless we have the guts to take on the insurance companies and the drug companies and guarantee health care to all people. I'll be asking you a question about that. Lowering the cost of prescription drugs. How do you make America healthy again if one out of four people in this country cannot afford the price of prescription drugs, which is far higher in America, any other country on earth.

Bill Cassidy

00:08:08

Under President Biden, we made some progress and this committee played an active role.

What we accomplished here, we are the only major country on earth not to guarantee paid family and medical leave. Mr. Kennedy, there are women today who are having babies. Then they got to go back to work in a week or two because they have no guaranteed paid family in medical leave.

Bill Cassidy

00:08:34

How do you have a healthy country when women are forced to go back to work? When women and men get fired because they stay home taking care of their sick kids, that's not making America healthy again. And I would go a little bit beyond the jurisdiction of Health and Human Services, but I think it's important.

Bill Cassidy

00:08:56

If you are working 50 or 60 hours a week, making 13, 14 bucks an hour, which is what millions of Americans are, can you be healthy? Will you join those of us who think that in the United States, wealthiest country on earth, people work 40 hours a week, they should not live in poverty.

Bill Cassidy

00:09:14

Got to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. And lastly, and we discussed this very briefly, President Trump believes that climate change is a hoax. I happen to believe, and most Americans believe, and virtually the entire scientific community believes, that it is an existential threat to this planet. I don't know how you're going to make America healthy again or keep the world healthy when you have massive heat waves and droughts and floods and extreme weather disturbances.

Bill Cassidy

00:09:46

Louisiana had them. Vermont had them. That's not keeping America. That's not within the jurisdiction of hhs. But I surely hope that you will, if you are confirmed, demand that President Trump change his position and work with those of us who are trying to transform our energy system and, in fact, keep America healthy by addressing the crisis of climate change.

Bill Cassidy

00:10:08

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Sanders. And now I'd like to welcome our nominee, Mr. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Mr. Kennedy has a long career as an attorney and advocate for various health and environmental concerns. He has championed a range of issues like healthy foods and efforts to fight chronic disease, while calling for greater transparency and accountability in our public health infrastructure.

Mr. Kennedy has an important opportunity to reform the department and to restore trust in our federal health agencies. I look forward to hearing more about his policy priorities and his plans to advance President Trump's agenda to make America healthy again. I thank you for joining us today. And I'll now turn over to Mr.

Bill Cassidy

00:10:47

Kennedy to introduce himself. Is your microphone on? Is your microphone on?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:10:57

Thank you, Chairman Cassidy. Thank you, Senator Sanders, ranking members and our ranking members, Senator Sanders, and other members of this distinguished committee. Cheryl and I were heartbroken last night to learn the tragic accident that took so many of our fellow Americans, including our service members. We are in an apartment where we were able to see the rescue operations from our.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:11:29

From our window. American Senator Marshall, please know that I will continue. There you are. I'll continue to pray for you. As I texted you last night, those who were lost who called your state home, as well as Senators Kaine and also Brooks. We appreciate the first responders and local officials who are working so hard.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:11:56

May God continue to be with us all and all who are impacted and those who continue to help with the recovery. I'm humbled to be sitting here today as President Trump's nominee to oversee the U.S. department of Health and Human Services. I want to thank President Trump for entrusting me to deliver on his promise to make America healthy again.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:12:20

I'm grateful to have my family here once more with me. I want to introduce my wife Cheryl, my daughter Kick, my son Bobby, my daughter in law, Amaryllis, and my nephew Jackson Hines. I want to thank them as well as the many members of my large extended family for the love they have so generously shared.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:12:48

I want to particularly thank you, Mr. Chairman, the time you've spent with me and the times we've talked in person by phone. I greatly admire your passion for public health and your commitment to science. This committee is blessed to have a medical doctor at the Helm and two other medical doctors, Dr. Marshall and Dr.

Rand, on the committee. I explained yesterday to the Finance Committee that my journey into the issue of health began with my career as an environmental lawyer. Working with hunters and fishermen and mothers in the communities and small towns along the Hudson River, I learned that human health and environmental health are intertwined and inseparable.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:13:34

The same chemicals that kill fish also sicken human beings. Today, Americans overall health is in grievous condition. Over 70% of adults and a third of children are overweight or obese. Diabetes is 10 times more prevalent than in 1960. Cancer among young people is rising by 1 or 2% per year. Autoimmune diseases, neurodevelopmental disorders, asthma, Alzheimer's, ADHD, depression, addiction and a host of other physical and mental health conditions are all on the rise.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:14:12

United States has worse health than any other developed nation, yet we spend more on health care, sometimes double, sometimes triple as other comparable nations. Last year we spent 4.8 trillion, not counting the indirect cost from missed work. That's almost a fifth of GDP. It is tantamount to a 20% tax on the entire economy.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:14:38

No wonder America has trouble competing with countries, pay a third of what we do for their health care and yet have a healthier workforce. But I don't want to make this too much about money is the human tragedy that moves us to care. President Trump has promised to resurrect America's global strength and our leadership and restore the American dream.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:15:04

He understands that we can't be a strong nation unless refers to healthy people. A healthy person has a thousand dreams. A sick person has only one. Today, over half our countrymen and women are chronically ill and have only one dream. When I met with President Trump last summer, I discovered that he has more than just a concern for this tragic situation, but genuine care.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:15:36

President Trump has committed to restoring the American dream, and 77 million Americans delivered a mandate to do just that, due in part to his embrace and elevation of the Make America Healthy Again movement. That movement, led largely by maha moms from Every state, many of whom have traveled to be here yesterday and today.

Senators, this is one of the most powerful and transcendent movements I've ever seen. The nation is ready for change and recognizes that this is a unique inflection moment. I promised President Trump that if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to put the health of America back on track. I've been greatly heartened to discover a deep level of care among members of this committee, both Democrats and Republicans.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:16:29

I came away from our conversations hopeful that we can put aside our divisions for the sake of a healthy America. For a long time, the nation has been locked in a divisive health care debate about who pays well when health care costs reach 20% of GDP, there are no good options, only bad ones.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:16:52

Shifting the burden around between government and industry and corporations is like changing deck chairs on the Titanic. Our country will sink beneath a sea of desperation and debt if we don't change course and ask the fundamental question, why are health care costs so high in the first place? The obvious answer to that question is chronic disease.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:17:18

CDC says over 90% of health care spending goes toward managing chronic disease, which hits lower income Americans the hardest. The President's pledge is not to make some Americans healthy again, but to make all Americans healthy again. There is no single culprit for chronic disease. Much as I've criticized certain industries and agencies, President Trump and I know that most of the scientists and experts genuinely care about American health.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:17:51

Therefore, we will bring together all stakeholders in pursuit of this unifying goal. Before I conclude, I want to make sure this committee is clear about a few things. News reports and many in the hearing yesterday have claimed that I'm anti vaccine and anti industry. Well, I'm neither. I'm pro safety. I'm pro good science.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:18:14

I worked for 40 years to raise awareness about mercury and other toxics in fish and nobody called me any fish. All my kids are vaccinated. I believe vaccines have saved millions of lives and play a critical role in healthcare. Nor am I the enemy of food producers. American farms are the bedrock of our culture and our national security.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:18:40

I was a four age kid and I spent my summers on ranches. I want to work with our farmers and food producers to remove burdensome regulations and unleash American ingenuity. Maha simply cannot succeed if we do not have the partnership of America's farmers and my advocacy. I've often disturbed the status quo by asking uncomfortable questions, and I'm not going to apologize for that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:19:10

We have massive health problems in our countries that we must Face honestly, the first thing I've done every morning for the past 20 years is to pray to God that he would put me in a position where I can end the chronic disease epidemic and protect our children. That's why I'm so grateful to President Trump.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:19:31

The opportunity to sit here before you today and seek your support and your partnership in this endeavor. I'll conclude with a promise to you, Mr. Chairman, members of this committee, to the President, and most of all, to the tens of millions of parents across America, especially the moms who have propelled this issue to center stage.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:19:56

Should I be so privileged as to be confirmed, we will make sure our tax dollars support healthy foods. It will scrutinize the chemical additives to our food supply. We'll remove the financial conflicts of interest from the agencies. We'll create an honest, unbiased, science driven HHS accountable to the President, to the Congress, and to the American people.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:20:21

We reverse the chronic disease epidemic and put the nation back on the road to good health. Thank you.

Bill Cassidy

00:20:28

Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. I'll start. And for everyone's information, yesterday finance went long. This is not the star chamber. This is where I think most people can get their questions out in five minutes. And so I'll let it go a little bit over five. But out of deference to our witness, who's already testified for three hours, I'll be a little tight.

Bill Cassidy

00:20:50

That said, at the end, taking the ranking member and the chairman's privilege, we will have a chance, the two of us will have a chance to ask a little bit more, and that's what you get for being a chair. So that said, let's begin. Bobby, if I may, because you said I could, you had once described yourself as pro vaccine.

To me. Now, the context of what I'm about to ask is that there's multiple studies establishing the safety of measles and hepatitis B vaccine and specifically that they are not a cause of autism. In this position, and you have previously said yes, but if you are approved to this decision, to this position, will you say unequivocally, will you reassure mothers, unequivocally and without qualification, that the measles and hepatitis B vaccines do not cause autism?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:21:45

Senator, I am not going into the agency with any.

Bill Cassidy

00:21:49

That's kind of a yes or no question, because. So if you're. Because the data is there, and that's kind of a yes or no, and I don't mean to cut you off, but that really is a yes or no.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:22:00

If the data is there, I will absolutely do that.

Bill Cassidy

00:22:05

Now there is the data. Just because I used to do hepatitis B, as I've said, I know the data is there.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:22:11

Well, then I will be the first person. If you show me data, I will be the first person to assure the American people that they need to take those vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

00:22:23

Now, what concerns me is that you've cast down on some of these vaccines recently. I mean, like last few years. But the data, and I could quote some of it, the data has been there for a long time. I've been out of the game. I've been in Congress for 16 years. And this data was in large measure generated before I came to Congress.

Bill Cassidy

00:22:45

So my concern is that if you were making those claims and being so influential, I mean, your bully pulp is incredible with that responsibility, that you never acquainted yourself with anything that might contradict that which you were previously saying. So let me ask once more. If the data is brought to you and these studies that have been out there for quite some time and have been peer reviewed and it shows that these two vaccines are not associated with autism, will you ask no, I need even more.

Or will you say no? I see this. It stood the test of time. And I unequivocally and without qualification say that this does not cause autism.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:23:25

Not only will I do that, but I will apologize for any statements that misled people. Otherwise.

Bill Cassidy

00:23:31

Thank you. Next.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:23:33

I just want to pledge you and I will never stick on a point if somebody shows me data that says I'm wrong. I know that's an interpretation people have, but it's absolutely wrong. I think the science driven and evidence.

Bill Cassidy

00:23:49

Driven, I think the concern is how persuadable people are. But let me go on because I have limited time. I'm going to hold myself to the same five minutes. Yesterday, Senator Bennett in finance asked you if you had once previously made statements that Lyme disease was created as a military bioweapon. And you said you may have said that once.

Bill Cassidy

00:24:06

Do you still believe that Lyme disease was created as a military bioweapon?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:24:11

I've never believed that, Senator. What I said is that we should always follow the evidence. There were three books suggesting that I have not read them through. What I've said is we should always follow evidence no matter what it says. So I never have said that definitively Lyme disease was created in a biolab.

Bill Cassidy

00:24:32

Okay, next, again, this will be kind of a yes or no. Do you commit that you will revise any CDC recommendations only based on peer review, consensus based, widely accepted science, in other words, not personal beliefs or the beliefs of any single person that you or your department may identify.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:24:54

Absolutely, Senator. I am not. I am not going to go into HHS and impose my preordained

opinions on anybody at hhs. I'm going to empower the scientists at HHS to do their job and make sure that we have good science that's evidence based, that's replicatable, where the raw.

Bill Cassidy 00:25:18

Data is published almost out of time. So let me get to another question.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 00:25:20

All right.

Bill Cassidy 00:25:21

Do you promise that FDA will not deprioritize or delay review and. Or approval of new vaccines and that vaccine review standards will not change from historical norms?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 00:25:32

We will have the best vaccine standards with safety studies and I will if they.

Bill Cassidy 00:25:38

That's a little bit of a different answer than the question I asked, because what is the best could be in the. In the eyes of the beholder. So let me read again. Promise that the FDA will not deprioritize our delay, review and. Or approval of new vaccines. And. And that vaccine review standards will not change from historical norms.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 00:25:57

Yes.

Bill Cassidy 00:25:58

Great. With that, I will set a good example and I yield my time to. Thank you, member. Thank you, Chairman Cassidy. And I'm gonna do what I very rarely do, is actually follow up on a question from Senator Cassidy. There have been, as I understand it, dozens of studies done all over the world that make it very clear that vaccines do not cause autism.

Bill Cassidy 00:26:26

Now, you just said, if I heard correctly. Well, if the evidence is there, the evidence is there. That's it. Vaccines do not cause autism. Do you agree with that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 00:26:41

As I said, I'm not going to go into HHS with any preordained.

I asked you a simple question, Bobby. Studies all over the world say it does not.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:26:50

What do you think, Senator? If you show me those studies, I will absolutely, as I promised to Chairman Cassidy, I will.

Bill Cassidy

00:26:58

That is a very troubling response because the studies are there. Your job was to have looked at those studies as an applicant for this job. All right, let me ask you another question about this one about COVID Scientists with the Yale School of Public Health and University of Maryland have estimated that the COVID vaccine saved 3 million lives and prevented 18 million hospitalizations.

Bill Cassidy

00:27:23

President Trump, someone who I do not often agree with, has said that the COVID vaccine was, quote, one of the greatest miracles of the ages. That's Donald Trump. But, Bobby, you had a very different perspective at a time when thousands of Americans were dying from COVID Every week In May of 2021, you petitioned the Food and Drug Administration to revoke the emergency use of COVID vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

00:27:51

So my question to you is, were the scientists who told us that the COVID vaccine was imperative and President Trump who told us that it was this great thing, were they right or were you right when you told people that they should not take Covid shots?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:28:13

Senator, I filed that lawsuit after CDC recommended the vaccine for six year old children without any evidence that it would benefit them and without testing on six year old children. And that was my reason for filing that lawsuit.

Bill Cassidy

00:28:30

Was the vaccine, COVID vaccine successful in saving millions of lives?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:28:35

I don't know. We don't have a good surveillance system, unfortunately, we don't know. I don't think anybody can say that. If you show me science that says.

Bill Cassidy

00:28:44

That, Bob, you say if I show you, you're applying for the job. I mean, clearly you should know this, and that is the scientific community has established that the COVID vaccines save millions of lives, and you're casting doubt. That is really problematic. All right, let me ask you another question on another subject.

Bill Cassidy

00:29:10

My Republican colleagues and President Trump are moving toward making massive cuts into Medicaid in order to provide tax breaks for the wealthiest people in this country. As I'm sure you know, Medicaid provides health insurance to tens of millions of children, provides the funding for two out of every three seniors in nursing homes.

Bill Cassidy

00:29:32

It provides 43% of the revenue for community health center, something I feel very strongly about. And it is so important for millions of people. If confirmed in terms of making America healthy again, will you stand up to the White House and say, no, we cannot throw millions of children off of health care, millions of elderly people out of nursing homes.

Bill Cassidy

00:29:58

We cannot cut Medicaid to give tax breaks to billionaires.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:30:02

President Trump has made no indication to me that he intends to throw millions of people out of nursing home or deprive people of their health care. Senator, if a health care system that's broken, it's not working. You've been working on it your entire career. As Americans get less and less healthier as premiums rose.

Bill Cassidy

00:30:22

Bobby, I believe the health care system is broken, asked me to fix it. But my colleagues here, certainly in the House of Representatives, are prepared to make massive cuts in Medicaid. Now, I happen to believe in a Medicare whole system that guarantees health care to all people, not what we're talking about. But in fact, there is serious discussion of massive cuts to Medicaid which will have devastating harm on children, people in nursing school.

Bill Cassidy

00:30:51

All I am asking you, if that proposal goes through, will you say, hey, you're not making keeping America healthy by throwing children off of health care.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:31:00

Senator, I haven't seen any of the congressional proposals. I can only tell you what President Trump has told me, which is that he wants me to make Medicaid, Medicare and Obamacare better.

Bill Cassidy

00:31:12

Well, if you haven't seen those proposals, suggest you go to any newspaper. They're there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Paul. You know, I think the discussion over vaccines is so oversimplified and dumbed down that we never really get to real truths. And it's why people up here are so separated from real people at home.

Bill Cassidy

00:31:32

So we talk about Hepatitis B, it's a terrible disease, it could lead to liver failure, as the chairman said. But the reason you have distrust from people at home, why they don't believe anything you say, they don't believe government at all, is you're telling my kid to take a Hepatitis B vaccine when he's one day old.

Bill Cassidy

00:31:48

You get it through drug use and sexually transmitted. That's how you get hepatitis B. But you're telling me my kid has to take it at one day old. You're not. That's not science. And so every person with a bit.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:32:00

Of common sense, even people who don't.

Bill Cassidy

00:32:02

Resist vaccines, I vaccinated all my kids. I believe vaccines are one of the modern miracles. Beyond all pale.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:32:08

The Speckled Monster is a great book.

Bill Cassidy

00:32:10

About the introduction of the smallpox vaccine in 1720 into our country. All miracles. But I'm not a one size fits all. It's not all or nothing. I chose to wait on my Hepatitis B vaccine and we did it when.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:32:22

They went to school.

Does that make me an awful person? Does that make me an anti vaxxer? Because I questioned the government dictate of whether I do it. And I'm not speaking for anybody else, I'm only speaking for myself. But for goodness sakes, let's have an honest debate about these things. The COVID vaccine, if you ask me.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:32:39

My opinion, there were reporters run up and down the soil and they say you still anti vaccine. No, I'm pro vaccine. But on the COVID vaccine and on.

Bill Cassidy

00:32:46

The COVID illness, there was a thousand fold or more difference between the elderly and children. If you don't acknowledge that you're committing malpractice, you're showing your ignorance. If you say a six month old must be mandated to get it, the.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:00

Science is not there.

Bill Cassidy

00:33:01

So all this blather about the science.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:03

Says this and the science says that.

Bill Cassidy

00:33:05

No, it doesn't. The science actually shows that no healthy child in America died from COVID look it up. No healthy child died from COVID And so the thing is is that it's a thousand fold greater. So if you asked me my advice as a physician, if you were 65 or older or overweight and some other conditions, I would have said hell yes.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:25

I'd take the COVID vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

00:33:27

The risks of the disease were real.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:28

And much greater than the vaccine.

But if you ask me, should my healthy 6 month old get it?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:33

See, these are the nuances you're unwilling.

Bill Cassidy

00:33:35

To talk about because there's such a belief in submission. Submit to the government, do what you're told.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:33:41

There is no discussion. There ought to be a debate.

Bill Cassidy

00:33:43

You're not going to let him have the debate because you're just going to criticize and say it is this and admit to it or we're not going to appoint you. But it's more complicated than that. And this is why people distrust government, because you're unwilling to have these conversations and go home. Ask your Democrat young mothers, your Republican young mothers, if they're vaccinating their kid for hepatitis B and they're like, well, do I have to do it on day one as this precious little baby?

Bill Cassidy

00:34:06

Is there science to say you shouldn't do it? Probably not, but it's my kid. You know, it's like there isn't clear cut science saying not to. But on autism, there's no good science of anything to show what causes autism. We don't know it's a profound disease. I know many moms here and dads who have kids with autism.

Bill Cassidy

00:34:25

I know them personally, I've met their kids. But the thing is, is they saw their kids developing completely normal, maybe speaking 100 words go to no words at about 15 months of age. Now, there isn't proof, there isn't proof that the vaccines cause it. That's true. There isn't proof that it caused it.

Bill Cassidy

00:34:41

But we don't know what causes it yet. So shouldn't we be at least open minded? We take 72 vaccines. Could it be, I don't know. But we shouldn't just close the door and say we're no longer because we believe so much in submission, we're not going to have an open mind to study these things.

And so it's sort of this crazy notion, schizophrenia. I would put in the same notion. You have a kid who's completely normal to 18 or 19 and their brain goes haywire. How does that happen? It's the most bizarre disease. Shouldn't we be open? Could it be our food? It might be vaccines, it might be our food.

Bill Cassidy

00:35:14

But autism's more common. I don't know about the schizophrenia statistics, but autism is more common. Shouldn't we want to be open minded instead? We're so close minded and we're so.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:35:23

Consensus driven that the science says this?

Bill Cassidy

00:35:26

Well, science doesn't say anything. Science is a dispute. And 10 years from now we could all be wrong. We were told in the beginning, 20 years ago, they did this enormous study and they said, everybody over 50 should take an aspirin. I thought, well, that's a pretty good idea. It makes sense. But you know what?

Bill Cassidy

00:35:41

20 years later they measured it and they found if you had no heart disease and you were taking aspirin, your chance of dying from a brain bleed or from a stomach bleeding, we're greater than the risk of heart disease. Do you have heart disease? They still say, take an aspirin. If you don't, they've changed your mind 20 years later.

Bill Cassidy

00:35:56

But would you have all said, I was crazy and I should no longer be in public discourse if I had said 20 years ago, I don't feel like taking an aspirin, I ride my bike all the time. I'm afraid I might hit my head. But that's what country's about, what dissent is about.

Bill Cassidy

00:36:09

So just ask you to look at the larger picture and give the guy a break who says, I just want to follow the science where it leads without presupposition. I think really what we have up here is presupposition. You've already concluded it's absolute, that autism isn't caused by it. We don't know what causes autism, so we should be more humble in what we say.

Bill Cassidy

00:36:28

Sorry, I didn't get to a question for the record. For the record, if a child is born to a hepatitis B mother, that child may have a 95% chance of becoming a chronic carrier. And

we vaccinate those people. And nobody's against that. That's a very small percentage. In a red herring, that is not what we're talking about.

Bill Cassidy

00:36:52

99.9% of kids don't have a hepatitis B mom. And could they wait a while? Could they get vaccinated three months or a year? Yes. So again, for the record, if the mother's hepatitis B status is known, then that can be delayed. The problem is oftentimes, or at least a significant percentage of the time, the mother's status is not known if she's hepatitis B positive.

Bill Cassidy

00:37:16

A vaccine on day one of life prevents chronic hepatitis B 95% of the time. So it really depends upon the mother's. The knowledge of the mother's hepatitis B status and when they used to do just. Okay, we know the mother status or not, there's mothers that snuck through. Their status was unknown. We can blame the obs, but.

Bill Cassidy

00:37:37

Yeah, Marshall. But for the record, there is an absolute rationale for that. But you are right, if the mother status is definitively known that it can be safely delayed. So now, Senator Murray. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. HHS has really broad and critical responsibilities to protect and preserve health care and social services, from women's health to childcare to biomedical research.

Bill Cassidy

00:38:06

That's just a few. In light of last night's tragedy, I do want to express my thoughts and prayers, but it is, I think, a painful reminder to all of us that we need competent people running our federal agencies to respond when a crisis strikes. Mr. Kennedy, let me start by talking about vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

00:38:26

I think we all agree that cancer is particularly nefarious chronic disease. And the American Cancer Society reported earlier this month that women under 50 are experiencing a dramatic increase in the incidence of that disease. Fortunately, there is clear data showing that the HPV vaccine has saved lives and cut cervical cancer rates dramatically.

Bill Cassidy

00:38:50

You have called the HPV vaccine, quote, dangerous and effective and said it actually increases the risk of cervical cancer. Do you stand by those statements, yes or no.

The HPV vaccine? You know, I brought litigation. I represented.

Bill Cassidy

00:39:10

Yes or no?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:39:11

I represented.

Bill Cassidy

00:39:12

By your statements.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:39:13

Let me answer.

Bill Cassidy

00:39:15

I'm trying to. Yes or no. It's a simple yes or no.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:39:17

I'm. By your previous statement, I litigated on that issue. I represented hundreds of young girls who felt that they were injured by the vaccine. That trial is happening right now in Los Angeles. Those questions will be answered by a jury at trial.

Bill Cassidy

00:39:37

You said that no loving parents would allow their daughter to receive that vaccine if confirmed. As HHS secretary, would you recommend that parents get their children vaccinated against he.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:39:47

I recommend that children follow the. The CDC schedule. And I will support the CDC schedule when I get in there, if I'm fortunate enough to be confirmed.

Bill Cassidy

00:39:59

Would you recommend the parents get their children vaccinated against the measles? Yes or no?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:40:03

Against measles, yes.

Well, just remind everybody that parents look to our health leaders for advice on these decisions. You would be a health leader. And for the record, I would like to put into the record his previous statements on these vaccines. I do want to ask you a question about character. I still believe character matters.

Bill Cassidy

00:40:25

And I want to let you respond to this. You were accused of sexual harassment and assault by Eliza Cooney, who was first hired as a part time babysitter by your family. When you were confronted about this accusation, you said you were, quote, not a church boy and that you, quote, have so many skeletons in my closet.

Bill Cassidy

00:40:42

You then texted Ms. Cooney an apology and indicated you had no memory of what she described. Mr. Kennedy, I'm asking you to respond to those accusations seriously in front of this committee. Did you make sexual advances towards Ms. Cooney without her consent?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:40:58

No, I did not. And that story has been debunked.

Bill Cassidy

00:41:01

But why did you apologize to her then?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:41:03

I apologize for something else.

Bill Cassidy

00:41:08

Well, that's not my understanding. Are there. Let me just ask.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:41:11

All you have to read is the text which she published is not for that.

Bill Cassidy

00:41:16

That is not how I've read it. Are there any other instances where you have made sexual advances towards an individual without their consent? Just yes or no.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:41:23

No.

No. Mr. Kennedy, you said that you're going to say to NIH scientists, God bless you all. Thank you for your public service. We're going to give infectious disease a break for eight years.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:41:38

Excuse me?

Bill Cassidy

00:41:40

You said you were. You just said thank you for your service to our federal employees. You want to give infectious disease a break. That's a quote. Will you support the development and distribution of vaccines for the avian flu? Yes or no?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:41:54

Will I? For the avian flu? Yes.

Bill Cassidy

00:41:59

My time's almost up. But having read a lot and listened a lot, I just want to remind all my colleagues that by voting to confirm Mr. Kennedy, we would be telling our constituents he's worth listening to. That alone could get people killed before he even lifts a finger because he does not even need the levers of power to influence people, as we saw in Samoa.

Bill Cassidy

00:42:22

All he needs is a megaphone to affirm his views by voting to confirm him as our highest health official. We should not mince words about what that would mean when babies die from whoopee cough because parents weren't sure if the vaccine was safe. We will have to look them in the eye when measles sweeps through school, then hospitals, nursing wards.

Bill Cassidy

00:42:41

Will this be worth it? There are political realities. We all get that. But there's also right and wrong, fact and fiction. And there's also people staying healthy or dying pointlessly from diseases we can prevent because they thought Congress took its job vetting our healthcare secretary seriously. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're going to now go out of order.

Bill Cassidy

00:43:03

We're going to go to Senator Marshall. He would like to be able to view the press conference regarding the Tragedy on the plane from Wichita. Senator Marshall. Well, thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Kennedy, for your kind words this morning,

for your caring text last night. And I'm grateful for all my colleagues, most everybody reaching out to us and, and it's certainly, it's a, it's a tough day for Kansans and many others who lost loved ones and we will look forward meeting with the President later today and those loved ones and just want everyone back home to know that we're wrapping our arms around them, that we're mourning with them and we'll get through this together.

Bill Cassidy

00:43:44

So thank you. Mr. Kennedy. Take a second and just describe why fighting chronic disease is so important to you. Who are we fighting for? What is your role as HHS secretary? And is there anything that's a bigger priority to you than this as you go into this role?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:44:04

Thank you, Senator. When I was a 10 year old boy, my uncle was in the White House. The chronic disease among American children was 2%. Today it's 66%. The cost of chronic disease to our country when my uncle was present was zero. There were not even treatments for chronic disease at that time.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:44:28

The cost is \$4.45 trillion 77% is bankrupting our country. of American kids can't qualify for military service. 38% of teens, according to NIH's last report, which was three weeks ago, 30, 38% are diabetic or pre diabetic. When my uncle's president, the typical pediatrician with one or two cases of diabetes in his lifetime, juvenile diabetes, it's more than a third of the kids who walk through his door or her door is diabetic or pre diabetic.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:45:09

Autism rates have gone from 1 in 10,000 or 1 in 1500 to 1 in 10,000, depending on what study you look at. In my generation as a 70 year old men today in our children it's 1 in 34. The explosion. You know, I had 11 siblings, I had dozens of first cousins.

Bill Cassidy

00:45:29

Mr. Kennedy, I'm sorry, so who are we? What's your role as HHS secretary to fight that disease?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:45:37

There's never been an HHS secretary who came in to do this. It was all about, about the typical partisan debate about how we allocate the cost, whether insurers pay it or whether hospitals, providers or families pay it. And the costs continue to rise. All the things we're debating on our kids are getting sicker and sicker.

Just to quote you from yesterday, it's like we're moving the chairs on the.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:46:06

Titanic and the ship is sinking and nobody's paying attention to it. And yesterday I got, I got question after question from the Democrats about measles. In 1963, the year before the measles epidemic or the measles vaccine was introduced, 500 American kids died from measles, almost all of them extremely poor and malnourished. We have 252 million Americans who are suffering from chronic disease and none of them.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:46:39

I mentioned diabetes, didn't mention heart disease, they didn't mention cancers yesterday. We need to refocus if we're going to save our country. This is existential. Our country is not going to be destroyed because we get the marginal tax rate wrong. It is going to be destroyed if we get this issue wrong. And I am in a unique position to be able to stop this epidemic.

Bill Cassidy

00:47:06

Mr. Kennedy, I want to contribute as one of the three physicians on here. And even as I listen to my friends across the aisle, my conclusion is that we have to guard the physician patient relationship and give those parents of these kids the information. All three of us are going to disagree on exactly who should and shouldn't get a particular vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

00:47:28

We all recognize the incredible successes of different vaccines as well. But we have to give the American public the best information, non biased information. And I'd love to get you to respond that, but I have an important question for folks back home. This will be my last question. I've never seen a person whose words written and spoken have been so misattributed, exaggerated, sensationalized and taken out of context.

Bill Cassidy

00:47:53

Will you just speak to my farmers and ranchers back home and tell me about your. Where do they fit in this role of Maha and how we're going to work with them and just your compassion.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:48:04

Towards these farmers and ranchers, I mean, we can. Maha will not succeed without the cooperation and partnership of agricultural producers of farmers and ranchers across this country. I was a 4H kid. I grew up working on ranches and I've worked for years representing farmers in various forms of litigation. Thomas Jefferson said that American

democracy is rooted in tens of thousands of independent freeholds owned by farmers.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:48:35

We are losing farmers today and we can't afford to lose single farmer. And on my watch, I do not want to lose a single farmer. We have to offer farmers an off ramp from chemically intensive agriculture, which they don't want to do, which even the chemical industry is ready to change into, so that they can grow crops that they can sell in Europe.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:49:01

They can grow crops. Senator Hawley told me during Our meeting that four out of his five of his brother in laws have Parkinson's. There's illness all over the farm community and it's undoubtedly related to the intensity of chemical pesticides. Mr. Kennedy, we need to reduce that, but I'm not going to do anything coercive farmer.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:49:21

President Trump was the best president in modern American history for the American farmer, the first one to see farm prices go up. He has instructed me to take care of the farmers and make sure they're full partners.

Bill Cassidy

00:49:36

Thank you, Senator Baldwin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:49:42

Mr. Kennedy, I've been listening to the back and forth and questions and when people have tried to pay, you have said can you speak up, Senator Baldwin?

Bill Cassidy

00:49:51

Yes, I've been listening to the back and forth, the questions and when people.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:49:54

Tried to pin you down on a.

Bill Cassidy

00:49:55

Point, you said show me the data or bring me the studies. And I want to suggest that that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:50:02

Data is out there and those studies are out there.

And if you're going to review all the studies and the data, you're going to be doing that if confirmed for your first year of being secretary. When we talked, we were talking a bit about vaccines at the end of our meeting and you said really to me that there's no post approval safety monitoring.

Bill Cassidy

00:50:25

And that led me to believe that you're not aware of the significant and ongoing safety monitoring that occurs after years of rigorous studies showing vaccines to be safe and effective.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:50:36

So I want to give you the.

Bill Cassidy

00:50:37

Opportunity to set the record straight here. Are you aware of the measures in place throughout Health and Human Services to ensure vaccine safety after approval, yes or no?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:50:49

I'm aware of the VAER system which CDC admits captures fewer than 1% of vaccine injuries.

Bill Cassidy

00:50:56

So you are aware of the monitoring. Are you aware of the FDA post approval monitoring?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:51:04

I'm aware of only two systems.

Bill Cassidy

00:51:06

Are you aware of the vaccine safety data link?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:51:09

Oh yeah, I'm very aware of that.

Bill Cassidy

00:51:11

Are you aware of the vaccine adverse event reporting system?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:51:14

I'm aware of the vaccine safety data link that CDC keeps under a lockbox and will not let independent scientists.

Bill Cassidy

00:51:21

Are you aware of the Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment project?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:51:25

As I said, are you aware of V safe? I'm aware that they're broken and I can explain to you how each one of those is broken if you're interested. What I want to do is make sure we have gold standard science. We get the conflicts off the panels so that people, you know, there's Congress.

Bill Cassidy

00:51:45

What I listed right now are just.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:51:47

Some of the guardrails that are in.

Bill Cassidy

00:51:49

Place to ensure that life saving vaccines are safe and effective. And this is after numerous clinical trials, rigorous studies and review by an independent panel of experts that show vaccines are safe and effective, which is available to all the public. If you want to take a second look at the science like you have said, well, it's here, it's available and it's conclusive.

Bill Cassidy

00:52:16

And saying anything else is undermining vaccines to a different.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:52:21

And by the way, repeating what Congress found in the 2003 investigation, Kennedy I.

Bill Cassidy

00:52:26

Want to move to what I hope it will be pretty simple stuff in general for a drug to be considered safe. Would you say that 97, 98% of people taking that drug and having no complications is generally safe?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:52:43

It would completely depend on what the drug is. If it's a drug given to a healthy

population, that would not be an excuse.

Bill Cassidy

00:52:49

Again, this is as high a level as it gets. Would you say that when 99 out of 100 people experience minimal or no complications, that that drug is safe?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:52:59

It depends what the risk is from the disease. It depends what the benefit from the drug is. If you're dying of cancer, you will take a drug with that kind of risk profile.

Bill Cassidy

00:53:10

And if we were to, if you're.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:53:11

A healthy individual, peer reviewed, if you are, if you're a healthy individual with.

Bill Cassidy

00:53:15

Zero risk, I'm talking about mifepristone. But if we were to talk about peer reviewed replicable studies of a medication, would you say that you needed 10 trusted studies to get the same conclusion?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:53:27

It depends.

Bill Cassidy

00:53:28

What the 20 trusted studies?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:53:30

It depends what the, what's your number? It completely depends on the kind of study you're talking about. Randomized studies or observational studies.

Bill Cassidy

00:53:39

Is it safe to assume that 100 studies that are replicable and peer reviewed is enough?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:53:45

Well, it could be one study if it was a powerful enough study.

The most widely used medication, abortion drug, mifepristone, has been FDA approved for nearly 25 years. More than 100 studies have confirmed that 99% of patients who took the abortion pill had no complications. So with all of that, I can only conclude that you would commit to keep this science backed and proven medication on the market and accessible for women.

Bill Cassidy

00:54:15

Is that correct?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:54:17

I'm going to with never. President Trump has not chosen a policy and I will implement his policy.

Bill Cassidy

00:54:29

So regardless of the studies, regardless of the data, regardless of the science you've been talking about, show me the data. Show me the studies. Well, if you would have that policy, regardless of what the science says the.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:54:44

Senator, the devil is in the Details. If you're telling me 99% of women did okay, but 1% died, I would say that is not a beneficial risk profile.

Bill Cassidy

00:54:54

What does the studies show?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:54:56

I know, but you're not showing me. I need those details from the study before I can't buy a pig and a poke. Show me what the study says.

Bill Cassidy

00:55:04

Let's move on. Next would be Senator mullen. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy, for being here. You know, we have fortunately been able to form quite a friendship over the last year and I appreciate it, appreciate the in depth conversations we've had. I just want to point out, I don't understand why my colleagues all of a sudden say we can't question science.

Bill Cassidy

00:55:31

It absolutely blows my mind that all of a sudden it's such shame that Bobby's sitting up here, he's questioning science. Because I guarantee you, if he was sitting here and he was

going to be the secretary of HHS underneath the former President Biden, which I enjoy saying, former President. I would bet you that you guys would have his back 100% and enjoy the fact that he's questioning science and would probably support his positions 100%.

Bill Cassidy

00:55:55

But because he's now on the Republican side, you guys went way off the rail. And how dare he question science. My God, if we didn't question science, where would we be today? We've always questioned science. Science is always evolving over changing. Have a glass of wine a day. It's healthy for you. Don't have a glass of wine a day.

Bill Cassidy

00:56:13

Have a piece of chocolate a day, it's healthy for you. Dark chocolate is healthy for you. Take an aspirin a day. As Senator Rand Paul pulled out, I mean, where would we be today if we didn't ever question science? But I will say there's an issue that I have as a father of six that when my kids come out from getting their vaccines, they look like a freaking pin cushion.

Bill Cassidy

00:56:31

I mean, 72 vaccinations. I think there's a reason we should be questioning this. When you start looking at the rise of autism, why wouldn't we be looking at everything? Who wouldn't want to look at everything? Give me anybody in this room that doesn't know somebody that you're personally connected to, that one of their children doesn't suffer from some severity of autism.

Bill Cassidy

00:56:55

Give me one. And you guys are all saying that Bobby can't question it. I don't get it, guys. I don't understand your point, other than the fact you just oppose him because he supports a president that you guys don't like now I applaud him for going into the situation and saying, let's question something.

Bill Cassidy

00:57:15

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing, expecting different results. Is it not true that you're supposed to question science? Is anybody going to question the fact that that's not true? Bobby, share the numbers again with me about autism. Where they at when you as a child to where they're at today as my kids or children.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:57:37

There weren't a lot of studies when I was a kid. But the best studies and really the only studies out There, there are two studies. One shows a rate of about one in 10,000, another

about one in 1500. And there are other estimates in between. Today it is one in every 36 kids, according to CDC.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:58:03

I want to say one other thing relevant to the point you just made. In 1963, my uncle awarded John F. Kennedy the highest civilian honor to Francis Kelsey. Francis Kelsey was a young scientist at NIH who came in and objected to the panel having approved thalidomide for American children. All the scientists that day, they were doing it in Europe.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:58:33

All the scientists of that day and the scientific panels that worked for the agency approved green lighted thalidomide. She stood up and screamed and fought and risked her job and risked her reputation and she blocked it in our country three years later. Everybody knew that, recognized that she was a hero and a savior of our children because we were not getting the kind of terrible diabolical deformities as they were experiencing in Europe.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

00:59:03

My uncle gave her the highest civilian honor because she questioned science and was courageous enough to stand up and say, I don't care what happens to me. This cannot happen.

Bill Cassidy

00:59:15

Irony is that she was a Democrat at that time and she questioned science. But now all of a sudden, because you're working for Republicans, you're not allowed to question science. Let's go back to this and say one. Let's just use a number of 1 in 10,000 your age. Now, we're a little bit different in age.

Bill Cassidy

00:59:29

I'm not going to say how old you are, but you look great for your age. I will say that 1 in 36, that's not a pandemic. Then what is 1 in 36 and it used to be 1 in 10,000 have autism. Now can any of you guys with a straight face say that we shouldn't look at every aspect to what we're putting in our kids, be it from the food to the vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

00:59:57

One in 36, that scares the living daylights out of me. Six kids I could have 36 grandkids. I'm just doing the math. I'm the youngest of seven. My kids are. My family seems to be pretty active in that area. So I'm not necessarily trying to be funny, but I'm being very serious. Guys.

We should support the fact that Bobby's questioning it. He's not saying he's against it. He's saying he's going to question it and let the studies follow where they were, where they will. And God bless you for doing that. Thank you.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:00:29

Thank you Senator.

Bill Cassidy

01:00:34

Senator Kaine thank you Mr. Chair, and congratulations on your nomination. Mr. Kennedy, I enjoyed our conversation. Thank you for starting off today acknowledging the pain felt by people in this region from this horrible air tragedy last night. Senator Marshall and Senator Moran, a lot of folks from Kansas, a lot of folks from Virginia, D.C.

Bill Cassidy

01:00:55

Maryland, but also when that passenger list comes out and when the three soldiers names are revealed, every office here is going to have some connection to them because you have your staffs who live here and we kind of dread seeing that list of names. I drove to the airport at 6:30 this morning and went across the bridge over the Potomac and saw the operation, the recovery operation kind of underway in daylight hours.

Bill Cassidy

01:01:20

And I thought about the last big aviation disaster in Richmond when on 9/11 a plane slammed into the Pentagon and Virginia got hurt very bad that day and so did the nation. Just a couple of months ago you posted this on your X account. On 9/11. It's hard to tell what is conspiracy theory and what isn't.

Bill Cassidy

01:01:47

I'd like to introduce that for the record, Mr. Chair. Objection. We take that kind of stuff pretty personally. Virginians know what happened on 9/11. We don't need folks given oxygen to conspiracy theories about 9/11. Now one thing I noticed about this post is it was in July of 2024. It was 23 years after 9/11.

Bill Cassidy

01:02:15

You had a lot going on in your life. You were running for President. Then. What made you decide in the midst of everything going on in this country, in this world, in July of 2024 in your own candidacy for President, that now was the time to say it's hard to tell what is conspiracy and what isn't about 9/11, what was so important about making this point in July of 2024, Senator?

The dramatic drop in trust in our government. And this is particularly at once one of the templates of that is what happened at cdc.

Bill Cassidy

01:02:47

Yeah, no, no, I want to move aside from that because you say, you go on to say I won't take sides as president. I won't take sides on 9 11. Wow. I won't take sides on 9 11. Let me ask you this as a general matter. Do you find it hard to tell what is a conspiracy theory and what isn't?

Bill Cassidy

01:03:18

Is that kind of a general deficit that you find in your own analytical abilities?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:03:25

My father told me when I was 13 years old, he said people in authority lie and that the job of a citizen in every democracy is to maintain a fierce skepticism.

Bill Cassidy

01:03:41

Okay, I get it.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:03:41

Government authority.

Bill Cassidy

01:03:42

And you're an authority. And you're an authority. But you wouldn't take sides on 9 11. And you're admitting you know I have a hard time telling what is a conspiracy theory and what isn't.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:03:53

Senator, I haven't investigated it. If the things that I investigate I take sides on, people are allowed to hold that opinion.

Bill Cassidy

01:04:00

They're allowed.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:04:01

I'm not going to tell them they're crazy for holding that opinion. I'm going to say, what is your evidence? And if I hear the evidence, I'm going to say, that doesn't make any sense.

So you won't take sides on 9 11. Wow. Senator Murray asked you some questions about Gardasil, and this is a vaccine that's manufactured in Virginia. There's other HPV vaccines. I'm going to enter into the record a whole series of studies from many, many nations that talk about the dramatic positive effect of Gardasil.

Bill Cassidy

01:04:30

Could I introduce those into the record? Mr. Chair, without objection.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:04:33

Those studies are.

Bill Cassidy

01:04:35

Wait, let me ask a question. Let me ask a question. These are studies from Scotland, Sweden, the uk, Australia, the United States, multiple studies. And then I'm going to introduce in the record, I guess it's a blog post of yours. The verdict is now inescapable. Gardasil is killing girls. And I'd like to introduce that into the record as well.

Bill Cassidy

01:04:56

Without objection. You have a pretty significant financial interest in litigation against Gardasil. You have received contingency fees and payments for referring people to lawyers suing the manufacturer. And in your ethics vetting, I've never.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:05:10

Received any money from any Gardy Silva or any other vaccine lawyers.

Bill Cassidy

01:05:15

Let me read a quote. This is your words in your ethics vetting for this nomination. You said, quote, pursuant to the referral agreement, I'm entitled to receive 10% of fees awarded in contingency cases referred to the firm. How can folks who need to have confidence in federal vaccine programs trust you to be independent and science based when you stand to gain significant funding if lawsuits against vaccine manufacturers are successful?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:05:44

I have given Away all of my rights. Any fees in that lawsuit, I yield back.

Bill Cassidy

01:05:52

Next is Senator Scott. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kennedy, good to see you again. Thank you for being here before the committee. One of the beauties of our country is we

have foundational documents that point us in the right direction. I think it's the compass that shows us due north, true north. The Declaration of Independence mentions life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as unalienable rights.

Bill Cassidy

01:06:11

You and I had a serious conversation about the importance of life. And I'm a pro life Christian, as you know, and you said that you assured me that your deputies were going to be pro life. Is that still the case?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:06:24

I will implement President Trump's policies. I serve at his pleasure. But I share President Trump's view that every abortion is a tragedy.

Bill Cassidy

01:06:32

My question is, are you having deputies within your HHS that will be pro life?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:06:40

As I said, I can tell you exactly what I'm going to do. So there's no mistake. I'm going to implement President Trump's policies. President Trump has told me he wants to end like term abortion.

Bill Cassidy

01:06:52

Are you hiring people who are pro life at hhs?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:06:55

Yes, I am.

Bill Cassidy

01:06:56

Thank you. During the first Trump administration, HHS began investing in policies to support individuals living with sickle cell anemia. This has continued. A career staff person has dedicated time to coordinate sickle cell disease related activities across HHS and other government agencies. Will you commit to continuing to have an individual serve in this coordinating role for sickle cell?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:07:20

Yes, and I think I've worked on sickle cell for many, many years. I told you, I have many friends who have sickle cell. Several of them. I've seen the suffering that they endure. One out of every three, 365 blacks in our country has sickle cell. There are now promising gene

therapies. They're very, very expensive.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:07:42

But it's something that NIH should be enthusiastically supporting, that kind of research.

Bill Cassidy

01:07:48

Well, you answered my second question, so that's great. Which was today. You noticed the FDA gene therapies are really breakthrough evolutions in science that are really one time cures. So you support the continuation of the research that makes that more.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:08:04

Absolutely.

Bill Cassidy

01:08:05

Thank you. That's great news. This past fall, due to one facility making the majority of our IV drugs in the US it was devastated by Hurricane Helene. Hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country faced IV shortages. Nephron Pharmaceuticals in Columbia, South Carolina tried to shore up IV support in South Carolina hospitals by creating the Palmetto line in this facility to help make IVs for hospitals across the state, we must do more proactively to address the shortages in the shortage risks, as well as to provide and promote the production of medical products here in the US if confirmed, how will you prioritize efforts to prevent and reduce drug shortages, including for essential medicines?

Bill Cassidy

01:08:52

Including essential medicines.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:08:55

I mean, President Trump has told me it's his priority to bring essential medicine manufacturing back to this country. It's a national security threat. So much of it has been exported abroad and particularly to China. And it's a priority for him. So it's a priority for me as well.

Bill Cassidy

01:09:15

Very good. Will you commit to fostering productive public private partnerships that can provide the government with key information on pharmaceutical supply chains, help direct shortages, and improve the long term security and resiliency of the US Drug supply?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:09:28

Absolutely, Senator.

Bill Cassidy

01:09:30

Thank you very much. And one of the things that we study, I had two opportunities to question you once yesterday at the Finance Committee. I opted, as opposed to seeing you twice, just to see you one time and spend my time doing some other things at that time. But I think it's important for us to recognize that we are in a critical place as a nation.

Bill Cassidy

01:09:50

We're so dependent on other countries for the essentials from health care and beyond. And we ought to work on a strategy of resilience across this nation in all of the essential areas that we need to become less dependent on the rest of the world and more dependent on ourselves. I hope that as your term at the hhs, you will spend a lot of time thinking through all the layers and complexity that is under hhs, how we become more and more resilient as a nation.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:10:23

That's absolutely critical for our national security and for our economy. President Trump is doing that through hhs, but also more importantly through the Commerce Department and meeting directly with pharmaceutical industry leaders to figure out what kind of incentives that they need to bring manufacturing home.

Bill Cassidy

01:10:46

Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back my eight seconds and then we'll go to Senator Murphy. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kennedy, thank you for joining us here today. Listen, credibility matters so much when you lead the most important health agency in the world. The secretary of HHS has got to be trusted that he's telling the truth, that he cares about science, has no political agenda.

Bill Cassidy

01:11:12

Mr. Kennedy, I want to go back to some of your testimony yesterday before the Finance Committee when you either feigned ignorance about some very clear statements that you have made in the past or you outright denied saying things about the vaccine program that you have undoubtedly said. And so, with a day's Hindsight, I want to give you another chance to be honest about the things that you have said.

Bill Cassidy

01:11:42

Senator Warnock asked you yesterday if you had compared America's vaccine program to the Catholic Church's pedophilia scandal. You said you never said that. Now, I'm not asking

to explain what you said.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:11:55

I didn't say it.

Bill Cassidy

01:11:56

Didn't say you didn't. You didn't say that, Senator.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:11:59

I hadn't said that, Senator. I said the other question.

Bill Cassidy

01:12:04

That's fine. You're doubling down on that. You said Senator Warnock also asked you if you compared America's vaccine campaign to the Nazi death camps and the Holocaust. Again, you said yesterday you didn't say that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:12:17

I did not say that.

Bill Cassidy

01:12:18

Did not say that. Senator Bennett asked you yesterday if you had made an allegation that AIDS is a different disease in Africa than it is in America. On that one, you said you didn't recall having had a day to think about it. Do you recall saying that AIDS is a different disease in Africa than it is in the United States?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:12:42

I looked up that passage in my book and found that, indeed, the diagnostics for AIDS are very different in Africa than in the United States, that the list of symptoms is almost completely different.

Bill Cassidy

01:13:00

So let me just. I'll submit this for the record. But having denied the first two statements, let me just read what you said. You said in 2013. Is it hyperbole to say that the people who run our vaccine programs should be in jail? They should be in jail. To me, this is like Nazi death camps.

Bill Cassidy

01:13:23

Look at what it does to the families who participate in the vaccine program. I can't tell why

somebody would do something like that. I can't tell you why ordinary Germans participated in the Holocaust. I can't tell you what was going on in their minds with respect to the pedophilia scandal. You said the pedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church is a perfect metaphor for what's happening in the United States, the vaccine program.

Bill Cassidy

01:13:52

It's the same reason we had a pedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church, because people were able to convince themselves that the institution of the church was more important than these little boys and girls who were being raped. I don't disagree with Senator Mullen. I don't want an HHS secretary that's not going to question science.

Bill Cassidy

01:14:09

I think it's important to question science, but you're not questioning science. You've made up your mind. You have spent your entire career undermining America's vaccine program. You make these Purposeful comparisons to those that are administering the vaccine program, to the Nazi executioners, to the people who covered up the Catholic Church's pedophilia scandal.

Bill Cassidy

01:14:37

Because you have made a decision that there is a comparison, that there is evil in the vaccine program as there was evil in the pedophilia scandal and the Nazi death camps. You aren't exploring science. You have made up your mind. You've spent your entire career trying to undermine these programs. The reason that these statements, these incredibly aggressive over the top statements matter to us is because it just isn't believable that when you become secretary, you are all of a sudden going to be consistent with science.

Bill Cassidy

01:15:13

People who have spent their career saying these kinds of things, running the kinds of campaigns that you have run, don't all of a sudden change their stripes. And so, Mr. Chairman, I will submit these statements.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:15:26

Can I respond to that, Senator?

Bill Cassidy

01:15:28

Objection.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:15:31

My statement about the Catholic Church is almost identical. The findings of the Government Oversight Investigation committee and investigated CDC's vaccine program in 2003. Senator Burton was chairman of that committee and he said that certain individuals in that program had written off a generation of kids because of misplaced institutional loyalty to the CDC and because of entanglements with the drug companies.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:16:04

Let me finish what I'm saying. You made some grave accusations.

Bill Cassidy

01:16:08

Pedophilia to the administer to the administration of vaccines.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:16:12

No, it wasn't pedophilia.

Bill Cassidy

01:16:14

It was a perfect metaphor.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:16:16

Well, if you have 1 in 36 kids with neurological injuries and if that is, you know, know, linked, that's a perfect metaphysical study.

Bill Cassidy

01:16:26

Is it a perfect metaphor?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:16:27

It's not a perfect metaphor, but there's no metaphor that's perfect. But I am pro vaccine. I am going to support the vaccine program. I want kids to be healthy. And I'm coming in here to get rid of the conflicts of interest within the agency, make sure that we have gold standard evidence based science.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:16:44

And if you show me where I'm wrong on this, show me a single statement I made about science that is erroneous.

Bill Cassidy

01:16:52

Thank you, Senator Hawley. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Kennedy, welcome. I enjoyed our conversation last month in our office and thank you for remembering as you

did again today, my uncles who we talked about, Morris and Lauren and Jean, who all have recently passed away from Parkinson's, grew up in a farm family.

Bill Cassidy

01:17:11

That was kind of you to remember them.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:17:12

So thank you for that.

Bill Cassidy

01:17:14

Let me start by asking you a question about children and the safety of children. President Biden's administration, his HHS issued a rule A rule so it's binding, requiring that every doctor in America, including pediatricians, who receive any kind of federal funding, so that's anybody who takes ACA funding, excuse me, anybody who takes CHIP funding.

Bill Cassidy

01:17:35

This is almost every health provider in America requiring them to conduct gender transition and gender so called affirming procedures. So that means hormones, that means puberty blockers, that means surgeries. In some cases they impose that rule on doctors across the country. This has been litigated and it has been actually stopped by a couple of courts who found that it was way outside of HHS jurisdiction.

Bill Cassidy

01:17:57

My question to you is, will you rescind this rule that imposes this radical policy and talk about being anti science, this radical policy on just about every pediatrician in the United States of America?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:18:12

Yes, I will. And by the way, that rule is any science. The most thorough meta review on gender affirming care has come out in the CAS report which reports really catastrophic impacts on children. And that is science. It's a meta review of all the existing scientific studies. But even more just from a common sense, if you're a patient, do you really want somebody performing surgery on you who is morally opposed to that surgery?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:18:48

It doesn't make any sense. We need to embrace diversity in this country are people who believe that's important. I respect them, we should hear them out, we should debate, we should have a congenial conversation. There are also people who believe that it is an atrocity and they need to be listened to too.

And we need to embrace diversity and make room for diversity in this country and not force people to do things that are against their conscience.

Bill Cassidy

01:19:18

And let me just point out that on this rule, what's particularly pernicious about it is we're talking about gender transition surgeries, gender transition care on minor children. This rule purported to preempt all state law. So in states like mine and many others where the voters have said we don't want gender transition procedures performed on minors, the Biden administration attempted to use federal money and forced pediatricians to do it anyway.

Bill Cassidy

01:19:43

So I'm glad to hear you say.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:19:44

You'll rescind that rule.

Bill Cassidy

01:19:45

I think that's terrific for the safety of children.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:19:46

And Senator, I would add that we don't let children drink, we don't let them drive an automobile because they have bad judgment. They are flooded with hormones, their brains are still in formation, their sexuality is still in formation. Formation allow them to make judgments about that are going to have life changing forever implications for the rest of their life at that age is Unconscionable, particularly in light of the CAS report.

Bill Cassidy

01:20:17

I'm glad to hear you say that. Let me ask you a question about NIH research, if I may. I know this is something that you care a lot about. Under the first Trump presidency, I do.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:20:25

Want to add that people who have gender differences should be respected. They should be loved. Loving them is. Does not. Sometimes love means saying no to people.

Bill Cassidy

01:20:36

Let me on nih. Under the first Trump presidency, HHS stopped new NIH research that involved human fetal tissue from elective abortions. Now, you were asked about this sort

of tangentially yesterday by Senator Cantwell, and I want to get your quote right. You said to her correctly, you said stem cell research today can be done on umbilical cords and you don't need any fetal tissue, which is correct.

Bill Cassidy

01:21:00

My question to you is, will you reinstate President Trump's policy that ensures that no federal research and no federal tax dollars is conducted on fetal tissue taken from elective abortion?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:21:10

Yes.

Bill Cassidy

01:21:11

Fantastic. Let me ask you just about Title 10. You were asked about this yesterday, too, and I think I understand your answer. I just want to be sure I've got it crystal clear. Title 10, which prohibits the funding of the use of federal taxpayer funding for abortions or to flow to entities like Planned Parenthood that perform abortions or refer people to abortions.

Bill Cassidy

01:21:30

You were asked yesterday if you would support President Trump's rule that says no Title 10 funding for those who perform abortions or refer people to abortions. I think your answer was yes.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:21:39

You would reinstate that rule.

Bill Cassidy

01:21:40

I just want to be sure I'm right about that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:21:41

Yes.

Bill Cassidy

01:21:42

Fantastic. Last point that I have for you. On mifepristone, the chemical abortion drug, you said yesterday that you would study its safety. I think that's good. I want to make an additional point here just about how the Biden administration changed the rules on mifepristone that I hope that you'll take into consideration because you pointed out.

I'm almost done, Mr. Chairman. You pointed out that we need to honor the wishes of voters and states and their right to set life policy. I just point out that the Biden administration's rule on mifepristone, which they did after the Dobbs decision, means that in any state, including ones like mine, where voters or state legislators say we don't want abortion performed after a certain point, if you.

Bill Cassidy

01:22:21

If the Biden administration rule on chemical abortion stands and you can mail in these abortion drugs without a doctor visit or referral, that means no state ban, no state decision, no Voter decision is going to matter. We're going to have a one size fits all policy set here in Washington. I hope you'll take that into consideration.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:22:37

I will implement President Trump's policies.

Bill Cassidy

01:22:41

Senator Hassan. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Sanders. Good morning, Mr. Kennedy. Look, I want to just take a moment because like a few of us on this dais, I sit on finance as well as help. And one of the things that was most disturbing to me about yesterday's hearing was the suggestion from some of my friends on the other side of the dais that our intense questioning and concerns about Mr.

Bill Cassidy

01:23:11

Kennedy were driven by partisanship. I have voted for five of President Trump's nominees to date in the last couple of weeks. One of them, the new Secretary of Transportation, was on the scene last night at dca. Like all of us, I take really seriously our obligation for advice and consent. And I am concerned as Senator Mullen expressed his concern about the need for science to help us move forward on critical, critical issues.

Bill Cassidy

01:23:45

Now, some of you are new to this committee and new to the Senate, so you may not know that I am the proud mother of a 36 year old young man with severe cerebral palsy. And a day does not go by when I don't think about what did I do when I was pregnant with him that might have caused the hydrocephalus that has so impacted his life.

Bill Cassidy

01:24:10

So please do not suggest that anybody in this body of either political party doesn't want to know what the cause of autism is. Do you know how many friends I have with children who have autism? The problem with this witness's response on the autism cause and the

relationship to vaccines is because he's relitigating and churning settled science.

Bill Cassidy

01:24:41

So we can't go forward and find out what the cause of autism is and treat these kids and help these families. Mr. Kennedy, that first autism study rocked my world. And like every mother, I worried about whether, in fact, the vaccine had done something to my son. And you know what? It was a tiny study of about 12 kids.

Bill Cassidy

01:25:09

And over time, the scientific community studied and studied and studied and found that it was wrong. And the journal retracted the study. Because sometimes science is wrong. We make progress, we build on the work, and we become more successful. And when you continue to sow doubt about settled science, it makes it impossible for us to move forward.

Bill Cassidy

01:25:40

So that's what the problem is here. It's the relitigating and rehashing and continuing to sow doubt. So we can't move forward, and it freezes us in place. Now let me move on to my other concerns from yesterday's hearing. During yesterday's hearing, you really showed a lack of knowledge about Medicare and Medicaid. So what is Medicare Part A?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:26:09

Medicare Part A is mainly for primary care or physicians, and then no.

Bill Cassidy

01:26:19

So it is about Medicare. Part A is seniors coverage for inpatient hospital care.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:26:25

What's Medicare Part B for physicians and doctors. Medicare Part D is.

Bill Cassidy

01:26:31

That is coverage for outpatient care and home health. So what is Medicare Part C?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:26:35

Medicare Part C is a program where it's the full menu of all the services A, B, C and D for Medicare.

Bill Cassidy

01:26:45

It is Medicare Advantage, which the private. It's the private insurance option for seniors on Medicare. So, Mr. Kennedy, you want us to confirm you to be in charge of Medicare, but it appears that you don't know the basics of this program. So let's turn to Medicaid. No, I had to correct you on several things.

Bill Cassidy 01:27:05

Let's turn to Medicaid.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 01:27:07

Yesterday you said, correct me. I didn't get it.

Bill Cassidy 01:27:09

Mr. Kennedy, my time is limited and I hope the chair will give me.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 01:27:13

A couple of more minutes. Senator.

Bill Cassidy 01:27:15

Yes, Medicaid.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 01:27:16

Because you're giving me very little time to answer one.

Bill Cassidy 01:27:19

Let's turn to Medicaid. Medicaid, you said yesterday to Senator Cassidy, Medicaid is fully paid for by the federal government, and it's not fee for service. That statement is false. Do you now understand that that statement is false? Yes or no.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 01:27:36

Medicaid is paid for by the federal government. I believe that you said it is.

Bill Cassidy 01:27:40

Free, fully paid for Medicaid.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr 01:27:41

In fact, sir, is a federal, state has a partnership. Right.

So you were wrong yesterday. So you're acknowledging that that statement was false. Right?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:27:50

I misstated something.

Bill Cassidy

01:27:51

All right, good. So yesterday when you were questioned about Medicaid, you repeatedly dodged questions by saying you want to make it better. Republicans are circulating a proposal that would end Medicaid expansion in some states, including in New Hampshire. So I will continue submit this for the record, but it is important to me to understand whether you believe that taking Medicaid away from 60,000 people in New Hampshire would make Medicaid better and would it make New Hampshire healthy again?

Bill Cassidy

01:28:21

I'll submit that for the record. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Senator Tuberville, thank you.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:28:25

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy, for being here. Being a few months older than me, I'm going to be respectful. Your elders. Not by much. Yeah, not by much. That's right. But thank you.

Bill Cassidy

01:28:39

Look at this room.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:28:39

We hadn't Had a full room in here since I've been in her four years on any hearing. Thank you for bringing the light to what this is all about. It's about health in our country. There might have been a half a dozen people in, in the last Health and Human Services nominee. Nobody was interested.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:29:00

Lawyer who worked from home in California, didn't do a damn thing in terms of what we needed when Covid was full steam. So thank you. Thank you for getting our young people involved. My two boys, 28 and 30. A year or so ago, they were going to vote for you for President United States.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:29:20

You know why? Because you're trying to save their group of people from the chemicals and the things that we have in our food. They're fired up about it. And you brought light to that. And thank God you've done that. You brought importance to what we're doing. You know, I coached for 40 years.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:29:38

In the last four or five years I coached, I'd never seen, like the run on drugs our young people are being given by doctors across this country. We have a attention deficit problem in.

Bill Cassidy

01:29:49

This country, you know, Attention deficit.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:29:51

When you and I were growing up, our parents didn't use a drug, they used a belt, whipped our butt, you know, and told us to sit down. Nowadays, we give them Adderall and Redlin like candy across college campuses and high school campuses. Mr. Kennedy, what are we going to do about that? Today, 15% of American kids are on Adderall and there's clearly a major problem with over prescription, not just with our children, but with our entire population.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:30:26

We have 4.2% of the world's population and we take 50% of the pharmaceutical drugs. And there's a recent study by Peter Ghosh, who is one of the founders of the Cochrane Collaboration, that showed that prescription drugs are now the third largest cause of death in our country, after cardiac arrest, breast and cancer.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:30:46

We're not getting healthier. Americans are getting less and less healthy. 70% of pharmaceutical profits globally come from our country, which has 4.2% of the world's population. We're the only country that allows full scale pharmaceutical ads on tv. And we're all being told, you can make yourself, you can eat anything you want, you can smoke anything you want, you can do anything you want, and there'll be a drug to fix you in the end.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:31:14

And it is not a good formula. And our kids are getting sicker and sicker. They're not getting better. Nobody here, all the people here who are defending this current system and defending these Pharmaceutical industry profits, many of whom are taking huge amounts

of money on the pharmaceutical industry. Millions of dollars for many of these senators and none of that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:31:41

This is not making our country healthier, it's making us sicker. We need to get rid of these conflicts. We need good science and we need good leadership is able to stand up to these big industries and not bend over for them. Thank you. And you brought to light the vaccines over the last couple years.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:32:01

I've had my first granddaughter here in a couple. Couple of weeks and my son and his wife have done their research about vaccines. And she's not going to be a pincushion. We're not going to allow that to happen. But you brought that up.

Bill Cassidy

01:32:16

And.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:32:17

But as you and I talked about vaccines, coach, let's empower scientists to do their job. You know, let's go by what they do. Let's don't just do something for the pharmaceutical company. So I appreciate you doing that. One other thing is you and I talked about red dye number three and just happened.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:32:33

You and I talked about that. And a few days later in this room, we had the FDA director and I asked him, why do we use red dye 3 in our cosmetics or we don't use in cosmetics. We use it in our food, but we don't use it in cosmetics because it causes cancer.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:32:47

What in the heck's going on? Well, a few weeks later, because of your. We dropped. So tell me about dyes and things that you're concerned about because I get more talk about that than anything. We have 10,000 ingredients in our food in this country because FDA employs a standard called the grass standard and looks at any new chemical as innocent until proven guilty.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:33:13

In Europe, they have 400 ingredients in their foods. Kellogg's makes Fruit Loops for the United States alone. It is loaded with red dye, blue dye, yellow dye, and many, many other ingredients. They make the same product for Canada, that's all vegetable dyes. And for

Europe, if you eat a McDonald's french fry in this country, it has 11 ingredients with the same product.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:33:37

In Europe, it has three. We are allowing these companies because their influence over this body, over our regulatory agencies to mass poison American children. And that's wrong. It needs to end. And I believe I'm the one person who's able to end it.

Bill Cassidy

01:33:56

Thank you, Senator Kim. Thank you, chairman. Mr. Kennedy, good to see you. I wanted to just start by asking you if you support medically assisted treatment to help people get off of opiate addiction.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:34:10

Yes, I do.

Bill Cassidy

01:34:11

Do you think it's safe and would you consider it to be the gold standard of the approach?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:34:15

The Cochrane Collaboration, which is the most prestigious or scientific research organization, has at the gold standard has found in studies. A gold standard is 12 step programs. You need an entire retinue, entire menu of treatments because many addicts will not respond immediately, at least to 12 step programs. And for many of them, Suboxone and other and even methadone are critical interventions that save lives, that get addicts off the street and they should be available as a treatment option.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:34:57

I wouldn't describe them as gold standard, but I would describe them as medically necessary.

Bill Cassidy

01:35:02

Well, this is something. Look, I know we all take this very seriously in terms of the plight of opiate addiction in our country. And that's something that I hope we can recognize. We need to lift up more and more. I mean, NIH has said over and over again we need. Not enough people are doing it.

Bill Cassidy

01:35:16

In fact, an NIH published study does call it the gold standard of treatment for opioid use disorder. You're on a mission against and fighting against chronic disease.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:35:27

You talk a lot about obesity.

Bill Cassidy

01:35:29

I wanted to get your thoughts. If you support WeGov, Ozempic, other similar types of GLP1 drugs to fight obesity.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:35:38

The GLP1 drugs, the GLP drugs, the class of drugs are miracle drugs drugs. But I do not think they should be the first frontline intervention for six year old kids for whom they are currently. That is the standard of practice. Now, if every American who qualifies for GLP by being overweight, 74% of our population ask for them and the federal government was paying for it, it would cost over a trillion dollars a year, it would double the insurance costs for employers in this country and it would be a tsunami and you have a lot of side effects.

Bill Cassidy

01:36:27

You said you support it, but that you don't see it being the tool of choice for especially young kids.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:36:35

Exactly. For people who have morbid obesity, for people of diabetes. Absolutely. And they shouldn't be prescribed alone without also prescriptions for exercise because otherwise they eat away at muscle and they're counterproductive. They go after muscle first. They have all kinds of bad side effects. About half the people on GLP is going to offer them after two years and there's problems when you get off them.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:37:10

Okay, go ahead.

Bill Cassidy

01:37:11

Yeah, I wanted to move on to just clarify some statements you made in the past. In the past you said, quote, WI Fi radiation does all kinds of bad things, including causing cancer. Do you still stand by that statement?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:37:23

Yes. I won a case in front of the court of appeals against the FCC on that variation.

Bill Cassidy

01:37:29

And 5G. Do you feel the same way about 5G?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:37:31

Well, I'm just saying. Electromagnetic radiation. Does an RF you think causes.

Bill Cassidy

01:37:40

Another issue that comes before your work, if you were to be confirmed.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:37:44

Let me just clarify that. It changes DNA and there are scientific studies that have linked it to cancer, many of them the. But it does other things that are including neurological injury that are kind of the other frontline injuries that we're most concerned about and that are best documented.

Bill Cassidy

01:38:04

One other issue that comes before your work, if you're confirmed, I wanted to ask if you would support and continue and expand CDC's role in collecting and disseminating data on firearm mortality in the United States.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:38:15

Something that I believe that we need to study the causes of mass shootings. Oh, you know, we need to study all the causes.

Bill Cassidy

01:38:27

When it came to. You said earlier in response on avian flu, you would continue the investments that you would support vaccine development. I just want to clarify, does that mean you support investments in mRNA vaccine research and development?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:38:43

I'm not going to pick a vaccine right now. I need to look at all the data. I need to look at safety data and efficacy data. But I'm going to continue research on every kind of vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

01:38:57

Mr. Chair, you'll back. Thank you, Senator Kim. And now Senator banks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kennedy. President Trump just won a historic election victory and you were

a big part of it. At the outset of the hearing, you talked about those maha moms, that coalition that you led, that movement that was behind you that supported President Trump on election day, giving him one of the biggest elector oral college votes in my lifetime.

Bill Cassidy

01:39:23

You were a part of that. The voters voted for President Trump. And President Trump, by the way, is a, is a man of his word. He always follows through on what he says he's going to do. And one of the things that he said he was going to do was put you front and center in this administration to make America healthy again.

Bill Cassidy

01:39:40

And that's why at the end of the day, a lot of those moms have been here yesterday and today from Indiana to support and this movement. And that's why you have my, my full support. And anything other than voting for you to confirm, you would be thumbing my nose at that movement, the millions of people in this country who want us to focus on making America healthy again.

Bill Cassidy

01:40:02

One of the things I've thought a lot about, I serve on the Armed Services Committee as well. I just left another hearing with the nominee to be our new secretary of the army. Is the. The national security risk of an obese nation. 70% of our kids are not eligible today to serve in the United States military.

Bill Cassidy

01:40:19

And the army two years ago was 25% off of its recruitment goals. And obesity among our kids is one of the reasons why, and I think you would agree. My first question for you. This epidemic in this country is as much of a public health risk as it is a national security risk.

Bill Cassidy

01:40:37

Would you agree with that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:40:38

Absolutely, Senator. And like I said. Well, I didn't say this. When my uncle was president, 3% of Americans were obese. And today 74% are obese or overweight. In Japan, 3% are obese. So other nations, what we're seeing here is not happening elsewhere. And American kids did not suddenly get gluttonous and lazy. Something is poisoning them.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:41:09

We need to figure that out. Then we need to end those exposures. We need to do gold standard science. And all of these moms recognize that we now have a unique opportunity in history where history now is an inflection point, where we have a unique opportunity to reverse this epidemic. And we know what we have to do.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:41:32

We have to study the additives. We have to end the conflicts of interest on the nutrition panels and on the drug panels that are loaded with people who have corrupt entanglements with the industries they're supposed to regulate that have turned these agencies into sock puppets for the industries they're supposed to regulate. We need somebody who can come in, who can break that inertia.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:41:58

We are attracting the most talented group of people who work in NIH and CDC and FDA in modern history and people who are not coming there for jobs. They're innovators, they're disruptors, they're entrepreneurs. And they're coming in not because they want position, but because they actually want to change things and give us gold standard science and make America healthy.

Bill Cassidy

01:42:23

And I know you agree that fair fitness is a part of that, a major part of that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:42:26

Absolutely. My uncle started the Presidential Council on Physical Fitness. I won a contest when I was in. In school. I got an award for it. And it was a piece of pride for me and for many people in my generation. I'm sure Coach, you know, won his residential.

Bill Cassidy

01:42:45

I want to move on. I want to move on to another national security threat. The biggest existential threat to America is the Chinese Communist Party. And right now we're importing one third of our medicines from China. And even more of our generic drugs come from China. It's a public health risk and a national security risk.

Bill Cassidy

01:43:04

What can you do as HHS secretary to reduce our reliance on China and help our domestic?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:43:10

This is a huge priority for President Trump. He sees this as perhaps our greatest national security vulnerability. And over the past few years, so much of our critical of our essential

medicines, the production of them and the supply chains have been exported to China and it's a crisis now in our country. If there is a pandemic, if there is a war, if there's any conflicts, China will now be able to ransom American health and that is not a good situation.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:43:45

We need to bring that production home. And President Trump has, is committed to doing just that.

Bill Cassidy

01:43:51

Well, I Sir, I think you're going to have a tough job. You have my full support, but you've got lawmakers against you, you're going to have bureaucrats against you. You're going to be working with the limits of the administrative state at the department. But I'll have your back and I want to work with you to get it done.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:44:06

Thank you.

Bill Cassidy

01:44:07

Movement thank you. I yield back. Senator Blunt, Rochester thank you, Chairman Cassidy and ranking member Sanders. Mr. Kennedy, during our meeting, you shared your vision for the department and we discussed priorities important to my home state of Delaware. But I must say, as a former cabinet secretary and a health official in my state and listening to your answers today in this hearing, I am deeply concerned and shocked by your apparent lack of understanding of, frankly, some of the basic, the basic responsibilities of the department.

Bill Cassidy

01:44:50

It's the largest, one of the largest, most complex and it is vitally important. And yesterday during your finance hearing and today, you confused details about Medicare and Medicaid. You didn't know what authorities you have under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor act known as emtala, and you made false claims about the safety of mifepristone.

Bill Cassidy

01:45:15

However, what concerns me the most as a mom and a first time grandmother, is your decades long track record of promoting vaccine misinformation and profiting from it, despite the harms that it may cause to American children. And with that, I'll turn to my questions. In yesterday's hearing, you did not seem to know anything about emtala, even

though I raised it with you during our meeting last week.

Bill Cassidy

01:45:40

So I'll give you another opportunity. Yes or no, do you believe that a person presenting to an emergency room with a severe illness should have any type of emergency care needed to save their life?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:45:54

Any American who the law says yes, I'm answering the question. Yes or no was the direction under the law. Every American who presents to emergency room must be treated. And I can enforce that law and I believe that's the right thing to do.

Bill Cassidy

01:46:11

Do you agree that a person who is experiencing severe pregnancy complications should be able to receive emergency care to save their life if that care is an abortion?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:46:23

My understanding of President Trump's policy is that.

Bill Cassidy

01:46:26

I'm not asking you President Trump's policy policy. I'm asking you what do you believe?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:46:31

If it's necessary to save the life of the mother.

Bill Cassidy

01:46:33

Okay, so you do believe. Yes, they should. Do you commit to ensuring that pregnant women will have access to all necessary emergency care, including an abortion, if it is required to save their life or.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:46:45

Preserve if it's required to save their life?

Bill Cassidy

01:46:48

And would you agree that the ability to provide quality emergency care for pregnant women is essential to preventing maternal mortality?

01:46:58

Providing care for pregnant women. We should be providing care for pregnant women. President Trump wants to do that.

Bill Cassidy

01:47:05

Bottom line, for me, women should not be forced to rely on emergency airlifts to other states for life saving care. And to be blunt, in our meeting, your lack of understanding, really, again, was very concerning. In a 2023 interview, you described yourself saying, I'm a Kennedy Democrat. I believe in labor unions. I believe in a strong, robust middle class.

Bill Cassidy

01:47:31

I believe in racial justice. And just yesterday and today, during this hearing and the hearing yesterday, you said, we need to respect diversity. Mr. Kennedy, the Trump administration recently issued an executive order that directs the federal government to eliminate grants, contracts, policies, programs and activities that include diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. This executive order has already caused widespread confusion, fear and uncertainty for healthcare providers, researchers, public health professionals and service providers across the country.

Bill Cassidy

01:48:06

You said in our meeting that you understand that health disparities exist. So yes or no, do you, in your view, do the following programs count as health DEI programs, programs that target black women to address the maternal mortality crisis?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:48:24

Senator, there are seven. Yes.

Bill Cassidy

01:48:26

Yes or no?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:48:27

I'm not going to answer that. Yes or no. If you want an answer, I'm happy to give it to you, but it's not a yes.

Bill Cassidy

01:48:31

I just want a yes or no.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:48:33

It's not susceptible to yes or no answer. If you want to hear an answer.

Senator, let me shift this because I only have three.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:48:41

I'm very happy to hear.

Bill Cassidy

01:48:42

Now 33 seconds. And there are people out here who want to understand that if they are at a pride parade and they're a health care provider, can they give out a brochure?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:48:51

If you want people to understand, let me answer.

Bill Cassidy

01:48:54

A program in a black church that is on Martin Luther King Day Will they be able to have that program? Will it be funded? Will they get in trouble? Will they be fired? That's the cause and concern. We all know that it is important that we have a healthy country. I think I got my answer.

Bill Cassidy

01:49:16

Thank you. And I yield back. I will allow the witness to answer.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:49:23

There are seven departments at NIH that protects minority health and that seek to eliminate this, the shocking unacceptable disparities in minority health. I believe in helping all people who are vulnerable. DEI programs that President Trump eliminated spent \$63 million with no discernible impact on on positive impact on human health in this country.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:50:00

There are. There's institutions already that exist that existed before President Biden whose job it is to do just that.

Bill Cassidy

01:50:07

Will you cut those programs that you just referenced?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:50:11

That decision is up to Congress, not to the HHS secretary.

01:50:15

Thank you. I yield back. For the record, treating a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy is not an abortion. It just false. And so I would ask that that not be. Since I'm not into misinformation, I would ask that misinformation not continually be repeated. Senator Husted, thank you for. There we go. Thank you for the work that you have done to create awareness about the food we eat and how it affects our health, particularly with our children.

Bill Cassidy

01:50:56

And you have helped put that on the American agenda, rightfully so. And I appreciate that. I want to share with you a few statistics. According to the CDC, obesity prevalence is around 42% among adults with lower incomes compared to 31% among higher income individuals. That the relationship is Strong among women, 45% of low income women are obese.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:51:23

Compared to 29% of higher income women. And I know I have had this.

Bill Cassidy

01:51:28

Conversation over the course of my public service career many, many times because at the states we run the Medicaid program. That it impacts those health statistics, that obesity impacts our programs, the cost of them, the quality of life of the people who are served. And I also get this question about why in the world does the federal government continue to subsidize programs that lead to unhealthy foods and why do we operate programs in the way that we do, like with snap that pays for foods that we know are causing people to be unhealthy.

Bill Cassidy

01:52:11

And I know you don't have the sole authority in this matter. Department of Agriculture and the Congress is certainly has an impact on that. But could you just shed some light on how you see your role in trying to impact that? Because we see that these policies are disproportionately affecting poor People and the inability to change them and make America healthy again is having a disproportionate effect not only on them, but the cost of all of these programs we're trying to maintain.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:52:45

Thank you for the question, Senator. NIH has been diverted into, away from studying the ideology of chronic disease. There's almost nothing at NIH very, very little. Low percentage of its budget. A \$42 billion budget that is devoted to finding out why we're having this obesity epidemic. We know it's an environmental toxin. Epidemics are not caused by genes.

That genes may provide a vulnerability. You need an environmental toxin. Why aren't we devoting science to finding out what those toxins are and then eliminating them? And the focus is on infectious disease. And we almost altogether ignore chronic disease, which causes 92% of the deaths in this country. During COVID we had the highest death rate of any country in the world.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:53:47

We had 16% of the COVID deaths. We only have 4.2% of the world's population. No country did as poorly as usual. You ask CDC why is that? They say because we are the sickest people on earth. The average person who died from COVID had 3.8 chronic diseases. American blacks were dying from COVID greater than almost any population in the world.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:54:11

About over 3,000 deaths per million population. The only people worse are Indian reservations, which have an even higher rate. And the only person worth did worse globally were Samoans. American blacks were disproportionately impacted because they disproportionately have diabetes, obesity, cardiac illnesses, and other chronic disease. We need to start studying those, and we need to get rid of the conflicts and the agency that obstructs those studies that are focused on advancing the mercantile interest of the food industry and the pharmaceutical industry rather than the health of the American people.

Bill Cassidy

01:54:59

Well, I would ask you to take, if confirmed, to take a leadership role across agencies to advise us on what policy changes we must make to both not make it worse, but to make it better. Because we subsidize, literally. We have policies as a government to. That encourages the production of foods and the sale of foods, particularly our poorest Americans, that lead to these problems.

Bill Cassidy

01:55:27

We are literally creating the problem that we're trying to solve. And your recommendations would be very much appreciated.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:55:34

We already have liaisons with the usda, with Brooke Rollins, with whom I have a very good relationship, so that we can work collaboratively to reduce the chronic disease and the exposures that are causing them.

Bill Cassidy

01:55:52

Thank you, Senator Hickenlooper. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Bobby, we share a mutual, oldest, best friend and I respect that affection that you have for him very, very much. You did talk a little longer in your introduction. So I'm going to try to urge concision because I've got three or four questions.

Bill Cassidy

01:56:17

As I said when we met, I'm still very concerned about the issues around vaccination. But I thought I'd start with the ability of Medicare to negotiate drug prices, which was finally okayed in 2022. We'll save Medicare plan \$100 billion 10 in the next years. Probably \$1.5 billion 2026 out of consumers population pockets, Medicare patients in just alone.

Bill Cassidy

01:56:42

Yesterday you said that the Trump administration had issued a statement to lowering the cost of prescription drugs and continuing the negotiation program. I went back and looked at that and it was a statement that mentioned increasing transparency and then said they would solicit feedback on the Medicare drug price. But nowhere did it say in the statement that the administration was actually going to commit to lowering prices.

Bill Cassidy

01:57:05

So is that something you still feel that that negotiation program and lowering those prices is important?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:57:12

I've spoken to President Trump about negotiations. He's absolutely committed to negotiating lower drug prices.

Bill Cassidy

01:57:21

Right. I appreciate that. You've also spoken much on the need to focus on prevention of chronic disease, which I think everyone shares. The Maha movement is alive in Colorado as well as everywhere else. People are frustrated by the fact that for every dollar we spend on health care in this country and as has been previously said, often double any other country, only a nickel goes to prevention.

Bill Cassidy

01:57:47

So when you look at that \$100 billion 10 that's going to be saved over the next years through the negotiation of pharmaceuticals. Do you have any ideas of how we could put that towards prevention, that revenue?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:58:03

Well, that's a really good question, Senator Higginlooper. I mean, there's two things.

Bill Cassidy

01:58:10

I'm going to give you 40 seconds.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:58:11

Because I've got two more questions. We can do Medicaid, Medicare and Obamacare should be value. We should be moving to value based care, which includes prevention. And then the other arm is at nih, CDC and fda, which should identify the toxins that are contributing to chronic disease and eliminating them.

Bill Cassidy

01:58:34

Great. Another short question with mifepristone, which has been described and discussed a lot already. And I understand your commitment to follow the policy of the president, but he has other tools at his behest. If there needs to be another study or looking at the other existing studies, will you make sure that there's no bias to the Best of your.

Bill Cassidy

01:58:59

Of our human ability to twist those results in any way to support that policy. And I'm speaking now just about the defense of science to make sure that those.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:59:09

Governor, I will commit to you here today a review prior to approving any study at NIH to allow you to approve the protocols and the researchers and help us choose the research. All I want is good science and I would love input from this committee on any study that we do. There's many ways that studies are flawed and you can correct those at the outset in a lot of ways.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:59:37

So absolutely I will work with you to make sure that it's science that you're satisfied with and I'm satisfied that.

Bill Cassidy

01:59:43

Shows that this is the first time you're being considered for a cabinet position because no other person would ever solicit and willingly approve our participation.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

01:59:50

I'm going to make that commitment. I know the hazard of it, but I'm going to do it anyway.

Bill Cassidy**01:59:54**

I'll hold you to it. Now let me get to the vaccines. And I think this is crucial because I think there is widespread distrust and increasing distrust in the scientific community. I am a scientist. Some have argued that I'm the only scientist in, in the Senate left that is actually I've written research papers in peer reviewed journals.

Bill Cassidy**02:00:16**

I think I understand how it works and that is a healthy skepticism is useful, but we want to make sure that's a healthy skepticism. And yesterday in the discussion about Lyme disease, you said that in your discussion that it was formulated to be a militaristic bioweapon, that you had heard that in three books but you hadn't read through.

Bill Cassidy**02:00:42**

And I think at a certain point, if you're going to be an activist or some people would say a prophet, that what you say becomes promoting something, promoting an idea. And I think when you've only read three books or little bits of the three books, not the whole three books, isn't that reckless?

Bill Cassidy**02:01:03**

I mean, isn't that there's something about. Aren't you then promoting this anti science, anti the conspiracy about Lyme disease in this case, but the same thing about some of these vaccine issues.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr**02:01:14**

Like I said, I never endorse the issue. I said it's out there. For me not to acknowledge that is a form of manipulation. For me to say there is no question here, the government proclaimed orthodoxy is true. Anybody who believes it is a disorder.

Bill Cassidy**02:01:33**

I'm gonna have time. And I appreciate the things. I just leave it that just because we do have 100.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr**02:01:39**

Wait, wait, wait, wait.

Bill Cassidy**02:01:40**

One out of 36 kids that again, we can't explain what it was. It's not fair to put that blame

onto all kinds of things, but focus on vaccinations. I yield back. Dr. Moody. I'm Senator Moody. I'm sorry. Good morning. Thank you for joining us and thank you for sitting down with me and spending so much time with me in my office.

Bill Cassidy

02:02:03

It has been an overwhelming week. I am the junior most senator on this committee and certainly you treated me no differently than the chairman and I'm grateful to you for that. One of the topics we spent a long time talking about was your assurance and knowledge and understanding that it was the states that in fact gave power, limited power, to the federal government and not the other way around, and your assurance that you will not use your agency or any organization that falls under your leadership to interfere with the state's ability to set policy or any autonomy of the state to enact or enforce laws that protect the lives of the unborn.

Bill Cassidy

02:02:45

I think that that is a concern of many. It was certainly one of mine and you allayed those concerns and I appreciate, appreciated you spending so much time with your assurances. I want to turn to some of the discussions regarding many which would say the government and health professionals did great harm to science and medicine in the wake of COVID 19.

Bill Cassidy

02:03:08

America, I believe, is at a crossroads where unfortunately, things that used to not be particularly political like science and medicine, are now politicized to the point where reality is distorted. What you believe has little to do with truth or facts and everything to do with your party. My hope is that you, Mr.

Bill Cassidy

02:03:26

Kennedy and President Trump's other appointees will break this cycle that is threatening America and destroying its promise. Certainly while I was the Attorney General of Florida, I had the responsibility in numerous areas to seek the truth and bring justice. Working with Governor DeSantis and other leaders, we launched grand jury investigations. And I want to bring your attention to one of those grand jury investigations that dealt with COVID 19 and the actions of government officials and big pharma.

Bill Cassidy

02:03:58

And remember that a grand jury investigation is made up of lay people, 18 in this instance, that were brought from different communities in Florida. And I just want to read into the record one paragraph for your consideration. Much of the goodwill by the COVID 19 vaccines was squandered in the following years as sponsors and federal regulators collaborated to push out booster after booster based on shallow and accurate safety and

efficacy data, sidelining their own ombudsman to get doses of these vaccines into the arms of every American, regardless of their underlying risk from the SARS Covid 2 virus.

Bill Cassidy

02:04:37

Erstwhile gatekeepers became cheerleaders as federal regulators with the trust of the American people dragged their feet in publicly confirming important safety signals and then sanctioned long delays in mandatory post marketing studies involving those very same signals. Sponsors abused the scientific journal system and regulatory reporting requirements, delaying public disclosure of serious adverse events from their clinical trials for years.

Bill Cassidy

02:05:04

And I could go on. Mr. Kennedy, as secretary of Health and Human Services, will you use your position to squelch medical or scientific views with which you disagree?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:05:16

Never. And you know. And this is relevant to what Senator Higenlooper was asking me. We've tried this system where government lies to Americans or where they tell them that they have it with a level of assurance they don't feel themselves and it isn't working. The initial COVID vaccine, Americans flocked to get it.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:05:41

I think 90, 95% of Americans went and got it. CDC has now recommended an eighth booster and only 23% of Americans at most are taking it. It's because 77% of Americans no longer trust CDC. That's not a good thing. If we want uptake of vaccines, we need a trustworthy government in other nations where they don't have mandates, like Japan and a few years ago in Germany, they had the same uptake as we did without any mandates because people trust their government.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:06:16

That's what I want to restore to the American people and the vaccine program. I want people to know if the government says something, it's true, it's not manipulative, it's not a noble truth, which is what a certain doctor called his lies.

Bill Cassidy

02:06:31

Certainly I don't have a lot of time, but I would like to bring your attention to another grand jury investigation that we did in Florida. And I would ask Mr. Chairman to enter into the hearing record two grand jury reports related to human trafficking and COVID 19. Do I have your commitment that any organization under your purview will work with the state,

not impede our investigations, to ensure that children that are brought, that are in this country, that are minors, that are under your purview, that you will communicate with us so that we can have the information to make sure that they are safe?

Bill Cassidy

02:07:03

Unlike in an investigation where Biden blocked us in this administration at every turn, to keep us from getting information showing that they trafficked children that were brought into this country and lost dozens, tens of thousands of children, lost track of them and never gave us in dcf, in Florida the information so that we could protect them, to have Your word that you will protect children if you're given that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:07:25

Absolutely. And President Trump is determined to find the 300,000 children who were lost over the past four years and to return them to their parents.

Bill Cassidy

02:07:35

Thank you. Without objection, it can be entered into the record. Senator Markey, thank you. Yesterday, under oath, you told my colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee that when you went to Samoa In June of 2019, it, quote, had nothing to do with vaccines. Will you confirm again today that the trip had nothing to do with vaccines?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:08:01

My purpose in going down there had nothing to do with vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

02:08:04

Well, I have in my hand a blog post in 2021 in which you say the anti vaccine group Children's Health Defense, which you ran, offered to fund the purpose of the trip to Samoa. And in the same post, you state that the trip was ultimately arranged by an anti vaccine activist. And during the trip, you met with an activist who later compared vaccine mandates to Nazi Germany.

Bill Cassidy

02:08:33

And during that trip, you also discussed vaccines with the Prime Minister and the Director General of Health of Samoa. The Director General of Health said you specifically discussed your views on vaccine safety fears. And with unanimous consent, I will submit Those blog posts, Mr. Chairman, into the record. Without objection.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:08:54

Can I replace you again?

I'll ask you again. Did the trip have nothing to do with vaccines?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:09:02

As you told my colleagues, not the vaccines. And if you want me to explain, I will.

Bill Cassidy

02:09:08

Did it have anything to do with vaccines?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:09:10

No, it did not.

Bill Cassidy

02:09:11

It did not.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:09:12

Well, my purpose in the trip was not to. I ended up having conversations with people, some of whom I never intended to meet again.

Bill Cassidy

02:09:21

An anti vaxxer helped finance your trip?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:09:25

Well, you call them an anti vaxxer. That's not what they would call themselves. They call themselves safe vaccine advocates. I went down there. A CHD, which was that group, offered \$6 million to obtain a grant for million to install aid to digitalize the health records of Samark Medical Informatics. Thank you. That was the purpose of my trip.

Bill Cassidy

02:09:52

I got it. Thank you. So let me just follow through now. 2019. So now, in October of 2019, the CDC declared a measles outbreak in Samoa. And in November, Samoa started a mass vaccination campaign to stop the outbreak. That same month, November of 2019, after 16 people had already died from the outbreak and Samoa was trying to respond to the crisis, you sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Samoa stating that, quote, it is a regrettable possibility that these children are casualties of the vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

02:10:30

By unanimous consent, I will introduce that letter into the record without objection. So as Samoa was trying to contain the outbreak, you were saying that it was the fault of the

vaccine rather than the absence of vaccinations that caused the outbreak in Samoa in the same year, you visited Samoa.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:10:50

And I replied that.

Bill Cassidy

02:10:51

Senator, let me just finish. The death count in Samoa grew to 83. And ultimately volunteers in New Zealand sent tiny coffins to help bury the dozens of children who died. And the Samoan Director General of Health later said, with his last name and the status attached to it, people will believe him. People will believe Robert Kennedy.

Bill Cassidy

02:11:20

And a New Zealand vaccinologist later said, the impact of your role was devastating. So your name and your profile helped fuel a measles outbreak. You scared people from taking a vaccine. It slowed the public health response, and children died. You've taken no responsibility thus far. And if an outbreak occurs in the United States, I have no evidence that you would not use your role as secretary to spread dangerous misinformation.

Bill Cassidy

02:11:52

So that one incident, from my perspective, disqualifies you from holding any position in health care. Much less than number one health official in the United States. And 75 Nobel Prize winners in science have said very clearly that you should not be confirmed, that it would be dangerous for you to have.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:12:14

And you should look at the conflicts. So you should look at their conflicts. Of those individuals.

Bill Cassidy

02:12:19

Well, 75.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:12:21

And you should look at who financed that letter.

Bill Cassidy

02:12:23

75 Nobel Prize winners. And by the way, a high percentage of the medical community in Boston, the health capital of the United States, and the world have said the same thing

about your qualifications. They're saying to me they don't want tiny coffins as well. Neither do I. So that's the basis of my.

Bill Cassidy

02:12:48

Of my reservations about you and the reason why I'm going to vote no on your candidacy. Because I just think it's too dangerous to run the threat that that misinformation is spread in our country in the same way it was in Samoa. Senator Murkowski. And let me compliment Mullen and Murkowski. They've stayed here the entire conference.

Bill Cassidy

02:13:09

And they're obligated. They're not obligated to like the two of us. Not that we wouldn't have otherwise, but. Senator Murkowski, you please. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I think these are exactly the types of forums that we all need to be engaged in from start to finish, because.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:13:25

Can you speak up, Senator McCarthy?

Bill Cassidy

02:13:28

There's been considerable discussion here about many issues, certainly a lot about vaccines. I care deeply about making sure that our vaccines are safe, the efficacy of them the availability of them, how we disseminate, disseminate them is particularly important in a very, very rural state like mine. You have experience there. You understand that I am particularly attracted by the focus on chronic diseases.

Bill Cassidy

02:13:56

We know that if we can do a better job with chronic diseases, maybe some of the other things that we are susceptible to in the infectious diseases area, we're able to perhaps pull back a little bit on that. But our reality is, in order to make this country healthy again, it is a focus on everything.

Bill Cassidy

02:14:18

It is the prevention, it is the necessity of coming up with these life saving vaccines that are going to be so critically important. It is personal care, it is food, it is exercise, it is all of the above. And we gotta figure it out together. We do need to shake some things up, but we also need, we also need to give a level of confidence.

Bill Cassidy

02:14:43

And this is what I'm hearing from so many of my colleagues who have raised the issue of

vaccines. We have made some considerable gains in my state of Alaska with vaccinating the many people in very rural areas where one disease outbreak can wipe out an entire village. We saw this in 1918 with the Spanish flu and that's why everyone was rattled to the core.

Bill Cassidy

02:15:09

Villages were shut down entirely, entirely during COVID because of the fear of transmission. And so they're looking for these life saving ways and means. And so when there is, when there is a lack of confidence, when there is a doubt, it's like, well, what do I do? And so we're pulling back then on again these areas where we can work to prevent some of these deadly diseases that we thought we had wiped out years ago.

Bill Cassidy

02:15:40

We have dramatically reduced diseases in my state like hep A and B and meningitis. We're just now getting through a tough bout of whooping cough that came around to the state. Now there's a scare in the peninsula, in Alaska about a measles outbreak. So we can't be going backwards with our vaccinations that will allow for this level of prevention and protection.

Bill Cassidy

02:16:16

So I'm asking you, you are clearly an influencer. You are clearly an influencer. You would not be in this position today, but you can see how your podium, your platform, your voice can influence so many. So I am asking you on the issue of vaccines specifically to please convey, convey with a level of authority and science, but also with a level of conviction and free of conflict and free of political bias that these are measures that we should be proud of as a country.

Bill Cassidy

02:16:59

Proud of as a country. Look to what President Trump was able to do with a COVID vaccine. It was extraordinary and it did save lives. I need time for a question, so let me, I'm asking you to focus on how you can, how you can use your position to provide for greater levels of confidence to the public when it comes to these life saving areas.

Bill Cassidy

02:17:27

So I'm going to pivot to a question that you can answer. This relates.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:17:33

I can answer that one too.

I know, but I have 43 seconds. And no one has talked about our Native populations. When you look at our health statistics, whether it's Alaska Natives or whether it is American Indians, our health statistics in this country, you know very well, because we talked about them, are not where they need to be.

Bill Cassidy

02:17:53

And it's in all categories. It's infectious disease, it's tuberculosis, it's hep C, it's mental health, it's depression, it's substance use, it's sexually transmitted diseases, it's hypertension, stroke. It is so deep and it is so challenging and it is so hard. You have received support from Native American tribes. You have been in these areas.

Bill Cassidy

02:18:20

You have been quoted, and I'd like, for your comment on this quoted saying, as far as budgeting for Indian country, you said you would immediately triple the budget to support tribes. Can you expand on this pledge and the commitment? Because this is an area where we have truly left our Native people behind when it comes to their health and their health outcomes.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:18:43

Thank you, Senator. And this is an issue, as you and I talked about, that is very important. It's always been a priority for me. I spent 20% of my career working on Native issues. I was one of the founding editors of Indian Country Today, which is the biggest Indian newspaper. My father and uncle Ted Kennedy, my father, were deeply, deeply critical of the functioning of the Indian Health service back in 1968-1980.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:19:15

And nothing's changed. Nothing's gotten better. I'm going to bring in a Native at the Assistant Secretary level. I'd like to get him actually designated as a Assistant Secretary for the first time in American history. Ensure that all of the decisions that we make in our agency are conscious of their impacts on the First Nations.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:19:36

I've spent a lot of time in your state. It's my favorite place to go. I've been up with a Gwich'in representing the Gwich'in people up in Arctic Village and been all over the state in the remote areas. I understand at Alaska, unique needs of Alaska because of remote healthcare, because some of these areas are not even accessible except for or airplane, if they don't have ambulance services, that the federal government needs to pay attention to, financing, transportation, the unusual ways that are required there, and that we really need to focus on telemedicine and AI, make sure that even in remote places in Alaska that native people can get high quality healthcare.

And we can do that today. And I look forward forward to working with you on those issues and others.

Bill Cassidy

02:20:30

Thank you. Senator Murkowski sets the record for going over. Senator also Brooks. Sorry. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Kennedy, I was struck by your comments during our meeting last week.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:20:45

What?

Bill Cassidy

02:20:46

I was struck by your comments in our meeting last week where you made it abundantly clear to me that you intended to clean house of the professional scientist at the National Institutes of Health, which you know is headquartered in the state of Maryland and employs thousands of hardworking Marylanders. I, for the record, believe in scientists and I believe in doctors and I trust them over politicians without medical degrees.

Bill Cassidy

02:21:14

You talked about bad science and bad scientists. And in fact, you specifically said to me in response to my question that you intend to replace the bad scientist with the good scientist. And so I want to ask you, in your opinion, what makes a scientist or doctor qualified to serve at the.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:21:33

National Institutes of Health who's devoted to empirical methodology, to evidence based science, Scientists who understand the importance of replication, importance of publishing raw data and being open, transparent about it. The importance of publishing peer review. We have NIH has overseen over the past several years the decline, the precipitous decline in American Health.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:22:02

There's 91,000 people at HHS. And are you suggesting that some of them should not be held responsible for that decline? They were insured. Charge.

Bill Cassidy

02:22:12

Let me just, let me just insert.

Here, let me just finish.

Bill Cassidy

02:22:14

But let me just say this because I only have three minutes left. I don't set the rules here, but I ask the questions. And the question is really whether you intend, as you said, to, to substitute essentially your judgment for the judgment of these professional scientists and doctors.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:22:31

I never. I'm not going to substitute my judgment for science. Of course I'm not going to do that. What I'm going to do. Listen, the New York Times just did an article last week talking about the fraud, the 20 year fraud, 800 fraudulent studies produced by NIH on amyloid plaques and not allowing any other hypothesis about the cause of Alzheimer's disease.

Bill Cassidy

02:22:54

How will you decide, Mr. Kennedy? Which scientists are they? The ones who disagree with you?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:23:00

The ones who are corrupt. Ones who have been doing science like the amyloid plaque studies that were fraudulent well, these doctors.

Bill Cassidy

02:23:08

Let me ask you a question. Do you have a medical degree?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:23:10

Do I know.

Bill Cassidy

02:23:12

Okay, let me go to the next question. The Heritage Fund has compiled a watch list of federal employees to go after federal staff. Is there a watch list for federal staff at hhs?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:23:24

Not that I know of.

Bill Cassidy

02:23:26

Have you or has anyone in the administration developed a list of career scientists or federal staff that. That you would target for termination?

Not that I know of.

Bill Cassidy

02:23:39

And let me just ask you another question. Now, your failed presidential campaign has been raising money to try and cover your debts. And you were questioned about this yesterday and failed to answer a question that Senator Warren asked you. And so I want to ask you again regarding these emails that you have sent to raise money.

Bill Cassidy

02:24:03

How much has your presidential campaign made fundraising off of this administration's complete disregard for the workforce at hhs?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:24:10

Excuse me, I didn't hear the question.

Bill Cassidy

02:24:13

How much money has your presidential campaign made off of fundraising off of this administration's complete disregard for the workforce at HHS?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:24:23

Zero.

Bill Cassidy

02:24:24

Okay.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:24:25

Mr.

Bill Cassidy

02:24:25

Chair, I'd like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record two emails from this week and the week before regarding fundraising that you are currently doing through your presidential. Without objection. And finally, I want to ask you. I have a. You said to. You were on a show on February 26, 2021, an interview with Dr.

Bill Cassidy

02:24:48

Judy Mikovitz where you said the following, and I quote, we should not be giving black people the same vaccine schedule that's given to whites because their immune system is better than ours. Can you please explain what you meant?

There's a series of studies, I think most of them by Poland, that show that to particular antigens that blacks have a much stronger reaction. There's differences in response, reaction to different products by different races.

Bill Cassidy

02:25:22

So I have 17 seconds left. Let me just ask you then. So what different vaccine schedule would you say I should have received? What different vaccine schedule should I have received?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:25:33

I mean, the pollen article suggests that blacks need fewer antigens than. This is so huge measles vaccine.

Bill Cassidy

02:25:43

Mr. Kennedy, with all due respect, that is so dangerous. Your voice would be a voice that parents would listen to. That is so dangerous. I will be voting against your nomination because your views are dangerous to our state and to our country.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:25:57

I mean, do you think science is dangerous? Senator, this is published, peer reviewed studies.

Bill Cassidy

02:26:05

I yield. Senator Collins, who would have been here the whole time, but she was in an intel committee. So. Senator Collins. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Kennedy, welcome. First of all, I agree with you that there needs to be more focus on Chronic diseases like diabetes, like Alzheimer's. But it concerns me when I read a quote from you that says, I'm going to say to NIA scientists, God bless you all.

Bill Cassidy

02:26:40

Thank you for your public service. We're going to give infectious disease diseases a break for about eight years. Don't we need to do both?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:26:53

Absolutely, Senator. The problem is there's been an imbalance. We've devoted all of these dollars to infectious disease and to drug development to make NIH an incubator for the pharmaceutical industry and very little to chronic disease. But chronic disease is 92% of deaths in our country. It's nine out of every ten dollars we spend on our budget.

Why aren't we devoting at least equivalent studies to determine the etiology of our chronic disease? It just seems like common sense to me.

Bill Cassidy

02:27:28

I would point out that in many cases, it's Congress rather than HHS who sets the funding levels for various diseases.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:27:40

But NIH decides, has panels that decide who gets funding, not Congress.

Bill Cassidy

02:27:46

Senator, I want to share with you a discussion that I had with the main pediatric nurse practitioner. She raised the concern that if people are discouraged from getting their children vaccinated, we will lose the herd immunity in a classroom. And that means that a child who may be immunosuppressed and cannot get a vaccine are at risk of being in a classroom with an unvaccinated child and thus at risk of getting the infectious disease because we've lost the herd immunity.

Bill Cassidy

02:28:35

What would be your response to that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:28:37

My response is that vaccine uptake for the COVID vaccine, for example, is down to 23% and all vaccines are dropping. And they're not doing. They're doing that because people don't believe the government anymore. We need good science, and I'm going to bring that in. I'm going to restore trust, and that will restore vaccine uptake.

Bill Cassidy

02:28:58

Well, you're certainly correct about what happened with the COVID vaccine, but let me switch to the polio vaccine. Do you think that the polio vaccine is safe and effective?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:29:13

Yes, I do.

Bill Cassidy

02:29:15

And so would you seek to reduce its availability in any way?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:29:21

No, not at all.

Bill Cassidy

02:29:24

The state of Maine has seen a steady and disturbing increase in Lyme disease cases over the past decade. We talked a little bit about this in my office. In 2023, Maine had a record number of Lyme disease cases, nearly 3,000 reported cases. Fortunately, there is a promising vaccine trial for Lyme disease that is underway at Maine Health in Portland.

Bill Cassidy

02:29:59

Access to a Lyme disease would be a monumental step forward in reducing the Burden of. Of this disease, which can have lifelong effects. I've seen it in members of my own family as HHS secretary have confirmed. What influence would you exercise over new vaccine approvals such as one for Lyme disease?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:30:30

Senator, you and I have talked about this issue. I've had Lyme disease. I lived in the epicenter of Lyme disease. Every member of my family and my immediate family has had Lyme disease. I had a son whose face was paralyzed for a year. I have a son today who has been suffering with devastating effects from Lyme disease for two years.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:30:54

There's nobody who will fight harder to find a vaccine or a treatment for Lyme disease than me.

Bill Cassidy

02:31:02

I very much appreciate that assurance. And I'm sorry that your own family has been so adversely affected. In Maine, we have a lot of people who work outside and work in the woods and ticks are everywhere. So this is a very important issue to me. Thank you.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:31:24

And to me too, Senator.

Bill Cassidy

02:31:26

Let me. We're almost to the end. Let me acknowledge Senator Moody has also been here the whole time. And so. Thank you, Senator Moody. Yeah, just incredible diligence. Thank you both. Senator Sanders and I will have a couple questions and then we'll each have a closing statement and then your long national nightmare will be over.

So anyway, first, a couple more of Capitol type questions. If you are confirmed. Do you commit that you will not work to impound, divert or otherwise reduce any funding appropriated by Congress for the purpose of vaccination programs?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:32:08

Yes.

Bill Cassidy

02:32:10

And do you commit that you will not impose new grant conditions outside of congressional direction for state, local or global entities that in any way limits, restricts or rescinds act access to vaccines? Are vaccine promotion programs?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:32:24

Yes.

Bill Cassidy

02:32:25

And then. This is the nice thing about listening to all of this. Let me ask this. I've been impressed. One, you've handled yourself very well. I've been impressed that on many things you are familiar with recent medical data, but on other things you haven't been. Let me bring up two things which are very pertinent now.

Bill Cassidy

02:32:50

While sitting here, I went up to look at the medical literature on these issues. Here's a title, why Parents say no to Having Their Children Vaccinated against Measles. A systemic review of the social determinants of parental perceptions on MMR vaccine hesitancy. They found that fear of autism is a major driver of for vaccine hesitancy among those with a college education or higher, influenced by Internet social media narratives over physician based vaccine information.

Bill Cassidy

02:33:25

I'll go back to something I said earlier. You Got a following, man. There's a lot of people that look to you for do I get vaccinated or not? People that I kind of know. But here it says it's not just my anecdote, it's actually out there. But when I raised and you said, well, if I show you the data, you'll change your because I ask will you unequivocally, without qualification say that measles vaccine does not cause autism?

Bill Cassidy

02:33:52

And you said if I show you.

The data, I will publicly apologize. So here's a. I say that I was wrong.

Bill Cassidy

02:33:58

Here's a meta analysis from 2014 and you quoted Cochrane on several occasions, which for the people watching is a meta analysis. Meta meaning they look at everything and then they come to a conclusion based upon as much facts as they can get. And here is such a study and the title tells it all.

Bill Cassidy

02:34:17

Vaccines are not associated with autism. An evidence based meta analysis of case control and cohort studies. And they ended up looking at five cohort studies with roughly 1.2 million children. Now this is from 2014 and it has a whole bunch of articles it references. And then I got a text from a former employee of the NIH.

Bill Cassidy

02:34:39

I emphasize the former, who says that in 20, early in the President Trump's term, you and colleagues sent 90 papers for review by people at NIH. They felt like these NIH folks felt that without exception, they were lacking, severely lacking methodologically, and are found that they indeed showed the safety of these vaccines.

Bill Cassidy

02:35:06

We tried to engage Mr. Kennedy, but his colleagues refused to acknowledge the expertise of dozens of NIH scientists. We made about those papers. Now, you're a smart guy, you're reading the medical literature and you're coming up with the recent medical literature on certain issues. But here is both older article summarizing lots of older articles that have come out since the original refuted Wakefield article in the Lancet regarding measles and autism.

Bill Cassidy

02:35:40

And here is somebody who, you know, it's he said, he said, but somebody who said that previously you've had this presented to you. So back to me, I'm a doc trying to understand, convince me that you will become the public health advocate but not just churn old information so that there's never a conclusion as Senator Hassan suggested, but that will become the influencer for people to believe.

Bill Cassidy

02:36:13

No, there's 1.25 million kids studied and there's no autism associated with measles. You tell me you see what my question is in there.

I'm going to be advocate for strong science. You show me those scientific studies and you and I can meet about it. There are other studies as well and I'd love to show those to you. Or there's a study that came out last week of 47,000 9 year olds in the Medicaid system in Florida.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:36:50

I think a Louisiana scientist called Mawson shows the opposite. Oh, there are other studies out there. I just want to follow the science and I will do. If the science says, and I am wrong about what I've said in the past, as I said, I will publicly apologize. There's many times I've been wrong about science.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:37:13

If you look at my Instagram account, when I'm wrong, I apologize for it and I say I was wrong. I don't have any problems. Science is a process of challenging hypotheses with new evidence and scientists have to be able to admit when they're wrong. Epidemiological studies, the Institute of Medicine has repeatedly, in 2013, 2017, when they investigated this, has asked CDC to do certain studies, animal studies, bench studies, observational studies, studies of the vaccine safety data link.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:37:52

CDC has not done that. I want them to do that and I want the best science. I can guarantee you, on my word of honor. And if you show me science that says that I'm wrong, I'm going to say I was wrong. I don't have any problem. There's nothing that would make me happier.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:38:12

We need to be able to look at the science and get IOM involved. The National Academy of Sciences, they're the ultimate arbiter of safety.

Bill Cassidy

02:38:21

What was that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:38:23

One of the things we need to do, I think, is a subject that we haven't talked about here. Why don't we know what's causing this epidemic? Why hasn't the CDC been looking at other hypotheses to determine the ideology of why we've had this dramatic thousand percent increase in this disease that is destroying our kids is probably the biggest issue.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:38:47

Why don't we know the answer? After 30 years of steady rises in autism rates, I don't know. We know the answer. That we should know the answer.

Bill Cassidy

02:38:59

The. What was that, what was that last article?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:39:04

Did you mention that article is by Mawson M A W S O N.

Bill Cassidy

02:39:12

And it's regarding measles and. What?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:39:14

No, it, it looks at the entire schedule and it says it's a, it's a study of 9 year old poll boys, 47,000 9 year old boys from the Florida healthcare data.

Bill Cassidy

02:39:26

Okay, let me, let me. Senator Sanders, thank you. And I find myself in the Unusual and uncomfortable position of having to agree with Senator Cassidy's line of questioning. Mr. Kennedy, in an interview in July 2023, you stated, quote, I do believe autism does come from vaccines. And you have the end of quote.

Bill Cassidy

02:39:56

And you have praised a gentleman named Andrew Wakefield for his research. What studies. You talk about the need to be science based, get our information, good information to make decisions. What studies have you utilized to come to the conclusion that vaccines cause autism?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:40:19

I'm happy to sit down with you.

Bill Cassidy

02:40:21

No, no, please, just answer me. Not.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:40:23

You mean. Look at the Mason study, Senator, the one. Yeah, just look at that study.

02:40:28

Yeah, I will. And that was published.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:40:30

But I don't, you know, I don't want to. I wouldn't rest on a single study.

Bill Cassidy

02:40:34

Right.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:40:34

All studies can be methodology. Okay.

Bill Cassidy

02:40:36

Don't mean to be rude. I don't have a lot of time.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:40:38

Just saying we.

Bill Cassidy

02:40:39

You would not be. I just heard you say you would not. Could not be happier if you approved. Wrong. Mr. Chairman, I asked to put into the record 16 studies done by scientists and doctors all over the world saying that vaccines do not cause autism. Are you happy with that? Objection.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:41:00

Look, the IOM assessment of 16 study. Senator, the ILM has assessed them.

Bill Cassidy

02:41:07

But listen, let me get to. Don't have a lot of time. I apologize. I'm happy to talk to you at another time. Don't have a lot of time. Let's talk about COVID and I just want clarity on the issue. Again, I apologize, you have to be brief. We don't have a lot of time.

Bill Cassidy

02:41:23

Scientists have estimated that the COVID vaccine saved 3 million lives. President Trump said COVID vaccine was, quote, one of the great miracles of the ages, end quote. You have said the COVID vaccine was the deadliest vaccine ever made, end of quote. Was the COVID vaccine the deadliest vaccine ever made?

02:41:46

The reason I said that, Senator Sanders, is because there were more reports on the VAER system, on the vaccine Adverse event reporting system, which is the only surveillance says the of that and V safe. And there were more reports of injuries and deaths and all other vaccines combined.

Bill Cassidy

02:42:05

But you were. Was it. The scientists said it saved 3 million according to.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:42:11

I don't know. Because we don't have a good surveillance system.

Bill Cassidy

02:42:14

So you disagree with the scientific community that.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:42:17

Oh, I just. I'm agnostic because we don't have the science to make that determination.

Bill Cassidy

02:42:21

Really. Okay. Prescription drug prices in America, as you know.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:42:28

And by the way, I think President Trump did an extraordinary job on warp speed because he wasn't just focusing on that one intervention he was focusing on.

Bill Cassidy

02:42:35

He called it a miracle. But you have cast doubts on its efficacy. All right. Prescription drugs. We're going to make America healthy. I agree with you that we have to need a revolution in the nature of food in America, physical exercise, et cetera. Very, very important. But there are people who are going to get sick, and they have to go to the doctor and find out why one out of four Americans today cannot afford the prescription drugs their doctors prescribe.

Bill Cassidy

02:43:06

Because we pay by far the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. We made some progress under the Biden administration of negotiating prescription prescription drug prices with pharma. First time that's ever happened. Now, yesterday you told me that the White House was going to issue something affirming their support for continuing those Medicare negotiations.

Turned out not to be quite accurate. They came up with some bland statement, could have been written by pharma. Very specific questions. Do you believe and will you insist that Medicare continue to negotiate prices with the pharmaceutical industry so we can substantially lower prescription drug costs in America?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:43:48

President Trump has made it very clear to me that he wants to negotiate.

Bill Cassidy

02:43:52

Negotiate is a big word, Bobby. It's a big word.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:43:54

It's the word you just used.

Bill Cassidy

02:43:56

Yeah, but. But no, I use defend a particular law. Will you defend the law in the Inflation Reduction act, which already is negotiating prescription drug prices?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:44:08

President Trump wants us to negotiate drug price. He wants to lower drug price.

Bill Cassidy

02:44:12

So you're not telling me that you will defend the law that we passed, which has already had significant success?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:44:17

Well, the Congress. Look, I'm going to comply with the law, Senator. Congress passed the law. I'm swearing an oath to Constitution. I'm going to comply with.

Bill Cassidy

02:44:25

You're going to have a significant influence on health care policy if you are. Let me just say this in conclusion. Chairman Cassidy, President Trump and Mr. Kennedy are quite right when they say that our system is broken. They're right. Our economic system today is broken. Three people own more wealth than the bottom half of American society.

Bill Cassidy

02:44:55

Wages have been stagnant for American workers for 50 years. Economy is broken. You know what? Our political system is broken and corrupt. You have a handful of billionaires

in both political parties who contribute huge amounts of money to elect candidates in this room throughout the United States Congress. That is a broken political system and a real threat to democracy.

Bill Cassidy

02:45:23

Our health care system is broken. And it's broken for some of the reasons that Mr. Kennedy indicated. We have not paid attention to the fact that we have massive amounts of chronic disease. We have not answered the Question why in the richest country in the history of the world, our life expectancy is lower than it is in countries far poorer than we are.

Bill Cassidy

02:45:47

So I think in many ways President Trump and Mr. Kennedy have asked some of the right questions. Problem is their answers will only make a bad situation worse. So Let me ask Mr. Kennedy again. If we want to make America healthy, will you assure the American people that you will fight to do what every other major country on earth does?

Bill Cassidy

02:46:13

Guarantee health care to every single American?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:46:17

I'm going to make America healthier than other countries in the world right now.

Bill Cassidy

02:46:21

Will you guarantee do what every, every other major country does? That's a simple question.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:46:26

And by the way, Bernie, you know, the problem of corruption is not just in the federal agencies, it's in Congress, too. Almost all the members of this panel are accepting, including yourself, are accepting millions of dollars from the pharmaceutical industry. Oh, no. And protecting their interests.

Bill Cassidy

02:46:45

Oh, I thought that that would. I ran for president like you, I got millions and millions of contributions. They did not come from the executives, not one nickel of PAC money from the pharmaceutical industry.

They came from workers. In 2020, you were the single largest.

Bill Cassidy

02:47:06

Because I had pharmaceutical money from workers all over this country. Workers. Not a nickel. From corporate.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:47:16

With the single largest acceptor of pharmaceutical dollars.

Bill Cassidy

02:47:19

No, from workers.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr

02:47:20

In 1.5 million.

Bill Cassidy

02:47:22

Yeah. Out of 200 million. All right, but you have not answered last question. You have not answered my question, Mr. Chairman, we're three minutes. How America healthy. If you don't guarantee. We're literally three minutes over here now, how long does it keep going? And at some time you're just battering the witness. Not battering the witness.

Bill Cassidy

02:47:43

Yes, you are. You're getting upset at him. You're going at him just like anybody else would. Bernie's going over. You know, before I ever entered politics, before I was ever thinking about running for office, I practiced medicine. For 30 years. I worked in public hospitals in California, Louisiana, specializing in liver disease, caring for those who otherwise would not have had a specialist, if you will.

Bill Cassidy

02:48:16

Dedicating my life to saving lives, that is being a doctor. That ethic guides me. Now, in my opening statement, I told the story of my patient, an 18 year old girl with acute liver failure from hepatitis B being air ambulated to LSU Shreveport Hospital for a liver transplant. Let me finish the story.

Bill Cassidy

02:48:42

Her mother wasn't allowed to fly in the helicopter, so her mother drove the three hours from Baton Rouge to Shreveport. Now, when she arrived, they let her visit her daughter before she went back to the or. And the mom goes in to say a prayer, squeezes the

daughter's hand. The daughter's eyes open and she said, mama.

Bill Cassidy

02:49:06

And the daughter began to recover. Powerful story. Powerful story with a happy ending. But as a doctor, I saw endings not so happy. I just had a friend text me. Two children died in an intensive care unit in a Baton Rouge hospital from, from vaccine preventable diseases this past month. So my concern is that if there's any false note, any undermining of a mama's trust in vaccines, another person will die from a vaccine preventable disease.

Bill Cassidy

02:49:45

Now you've got a megaphone. Maybe you and Bernie, you know, Bobby and Bernie. Of everybody in this room, the two of you have the biggest followings, tremendous credibility. And with that influence comes a great responsibility. Now my responsibility is to learn, try and determine if you can be trusted to support the best public health, a worthy movement called maha to improve the health of Americans or to undermine it.

Bill Cassidy

02:50:23

Always asking for more evidence and never accepting the evidence that is there. I looked at the article from Dr. Mawson and it seems to be have some issues. I'll just put that to the side. And that is why I've been struggling with your nomination. There are issues. We are man ultra processed food, obesity.

Bill Cassidy

02:50:41

We are, we are simpatico. We're completely aligned. And as someone who has discussed immunizations with thousands of people, I understand that mothers want reassurance that the vaccine their child is receiving is necessary, safe and effective. We agree on that point, the two of us. But we've approached it differently. And I think I can say that I've approached it using the preponderance of evidence to reassure and you have approached using selected evidence to cast doubt.

Bill Cassidy

02:51:13

Now put differently, we're about the same age. Does a 70 year old man, 71 year old man, who spent decades criticizing vaccines and who's financially vested in finding fault with vaccines. Can he change his attitudes and approach now that he'll have the most important position influencing vaccine policy in the United States? Will you continue what you have been or will you overturn a new leaf at age 70?

Bill Cassidy

02:51:44

I recognize man, if you come out unequivocally, vaccines are safe, it does not cause

autism. That would have an incredible impact. That's your power. So what's it going to be? Will it be using the credibility to support lots of articles or will it be using credibility to undermine And I got to figure that out from my vote.

Bill Cassidy

02:52:12

You have the power to help rebuild, to help public health institutions re earn the trust of the American people. Now let's be political. I'm a Republican. I represent the amazing state of Louisiana. And as a patriotic American, I want President Trump's policies to succeed in making America and Americans more secure, more prosperous, healthier.

Bill Cassidy

02:52:40

But if there's someone that is not vaccinated because of policies or attitudes you bring to the department, and there's another 18 year old who dies of a vaccine preventable disease helicoptered away, God forbid, dies, it'll be blown up in the press. The greatest tragedy will be her death. But I can also tell you an associated tragedy, well, that will cast a shadow over President Trump's legacy, which I want to be the absolute best legacy it can be.

Bill Cassidy

02:53:10

So that's my dilemma, man. And you may be hearing me, hearing from me over the weekend. You may be hearing from me over the weekend. I once again thank you for your time and I yield to my ranking member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for your job today in conducting this very, very important hearing.

Bill Cassidy

02:53:35

Let me reiterate my concerns. Every person on this panel, and I would hope everybody in America wants to make us the healthiest country on earth. And I applaud Mr. Kennedy for raising the issues and talking about some very important truths. But what I am not hearing from him are some very specific policy issues that we absolutely need if we're going to make America healthy.

Bill Cassidy

02:54:11

It is unquestionable that when 68,000 Americans die because they can't afford to go to a doctor, you got to deal with that. And, and I have not heard one word about the need for universal health care that exists in every country on earth when one out of four people can't afford prescription drugs because the pharmaceutical industry is ripping us off and charging us 10 times more in some cases than the people in other countries.

Bill Cassidy

02:54:40

I have not heard the definitive answer. I need that we're not going to pay the highest

prices in the world for prescription drugs. And one of the points I think that Mr. Kennedy made, which is, right, health care is not just medical care, it's a lot more talk about the food industry. We have held a hearing, Senator Cassidy and I held a hearing a couple of months ago where we made the point that the food industry is, in fact poisoning our kids with addictive food that is leading to obesity, diabetes, heart conditions, et cetera.

Bill Cassidy

02:55:16

And I hope, I hope that our Congress and the White House will have the courage to take on a very powerful food industry and demand that the products that they sell our kids are in fact, healthy and non addictive in many ways. What the food industry is doing today is what the tobacco industry did 50 or 60 years ago and we talk about making America healthy today.

Bill Cassidy

02:55:42

Again it's not just doctor care, medical care. We have millions of people working for starvation wages. You cannot be healthy if you're working 50 or 60 hours a week and you can't afford the rent that your landlord is charging you. Stress kills. Stress makes us sick. Mr. Chairman, let me just say this.

Bill Cassidy

02:56:05

I think the issues that have been raised in this hearing today are of enormous importance. I look forward to working with you and other members of this committee to make sure that we develop the policies that have the courage to take on very powerful and wealthy special interests so in fact that we can make America healthy.

Bill Cassidy

02:56:26

Thank you. This concludes our hearing for any senators who wish to ask additional questions. Questions for the record will be due tomorrow. Tomorrow on Friday January 31st at 5pm it.