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LIEBERMAN PUTS CHILDREN FIRST ON IMUS IN THE MORNING

**DON IMUS CONVERSATION WITH
U.S. SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN
MARCH 23, 2006**

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Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT): "Absolutely. Absolutely, and that's exactly why I wrote the letter and why I put the requirement in the legislation we adopted last year. Here's the point — a lot of the experts have reached the conclusion that the vaccines had nothing to do with the incredible increase in autism after the decade of the '90s, but I don't think the question has been answered. Deirdre's right to take on this fight and what we're asking for in one of the appropriations bills that passed is that the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences convene a totally independent, big, new study of the possible links between thimerosal and autism ..."

Don Imus: "I mean, I would say to all these scientists and all of these various physicians and all of these other people who claim there's no link between thimerosal and autism, "Prove to me that it's safe." You don't have to be a doctor to know that a neurotoxin has to do something. If it doesn't cause autism, which I personally think it does, but if it doesn't, it must do something. It's mercury. You know, when women get pregnant, they tell them to reduce their fish intake to one serving a week and that's even a different, less toxic, kind of mercury..."

DON IMUS, MSNBC HOST: Please welcome to the Imus in the Morning program, from the great state of Connecticut, Senator Joe Lieberman. Good morning, Senator Lieberman.

SEN. JOE LIEBERMAN (D) CONNECTICUT :Good morning, Don Imus. How are you?

IMUS: Boy was I surprised. I walk in the — I was in the apartment - and I walk in the room there and my wife's on the phone and I'm trying to figure out who she's talking to and then she says "Senator Lieberman" and she's — it sounded like — well, I was a little concerned — but, she was gushing and so on and I wanted to point out to her and you that when — she loves you so much — I wanted you to know that she didn't vote for you when you were running for vice president. She voted for McCain.

LIEBERMAN: That was so gracious of you. But, listen, Dierdre's gotten older and wiser. Let me ask you this. Did you get a call from the NSA that I was on the phone with your wife? Is that why you walked into the room at that moment?

IMUS: Karl Rove called me and said, "You might want to listen in on this one."

LIEBERMAN: Alright, good.

IMUS: You wrote this letter about what to who? That she called you about.

LIEBERMAN: Yeah. Let me say, really, that Dierdre's doing some incredibly important and gutsy work here and I really appreciate it. Which is to say, she's taken on the cause of parents of kids who are autistic who, in my opinion, have a genuine concern that their kids taking vaccines during the `90s with a lot of mercury and thimerosal in them, in fact, became autistic because of thimerosal. And, look, there've been a couple of studies that have said that it's not a factor in the cause of the autism, but, you know, I

IMUS: Well the studies that have been done, Senator, they didn't exactly say that. What they said was they couldn't find any evidence of harm, which is 180 degrees from the CDC, the IOM, or anybody else or any of these people how are ridiculing these parents all over the country. It's a lot different than saying that it's safe. And, as you know and everybody else on the planet knows, that thimerosal is a neurotoxin. Injecting it at the levels they do and used to do — and still do, by the way — into the bloodstreams of infants, must do something.

LIEBERMAN: Absolutely. Absolutely, and that's exactly why I wrote the letter and why I put the requirement in the legislation we adopted last year. Here's the point — a lot of the experts have reached the conclusion that the vaccines had nothing to do with the incredible increase in autism after the decade of the `90s, but I don't think the question has been answered. Dierdre's right to take on this fight and what we're asking for in one of the appropriations bills that passed is that the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences convene a totally independent, big, new study of the possible links between thimerosal and autism and this letter was a letter to Dr. Schwartz who's the new director of the National Toxicology Program to say, "Hey, the law requires you to convene a planning session in May. I know a lot of the experts in the field are telling you not to, but you have a responsibility to Congress and also to the parents of the autistic community." And we're going to stay on top of him until he gets this done and if they don't, we're going to mandate it in the budget that we adopt this summer.

IMUS: I was over at Larry King Show the other night and I ran into a pediatrician from Albany — a lovely guy — and he said, "Well, there's no thimerosal in any children's vaccines anymore." And I told him he didn't know what the hell he was talking about, because

LIEBERMAN: It's an unusual situation where I agree with you and not a pediatrician, but you are absolutely right. There is. Thimerosal, as of 2001, in vaccines has been dramatically reduced, but you've got — a parent has to be very careful in the application of vaccines to their kids to make sure there is no thimerosal in it. That's certainly what I've asked — now, my kids are older, now, but I've ask my kids to do with my grandkids and I think everybody should do the same.

IMUS: You know, you absolutely should get your children vaccinated. We've gotten Wyatt vaccinated, but, then, you can ask your pediatrician to give you a thimerosal-free vaccine. Now, you know, the latest controversy — I was talking to Bobby Kennedy about and others — are these flu vaccines in which the, apparently, the vaccine manufacturers were willing to manufacture as much thimerosal-free flu vaccine as was necessary and, for whatever reason, either the CDC or IOM told them either not to or — it's a very confusing story, but there's not even enough of that available, so

LIEBERMAN: Yeah. I don't, honestly, know the details, but I heard about that Bobby Kennedy interview you had and we're going to check on it. But, you know, I want to stress what you said, some people — . I must say, when I got involved in this, I got involved because I heard from, you know, the Wrights and I heard about Dierdre and you being concerned about this, man, I got an avalanche of protest calls from people who are professionals in the field basically saying that I had gone over to the "Dark Side." But, we're just asking basic questions and the other thing they say is, "Well, you're going to scare people so they're not going to give their kids vaccines." That is absolutely wrong. People should be making sure their kids get vaccines. Vaccines are great, but make sure your kids are getting vaccines without thimerosal. Now, let's answer the questions the parents in the autistic community are raising and they are legitimate questions, because they're living with the very tough results of having an autistic child and maybe that was caused by thimerosal.

IMUS: I mean, I would say to all these scientists and all of these various physicians and all of these other people who claim there's no link between thimerosal and autism, "Prove to me that it's safe." You don't have to be a doctor to know that a neurotoxin has to do something. If it doesn't cause autism, which I personally think it does, but if it doesn't, it must do something. It's mercury. You know, when women get pregnant, they tell them to reduce their fish intake to one serving a week and that's even a different, less toxic, kind of mercury, so

LIEBERMAN: Absolutely right and, look, anybody who's against what we're asking for has to answer this question, "What's wrong with having another study? What's wrong with having an independent, broadly-based group go into the vaccine database that the CDC has and use that to reach some judgments?" Because here are some facts we know: kids were taking vaccines with a lot of thimerosal and mercury in it, way above the allowable limits during the '90s; there has been a shocking increase in autism in the last several years; now, the numbers are something like 1 in 165 kids has a probability of having some problems with autism or at least being along the autism spectrum and that raises real questions that ought to be answered.

IMUS: One in 166 — 4 to 1 boys, so

LIEBERMAN: There you go.

IMUS: We're talking to Senator Joe Lieberman. We don't have a lot of time for you this morning, Senator, because we have Van Zant here and we're just not going to waste any

LIEBERMAN: No, I understand I'm kind of the warm up act for Van Zant which is something in an earlier stage in my life, I would have dreamed of such a thing.

[discussion about the war]

IMUS: Senator Lieberman, you're — not to patronize you — but, you're a good man and a man of your word and while Dierdre and I don't have an autistic child, thank God, and we have a fulltime job with trying to run this ranch for kids with cancer, she got involved with Suzanne and Bob Wright and Katie Wright and once you meet — once you talk to these parents of these — once you see one of these autistic kids, it isn't something you can ignore. And the chickens, at some point, will come home to roost and we'll get an answer for this thanks to you and people like Senator Santorum, by the way.

LIEBERMAN: Yeah, no, I agree. Look, thanks for what you're doing, Don. You know, you gotta put yourself in the position of the parents or grandparents of autistic kids who have real problems everyday and you've got to say, "Don't we want to give some voice to their voicelessness and frustration?" And you and Dierdre have done a great job in doing that and I'm glad to be working on it with you.

IMUS: And it isn't just about trying to bring the pharmaceutical industry to their knees. Which I don't support, by the way. Turning a bunch of crazy trial lawyers loose. It's about giving these people some support. They don't have any insurance. These autistic kids live for, you know, they live normal lives. It destroys these families. They need financial aid. They need education. You know, this Combating Autism Act — it's crucial it get passed. So, good for you.

LIEBERMAN: Yep, that's [inaudible]. There's a good bi-partisan group working on it. Chris Dodd is the leader — Rick Santorum. We're going to keep pushing it and I'm not going to stop asking the questions that I'm asking on behalf of the autistic community until we get answers. So, forward.

IMUS: Thank you very much, Senator Lieberman.

LIEBERMAN: Thank you, my friend. Have a great day.

IMUS: She'll vote for you next time! Senator Joe Lieberman here on the Imus in the Morning program.