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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our helper, as a tragic pattern of insane violence continues to bring pain to our Nation and world, we turn our eyes to You. Thank You that though evil seems undeniably strong, You continue to rule in Your universe. May we refuse to be intimidated by the adversaries of freedom, as we remember Your sacred words, "There is no fear in love."

Lord, lead our Senators with Your wisdom. As they focus on Your presence and power, shield their hearts with Your peace. When they seek Your guidance, direct their steps in the path of truth.

Give us all the sensitivity to comprehend the holy meaning and the sacred mysteries that reside in every moment. And, Lord, be near to all who are affected by the mass shooting in San Bernardino, CA.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope all Members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans, Members of the House and Senate—take a long, hard look this morning, maybe in the mirror, and ask themselves: Where do I stand?

Yet again our country is faced with another sickening act of gun violence. Yesterday's shooting rampage took the lives of 14 people and wounded at least 17 more, a number of those grievously injured. That wasn't the only shooting yesterday; a gunman in Georgia killed a woman and injured three others.

So where do we stand? We have an epidemic of gun violence in America, and it is nothing less than sickening.

Fort Hood, 13 dead; Tucson, 6 dead; Carson City, 4 dead; Aurora, 12 dead; Newtown, 20 little children, 6 educators; the Navy Yard in Washington, DC, 12 dead; Las Vegas, 3 dead, two of whom were police officers. And I have heard this talk: Oh, it is so unusual, a husband and wife. These three people killed in Las Vegas were killed by a husband-and-wife team. In Charleston, nine dead; Moneta, VA, two dead—on live television, he came to kill two people. At Umpqua Community College, nine dead; Colorado Springs, three dead.

That tragic list is nowhere close to being comprehensive. The one in Georgia yesterday—one dead, two wounded. It hardly made the press. But the ones I just mentioned are a few that we picked up earlier this morning in my office.

It would be very difficult to list all the mass killings that have taken place in recent years. Why? Because we are 337 days into 2015 and we have had at least 355 mass shootings—355 mass shootings in 337 days. We are averaging more than one a day.

Two months ago I came to the floor very sad. I was here mourning the murder of innocent community college students attending class in Roseburg, OR. I said then that each time our Nation endures one of these mass killings, we go through the same routine. First we are shocked. Then we ask questions about the killers, their motives, and how they got their hands on those guns. Then we wonder, what could we have done to prevent this terrible thing from happening?

As I said, the disturbing part is that we don't do anything. We don't do anything. We, as the legislative body of this country, do nothing. So I have a question for every Member of this body: How can we live with ourselves for failing to do the things that we know will reduce gun violence? Will it get rid of all of it? Of course not. But will it reduce it? Yes. We are complicit through our inaction, and if we continue to fail to act, we will be complicit today and every day into the future. We will keep ending up right where we are, mourning innocent victims in San Bernardino, CA, or Charleston or Newtown. When victims turn to us for leadership and help, we will have nothing to show but empty hands and a few empty gestures. It is despicable.

For far too long we have done nothing, even as the gun violence shakes our Nation to its core. We must do something. We can start by passing improved background check legislation. Is it asking too much that if someone is crazy or a criminal, they shouldn't be able to walk into any gun shop and buy a gun? Of course not. But that is the law in America.

I know the thought of upsetting the National Rifle Association scares everybody—oh, especially my Republican colleagues. Do you know what scares the American people? Gun violence. These mass shootings at holiday parties frighten the American people. Is it unreasonable that they are frightened?

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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