Remembering the Benefits of Vaccination

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ABSTRACT: Between 2009 and 2012, 36 bills were introduced in 18 states to change vaccine exemption laws related to school-entry requirements. Of the 31 bills that sought to loosen requirements for obtaining an exemption, none passed. Fortunately, the clear evidence showing that easy exemption laws lead to higher exemption rates and higher exemption rates lead to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases was well-heeded. Further proof is now visible as we face the largest number of measles cases in the United States since the disease was declared eliminated in 2000, including a large ongoing outbreak associated with Disneyland that has affected more than 140 individuals. Most measles cases are among unvaccinated children whose parents refused the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine because of philosophical or religious beliefs. Since January 2015, legislators in at least 8 states have introduced bills to tighten exemptions to mandatory school-entry vaccination policies. The reemergence of measles has raised a sense of urgency and voices in support of vaccination have become much louder.

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