

they voted to block every sensible bill to address gun violence? Not some of them, all of them.

For example, how can the junior Senator from Florida—who all of a sudden has an interest in running for reelection—how can he speak of running for office again when he voted to let potential terrorists buy assault weapons and explosives? That is how he voted. The junior Senator has voted against every gun safety measure. He was quoted as saying: Well, with what happened yesterday, I might reconsider. He better reconsider his gun votes. He voted against background checks, assault weapons ban, and against legislation limiting the size of ammunition clips.

I ask again: Is this what we want for America? Mass shooting after mass shooting, and each new attack, it seems, is worse than the previous one.

We still have much to learn about the Orlando shooting, but we know one thing for sure. Congress is failing to do anything to prevent these mass killings—anything. Why? Because of Republican obstruction. Because of Republican obstruction, we are doing nothing. We are failing every one of the people killed on Sunday, their families, the whole State of Florida—the whole country. We are failing the families. We are failing everyone who has died in these mass shootings—and there are thousands of them—and those who have lost loved ones to mass shootings—thousands of them, I repeat; the injured, tens of thousands.

As President Obama said yesterday, “To actively do nothing is a decision as well.” And my Republican colleagues have made that decision: doing nothing.

It is time again to try to stop the plague of gun violence. We have a responsibility as lawmakers to do what we can to prevent these shootings, to enact commonsense reforms—nothing radical—that have proven to stop these attacks and save lives.

We should start by closing the loophole that allows terrorists to legally purchase weapons and explosives. Remember, everyone, we voted on this. Everyone in this Chamber should be able to agree that a suspected terrorist shouldn't have guns. Is it more than common sense? I don't think so.

We should do something to expand background checks, ensuring that terror suspects and criminals don't slip through the cracks, and we should do something to limit the size of weapon magazines and clips. There is no reason for gun stores to sell these clips that are that big, magazines or drums designed for the mass killing of human beings. That is what they are made for—no other purpose. People don't hunt with them.

Our Nation can no longer ignore the fact that every day Americans are being gunned down in cold blood. We can no longer ignore the will of the people. We shouldn't, at least. We can no longer ignore the will of the people.

The overwhelming majority of voters support these proposals. According to a

December poll by one of the foremost polling agencies in America, nearly 90 percent of Americans are in favor of expanded background checks. It doesn't matter what State you go to. This was a nationwide poll. In Nevada, Massachusetts, Iowa—it doesn't matter where you go. More than 80 percent of Americans want to close so-called terror loopholes, preventing people on terror watch lists from purchasing firearms. I see my friend from Florida behind me. Of course they care, as much as anyone, if not more, today.

Yet, in spite of the public's demand for action, Senate Republicans continue to cower—cower—before the NRA and the Gun Owners of America. The NRA is bad—really bad—but Gun Owners of America is even worse than bad. These two organizations are competing, seeing just how extreme they can be in pushing for more guns and fewer protections. And I know, after the statement I am making today, they will send out these fundraising calls: REID is trying to take away our guns. Send us some money.

These two organizations are competing to see how extreme they can be in pushing for more guns and fewer protections. Congressional Republicans are content just to go along. Republicans are so terrified of the extreme right that they refuse to pass legislation supported by the vast majority of their own constituents. The NRA and the Gun Owners of America mean more to them than the people they represent.

Do you know what terrifies the American people? It is not the NRA. It is not the Gun Owners of America. Mass shootings scare the American people. Innocent victims being gunned down at nightclubs and holiday parties and schools and movie theaters, that is what scares the American people.

Republicans need to find the backbone to stand up to groups like the NRA and Gun Owners of America. Senate Republicans are stalling important mental health legislation because they are afraid to talk about gun safety measures. Not only are they stalling, but Senate Republicans—led by the assistant Republican leader—are even threatening to include a provision that weakens the FBI's current background check system—which isn't much, to be honest with you—and to weaken it more would be speaking volumes.

We don't need to hear any more of the gun lobby's talking points about how more guns are the answer to what is going on in America or hiring security guards will solve our Nation's scourge of gun violence. The Pulse nightclub in Orlando had security, and there was reportedly an armed, off-duty police officer on the scene, but even that didn't prevent this tragedy.

Instead of pushing for more guns, maybe it is time to make it harder for terrorists and criminals to get guns. It is time for Congress to do something to stop the mass slaughter that is being carried out in our communities. How

else can we describe it? Are 50 dead people—49 plus the killer—49 dead people—is that enough to get our attention? The 50-odd who were injured, and somebody may be paralyzed, is that enough to get our attention?

It is time for Congress to do something—something—to stop this mass slaughter that is being carried out in our communities. Going forward, Democrats are going to continue to support and continue to push these solutions to our Nation's gun violence epidemic, and we are going to, as soon as we can, force a vote on this terror loophole. We are going to do this as soon as possible. There is no excuse for allowing suspected terrorists to buy guns.

There is much we can do but not if Republicans aren't serious about addressing these problems, and historically it has been proven they do not care.

I hope Republicans will find the courage, like George Voinovich, to help us pass meaningful legislation to protect the American people. By the way, George Voinovich was a good Republican.

Madam President, will the Chair announce the business for the rest of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2943, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2943) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 4607, to amend the provision on share-in-savings contracts.

Reed (for Reid) amendment No. 4603 (to amendment No. 4607), to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I have just returned from the command center of the emergency operations center, a temporary one that has been set up in the middle of South Orange Avenue, very close to the Pulse nightclub, not far from the hospital where so many of the victims have been taken, where 9 of the victims died in the care of the doctors, and where there are up to 50 people, some of whom are still fighting for their lives.

Needless to say, Orlando is shocked. We didn't know a place that sometimes

is called the happiest place on Earth could be one of the saddest places on Earth. Indeed, the morning's Orlando Sentinel, the entire front page is dedicated to a statement by the paper entitled "Our Community Will Heal." Will our community heal? Well, certainly, in what we see with the long lines snaking around the block at the blood donation center, where it is literally going around what would be the length of 2 blocks, and where there are people standing in the hot Sun with umbrellas to donate blood, that says something about how the community will heal. Indeed, when we had our office in Orlando opened on Sunday, the kinds of calls expressing grief and shock and just disbelief, along with the messages of comfort, has been quite a contrast to the 95 percent of the hundreds and hundreds of calls the Orlando office has received today. Ninety-five percent of those calls have been hateful.

What does that say about us as a nation? Will we, in fact, heal? What does it say about us as a nation deep inside? Have we lost the teachings in almost all the major religions—clearly in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and clearly in the New Testament, as well as in the Koran. You will recognize these words if I say it in the old English: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Putting it in modern English, it means to treat others as you would want to be treated. Yet what we find is that in our society today there are folks who want to divide instead of unify, and this killer is a good example.

I have spent two days with the FBI. I have been on the phone. I have talked to the Secretary of Homeland Security. I have talked to our intelligence community. It is this Senator's opinion that once the dots are completely connected—and they are being rapidly connected. The FBI is doing a great job. They are the lead in Orlando.

By the way, talking about something good, what about the cooperation and coordination, which has been almost seamless, among local, State, and Federal Government officials, all represented down there in the command center, all being represented as a number of us went in front of the assembled cameras? It seems that is a good thing. That is unity. That is how we do things in America.

Yet, as the dots are being connected, we will find out that, yes, this shooter was ISIS-inspired—and that is a whole set of issues—and how are we going to protect ourselves in the future? But we are also going to find that this shooter was inspired by hatred, and we are going to find that this hatred was directed, as his father already said in interviews, toward the gay community.

So here again, we have another terrible tragedy. I have had a number of calls from my fellow Senators. One of those calls came from RICHARD BLUMENTHAL. He is from Connecticut. He has reason to be sensitive about this because of the Sandy Hook Ele-

mentary School shooting, where 20 children and some 6 adults were gunned down needlessly. Maybe that was a mental case. Maybe part of this one in Orlando is a mental case. But it is driven by hatred, maybe through ISIS, a hatred of America and of a free society being willing to be able to speak what you want without fear of persecution, or maybe it is a hatred about a group of people. It is exactly the opposite of what is taught in all of the Scriptures.

So as we heal in Orlando, it will take a while. You can imagine those families of the ones who have been lost. You can imagine the families down in the Orlando Health hospital right now, grieving, hoping, and praying that those victims fighting for their lives are going to make it.

So America, we are going to have to dig down deep and find out who we really are. You know, I really know who we are. We are a people with a character that is compassionate, generous, kind, and respectful. We as Americans are ladies and gentlemen. We can express ourselves as has been the tradition on the floor of this Senate in the heat of political debate. We can sharply differ, but we can be respectful of the other fellow's point of view. That is America, and until we finally come to the conclusion and insist that this aberrant behavior be stopped—until that happens—we will still be grieving.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts. Mr. MARKEY. Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to echo the sentiments of the Senator from Florida. His State has suffered an unspeakable tragedy. It is something that unfortunately brings together two terrible biases—one against the LGBT community and the other a religiously based radical attack inspired by ISIS at that nightclub. They all came together. To the Senator and to everyone from Florida, our deepest, deepest sympathies go to you.

It was, of course, something that was understood in Massachusetts. He mentioned the Tsarnaev brothers as an inspiration to him. They struck on Patriots Day in 2013 in the United States. Mohamed Atta and the other nine hijackers were in Boston when they hijacked the two planes from Logan International Airport. So we know those people are out there. We know that their hate-filled message is intended to kill innocent Americans, and we saw it once again. Unfortunately, the target was a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

But for us, I think we have to learn from this. This man had been investigated as a terrorist suspect, and yet we are blocked—the Senator from Florida and I and others—from passing a law that would prevent anyone on a terror watch list from buying a gun in these United States. It is not against the law. The National Rifle Association has enough power here on the floor of

the Senate to prohibit someone who is on a terror watch list from buying guns in the United States of America. We need another vote on that issue here in the Senate. We need to give the protections to the American people for them to know that someone on a terror watch list cannot buy a gun in the United States of America.

We also have to ban these military-style assault weapons, like the AR-15, which are the guns of choice for those who seek to inflict mass casualties on civilians. These are not weapons that belong on the streets of our country. They belong in combat overseas, not in our communities. They don't belong in Newtown, they don't belong in San Bernardino, and they don't belong in Orlando. They don't belong in our streets or in our schools or in a civilized society, yet we cannot ban these weapons from being sold in the United States of America.

We have to prevent any known or suspected terrorist from buying firearms, and we have to make it impossible, as well, for them to buy these assault weapons. This is our challenge now.

Once again, we are warned. Once again, we are told what the weapon of choice is. Once again, we know that they are going to target us if we make it easy for them to access these weapons. How many warnings do we need?

The NRA really should stand for "not relevant anymore" in American politics. They should not control the agenda here on the floor of the Senate. We should be able to ban people on the terror watch list from buying guns. We should be able to ban these assault weapons from being sold at all inside of our country. The Senate leadership should stop banning a vote here on the Senate floor on ensuring that we do the research at the CDC on this relationship between mental health and the use of guns within our society.

The bill that I have introduced calls for \$10 million a year for the next 6 years. We can't even get the money to research gun violence in the United States of America.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can change. We can learn these lessons, but we can't wait any longer to put those commonsense gun laws on the books. We cannot wait any longer to make our streets safer.

So let's close the gun show loophole that allows anyone to go into one of these Kmart's full of killing machines and buy a gun without a background check. Let's close the loophole that allows domestic abusers to buy guns. Let's close the loophole that allows straw purchasers to buy guns and flood our streets with them. Let's repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act and take away the gun manufacturers' immunity from civil liability. PLCAA should stand for "protecting lives, creating arms accountability," not protecting these arms manufacturers from liability if these guns are used to kill innocent people in our society.

So in the coming days and weeks, you can be assured that the National Rifle Association will be opposed to even these limited commonsense gun measures. The NRA has had a stranglehold over Congress for far too long. It is time to end its reign of power. It is time to end its viselike grip on the safety and security of our Nation. Those in Congress who do not support these commonsense measures are siding with those forces that make it easier for these massacres to happen. That is the bottom line of where we are. Now is the time to stand up for the families of Columbine, of Newtown, of Aurora, of Chattanooga, of Charleston, of San Bernardino, and now of Orlando, and of all of the cities across our country, which are saying: Enough is enough.

I was so proud on Saturday to march in the Boston Gay Pride Parade. It was a joyous occasion where love, community, and social justice were all celebrated with a passion and a real sense of progress. But as I woke up the next morning, I saw again how an individual armed with guns and fueled by extremist ideology can fuel violence and terror.

We are a nation of hope, not hatred. After this tragedy, after this deplorable attack, let's denounce hate in all of its forms. Let's stand with the LGBT community and raise our voices with dignity, equality, and love. Let's say no to the rhetoric of hate that demonizes our friends and neighbors because of their faith, sexual orientation, or because of their country of origin. Let's recommit to justice and moving progress forward.

The American people are begging, pleading for this institution to enact commonsense gun safety measures. My hope is that the Senate can succeed where it has recently failed and muster the political will and courage to deliver badly needed reform of our gun laws. Let's work together to do this and to help prevent yet another mass shooting in our country.

I yield back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, it is good to see the Presiding Officer this afternoon.

This past weekend, Saturday, my wife and I went to New York City at the invitation of one of our sons. We visited the 9/11 Memorial in New York, literally erected on the site of the World Trade Center. I must confess it was emotionally charging, very saddening, and at the same time uplifting and inspiring.

I never imagined that within the space of less than 24 hours we would see dozens of our young have their lives taken from them.

I remember walking through the 9/11 Memorial—and for those who have not been, I urge you to go. For those who have, you probably remember going through parts of the memorial and literally seeing the faces of 3,000 men, women, and some children whose lives

were snuffed out that day some 15 years ago. Every one of them had moms and dads. They had grandparents. A number of them had children, spouses, brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, and nieces. Those families struggle even today with their loss.

The young people who died Saturday night, Sunday morning in a nightclub in Orlando, like those many folks whose faces we saw on Saturday, also have moms and dads, grandmoms, granddads, brothers, sisters, and cousins. Their families are mourning today just like others did 15 years ago.

What I want to do is preface my remarks by reaching out across the miles to the families who are mourning, trying to deal with their losses, and let them know that we want to take you in our loving embrace. To the best of our ability, we also want to make sure we continue to take steps in this country to ensure we reduce the likelihood that these kinds of attacks are going to occur and that when they do, if they do, we are better prepared to deal with them.

The killer, the man who took the lives of 49 people, demonstrated an act of hatred—in part, an act of terrorism but really an act of hatred. The question is, What do we do about it? Some would have us close our borders, the ability to come here even on a short-term basis: If you happen to be Muslim, we are going to keep you out. That is exactly what ISIS would like for us to do. There are 3.3 million Muslims in this country. The idea of somehow turning them against the rest of us, that is the kind of thing happening in some parts of Europe.

Unlike Europe, we are a country where we accept the people who come to our shores. We accept them. When you were a stranger in my land, did you take me in? For us, for years, for decades, and for a couple of centuries, the answer has been yes. That doesn't mean we shouldn't very carefully check and test the backgrounds of the people who come here to make sure they are who they say they are, that they are not on a terrorist watch list. We have a bunch of those. We want to make sure our agencies and our terrorist watch lists are coordinated. We want to make sure our intelligence agencies are in close communication with one another.

Part of the goal of ISIS is to make this a clash between the United States and the Muslim population here, 3.3 million people, and around the world. That is not what we should do. We should be smarter than that.

One of the things we need to do is to continue the work that was begun from last year—I have said it often, I am going to say it again—to degrade and destroy those who would do us harm. Those who would do us enormous harm are trying to set up a caliphate. They are somehow using their religion, bastardizing their religion, and making it say things it doesn't even begin to say.

What we need to do is make sure they get no further. The progress that

has been made in terms of rolling them back was with the help of a coalition that includes 15 nations—16 nations. We are taking back a lot of the land and about to—I hope—take Fallujah and Mosul and continue there.

When ISIS wannabes pop up in other countries, the idea is to work with our coalition in the countries that ISIS is trying to get a foothold in and make sure they are not successful. So it is a little like Whac-a-Mole—but it is not a game—and it is one we want to make sure they don't get a chance to get started there.

If you look at the amount of money—ISIS used to make a lot of money selling oil. They take over oil refineries and oilfields, and they sell the oil on the black market. We have greatly diminished their ability to do that and greatly diminished their ability to make money. In some cases, we have figured out where they are keeping their cash stored, and we have gone in and destroyed literally hundreds of millions of dollars in their currency that they were harboring.

There are a number of people coming from around the world to go to that part of the world—Iraq, Syria—who want to be ISIS volunteers. It is greatly diminished from what it was. It is down from 2,000 a month this time maybe last year to something that is just a fraction of that.

In the United States not that long ago, early this year, maybe six people a month were going from the United States to the Middle East to be part of ISIS, and they are down to maybe one per month. It is still one too many, but we are headed in the right direction.

The people who are being radicalized here by ISIS, ISIS is not sending people here to radicalize them. ISIS is basically trying to do this through social media, to use the Internet, and they are pretty good at it, but one of the things that will make them not so effective is once we demonstrate—and I think we are on our way to doing that—that ISIS is a losing team. The people who are apparently claiming credit for it—or the killer in this case who killed all of our folks over the weekend, he was looking for a winning team. He is not a person who had a lot of wins in his life, and he wanted to be a part of a winning team. Our challenge is to make sure that anybody who is looking for a winning team or thinks they can, through radicalization, attacks, and terrorism—we need to make sure they know they are barking up the wrong tree.

ISIS is a losing team. One of the ways we can do that is—the Presiding Officer along with me and a number of others on the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs have been all over this issue for years. It led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. We continue to stay right on this issue, and we will probably be doing that for as long as any of us are in the Senate.

Part of what we should be doing, aside from degrading and destroying ISIS—if we are smart, one of the things we need to do is reach out to the Muslim community in this country, unlike what has happened in places in Europe, where you have a lot of Muslim folks who are all segregated. They are not part of the culture. They are not welcomed so much in those countries. One of the things about us in America is we are a melting pot. We have been a melting pot forever. When I was a stranger in your land, did you take me in? For years, we said the answer is yes.

The Department of Homeland Security has asked for authorization to be able to create our community partnership, to reach out to Muslim communities across America, to meet with parents, with young people, not so young people, face the community, and make it clear they are a part of this country, make sure they say to their own people, their own young people: Don't do this. Don't do what this guy did over the weekend in Orlando. That is not part of our religion. It is not part of their religion. Don't go there.

The third thing we can do and ought to be doing is to strengthen our defenses at home.

We had an active shooter situation for hours into the wee hours of Saturday evening to Sunday morning, an active shooter situation. It is not the first active shooter situation we have faced. They are not easy to deal with.

One of the things the Department of Homeland Security can do, is doing, and ought to be doing more of, if given the resources, is doing active shooter training in police agencies all over the United States. If they ever face a situation such as this, they know what to do and they are able to be effective and save lives.

The other thing I would mention in terms of resources, as the Presiding Officer knows, we put a fair amount of resources toward a fusion center. Sometimes people used to call them confusion centers, but actually they are a fusion center. They give the ability to State and local law enforcement agencies to work with the Feds to better ensure that information gathered locally works its way up the channel, up through the chain of command, to be shared nationally with other States and with the Federal Government, and to make sure the converse is true, to the extent that we gather useful information at the national level, international level, that we bring it down and we funnel it back into individual States through fusion centers so they act on that actionable intelligence.

We need to work with energy in this regard. We need to work with a sense of urgency. We need to make sure, as we go through the appropriations process in the Senate in the days and weeks ahead, that we are putting resources, financial resources, where they need to go.

A number of folks have asked me in interviews yesterday and today: What

should we be doing about gun control? How does all of this relate to gun control? The answer is, I am not sure how this is going to affect the way we view guns. I believe in the Second Amendment right. I am sure the Presiding Officer does, a former Army colonel, retired colonel. I am a retired Navy captain, a Vietnam veteran. My dad was a chief petty officer in World War II and served for a long time as a chief petty officer in the Reserves after that. My dad was a hunter. He came from a family of hunters and taught me to be a hunter and a fisherman. One of the proudest possessions I own is a shotgun my grandfather gave me before he died. When I was in the Navy, I used to go back on leave from Southeast Asia, go visit my parents near Clearwater, FL, and stay in a guest bedroom. In the guest bedroom, under my bed where I slept, were guns. I opened the closet in the guestroom for my clothes, and there were guns. My father, in addition to being a hunter, actually bought and sold guns. He would basically sell them to people he knew. He felt they were not people who were mentally unstable or people who were felons, but he believed in the Second Amendment right. My dad also believed in common sense.

My dad is now deceased, but if he were alive and he heard that people who are on terrorism watch lists can literally buy weapons, including assault weapons, automatic weapons, he would say: That doesn't make any sense. If he found out we could go to a gun show, and a person who is mentally unstable, has a history of mental illness, and maybe someone who is a convicted felon could actually walk into a gun show and go to a federally registered gun dealer, be denied the ability to purchase an assault weapon, and then go to the next table over with someone who is not a federally registered gun dealer and purchase the same weapon they had just been denied, in terms of what makes sense and doesn't make sense to my dad and frankly to me—his son—those situations don't make a whole lot of sense. Those are areas we ought to agree on.

One of our colleagues, as the Presiding Officer knows, Senator ENZI from Wyoming, likes to talk about the 80–20 rule. It is a great rule. It says there is about 80 percent of the stuff we agree on and maybe 20 percent of an issue we don't agree on. What we should do is focus on the 80 percent we agree on. My hope is—most Americans get it, in terms of making sure that folks who are on the terrorist watch list don't have access to buy weapons. They get it. I think they also get the idea that this gun show loophole is something that ought to be closed as well.

I close by saying, in a sense, this is a test of our character as a nation. I said earlier our tradition has always been that we welcome people from disparate places, in some cases people fleeing oppression, lack of freedom, lack of religious opportunities and freedom of

worship. That is the way we operate as a country.

You don't open and read the Constitution—it doesn't say Matthew 25 because we decided we are not going to establish a religion here. If we did, Matthew 25 says: When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me to drink? When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was a stranger in your land, did you take me in?

I think we have a moral obligation to the least of these, including those who are fleeing oppression in other places looking for an opportunity for a new life. I think we have a moral obligation to welcome them, but we have a moral obligation to those who live here, to make sure that as we welcome people from other places, we do not imperil them by those who arrive from other shores.

The last thing I would say is, we need the kind of leadership in this body that seeks to really do what it says right over the Presiding Officer's head, where the Presiding Officer is sitting. The Latin words—I don't know a lot of Latin words but “*e pluribus unum*”—from many, one. Those are words that we would be wise to remember from this day as we go forward.

I think that is pretty much what I wanted to say. As this week goes on, I ask that my colleagues and I find out as much as we can, learn as much as we can, find out what went right and what went wrong, and do more of what went right. And at the end of the day, let's make sure we are true to the values on which this country was built.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, first of all, let me thank our colleague for his words. I certainly join him in mourning the horrible, tragic loss of life this weekend in Orlando. Certainly I am committed, along with all our colleagues, to fighting terror wherever it exists and whomever it targets. This was absolutely horrible.

Mr. President, I also rise today in support of a really important piece of bipartisan legislation that I have been working on with Senator SHAHEEN. I have introduced it to reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Programs—two vital small business programs in the Federal Government. We have an opportunity to accomplish this—to fully reauthorize and improve these programs—in the context of this Defense authorization bill that is on the floor now. I am very hopeful we are going to do that as part of a managers' package to the bill.

These two programs—the Small Business Innovation Research and the Small Business Technology Transfer Programs—are really vital and useful to the success of small businesses directly responsible for creating thousands, tens of thousands of new jobs.

By funding small businesses and entrepreneurs in the critical early stages

of R&D, these programs allow firms to drive the innovation sector of the economy with new ideas and technologies. Very rarely have government programs had such a clear and measurable, positive and stimulating effect on the economy.

SBIR and STTR are also crucial to Federal agencies as they solve many of our biggest science and technology challenges. Giving small, innovative firms access to already appropriated Federal R&D funding is a win-win—a win for the small business sector and just as importantly a win for the taxpayer and those agencies.

These programs exist to foster innovation, to facilitate public-private partnerships, to give firms the funding they need to help 11 Federal departments and agencies meet their R&D needs. These programs not only create jobs, but they also lead to a path for commercialization for many of these businesses, which is absolutely key to their success.

These programs have been front and center in improving our Nation's capacity to innovate. Over the course of the SBIR Program history from 1982 to 2014—the last year for which we have numbers—Federal agencies have made more than 152,000 SBIR awards to small businesses to develop innovative technologies, and the total dollar amount awarded—again out of existing R&D budgets—is \$42 billion.

In 2014 alone, SBIR gave nearly 5,500 Phase I and Phase II awards worth about \$2.2 billion, and the SBA is currently reporting an average of 5,000 awards per year. These awards are directly responsible for some of the most popular technologies that are available to the public today.

For instance, through an SBIR award from the Air Force, we have created a technology known as LASIK, originally to correct vision for pilots, but that is a widely used technology to correct vision for all Americans. That was an SBIR success.

Military armor has been a regular success of the SBIR Programs. ArmorWorks is a great example. That created over 350,000 top-of-the-line body armor plates worn by U.S. service men and women in the United States.

Liftware Spoon—a spoon that stabilizes hand tremors for patients with Parkinson's disease and essential tremor—again is a clear, identifiable, and important SBIR success story.

HydroMARK decreases patient discomfort with a minimally invasive breast biopsy procedure. With the HydroMARK, a mammogram is no longer necessary and the surgeon or radiologist can use an ultrasound to locate the tumor. This is a huge innovation that has dramatically improved thousands of women's lives and, again, directly out of SBIR.

Bioseal reduces lung collapse rates after lung biopsies.

iRobot's Roomba is something I can relate to. It is moving around at home when I am there on the weekend. This

is the popular autonomous robotic vacuum cleaner that has reached major commercial success, selling over 10 million units. That is directly out of SBIR.

These programs we are talking about, which have been so successful, are set to expire September 30 of 2017. As many of my colleagues can attest, it was a tumultuous process to complete the last reauthorization, so we are starting early now so we don't go through that tumultuous process again. Back then—the last reauthorization—participating agencies and firms had to endure a process that took over 3 years and 14 short-term extensions. In a bipartisan effort with Senator SHAHEEN, we have been working for the last year to avoid all that and to do this ahead of time so we don't have all of that tumult and uncertainty, which saps the effectiveness of the program for a significant period of time.

Reauthorizing these programs this year will ensure stability, foster an environment of innovative entrepreneurship, and avoid that uncertainty by directing more than \$200 billion annually to this R&D funding to the Nation's small business firms.

As chair of the Senate's Small Business Committee, I have made this a real priority. Senator SHAHEEN, as ranking member, has done the same. So I thank all of our committee members who are solidly behind this effort. I also thank so many other Members of the Senate who have been cooperative.

In the context of this Defense bill, we have cleared our reauthorization amendment with the Senate Committee on Armed Services, and I want to specifically thank Senators MCCAIN and REED for their leadership. We have cleared it with the Commerce Committee because agencies under the jurisdiction of that committee are involved. We have cleared it with the HELP Committee. They have the same tangential relationship. We are the authorizing committee, but some agencies involved are under their jurisdiction. We have cleared it with everyone in sight, so that means we have a real opportunity to have this in the managers' package—which it is, as I speak—and to pass it through the Defense bill as a full reauthorization.

I am also proud to share that not only will our reauthorization annually direct more than \$2 billion of Federal R&D to small firms that are most likely to create jobs and commercialize their projects, but it will also establish the Regional SBIR State Collaborative Initiative Pilot Program to help low-participation States attract R&D funding for their businesses.

All of this reauthorization is a true consensus effort, so I am grateful to the more than 50 organizations that strongly support it—among them the Small Business Technology Council, the National Small Business Association and the Defense Alliance, and 47 more. It is a true consensus effort. They all support the effort, as does the

leadership of SAS; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; and the Commerce Committee. So it is an important opportunity that we shouldn't let fall through our grasp.

Again, I want to stress that reauthorizing this program is an effective way to meet national needs while jump-starting entrepreneurs, growing our economy, and creating jobs.

With that, Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support this consensus amendment and help ensure that small businesses across the country can operate with long-term certainty and stability, which this amendment will provide.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the atrocity that occurred this past weekend in Orlando, FL, was an attack on every American, and my deepest condolences are with the victims and the families of this appalling attack. I am grateful for our law enforcement and the first responders who bravely put their lives on the line to save others.

This attack—the deadliest in American history since 9/11—was carried out by a gunman who pledged allegiance to ISIS. There are 49 families who received phone calls this weekend—phone calls we all hope we never receive. There are 49 families who are arranging for funerals this week. They never dreamed they would be put in this position—the tragedy, the sorrow of the mothers, the fathers, the aunts, the uncles, the brothers, the sisters, the grandparents, the cousins, and friends who will all be attending funerals this week.

Additionally, there are more than 50 families dealing with family members who were injured, some gravely, who are fighting for their lives as I speak.

Montana is a long ways away from Orlando, but I can tell you that last night across our State there were vigils in Great Falls, Helena, Missoula, Bozeman, Butte, and Billings, MT. We stand united with Orlando.

This threat of ISIS is continuing to grow each and every day. We need a strong strategy to destroy the growing threat of Islamic extremism—Islamic extremism on our soil as well. President Obama, what is that strategy?

We need to aggressively go after radical jihadists who seek to destroy our way of life and disturb the peace in our communities. The senseless hate of ISIS and radical Islam will not defeat us but, rather, strengthen our resolve and commitment to freedom.

We need to remember that this was an act of terror on American soil, that this is a threat we face from radical Islam and ISIS, and that the worst response would be to politicize this and use this tragedy to restrict our constitutional rights and freedoms.

We cannot allow dangerous terrorists to hide in our communities. We need to seek them out and ensure they aren't

able to inflict harm on our neighbors, our friends, and our families.

May God comfort those who have been profoundly affected by this tragedy, and may God protect our men and women who are defending our country both here and abroad every day. We are a strong nation, and together we will protect our country and ensure victory over the terrorists who want to take away our very way of life here in America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the junior Senator from Montana. I appreciate his coming to the floor today.

I rise today with a heavy heart. Since I first heard the horrible news about the senseless act of terrorism in Orlando, the victims, the partners, and the families have been at the center of my thoughts and prayers. But thoughts and prayers are not enough. It is long past time for the Senate to come together and have a conversation about what steps need to be taken to put an end to this violence and hatred. We cannot continue to be crippled by inaction. The Senate needs to come together to strengthen our national security.

After attacks like Orlando, we hear folks say "Never again," but actions really do speak louder than words. It is time that we work together to try to prevent these senseless acts of terror and violence. That conversation begins with our national security and what needs to be done to keep our families and our communities safe.

There are actions we can take right now to bolster our national security. There is no question that we must pass legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of terrorists. We absolutely do need to secure our borders. And we need to continue to crack down on insider threats by reforming our security clearance process.

Intolerance and hate have no place in this country, and as elected leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure that every American can live their life each day free from fear.

VETERANS FIRST ACT

Mr. President, this Nation has made a sacred promise to the men and women who have served in our Armed Forces. These folks answered a call to duty, and they made selfless sacrifices to protect the freedoms we all enjoy. These heroes stood up for us, and now it is time for the Senate to stand up for them.

Two years ago, when reports surfaced that veterans were dying while waiting to receive care at the VA, the Senate acted swiftly, and we passed legislation to build the capacity of the VA to better meet the needs of veterans now and into the future. Also included in that bill was the Veterans Choice Program, which allowed more veterans to seek care in their own community when

they were unable to get timely care from the VA. Unfortunately, the Choice Program is broken. We have heard this from veterans and community leaders, from veteran service organizations, from Republicans and from Democrats.

The intent of the Choice Program was a good one—to get veterans care more quickly—but the rollout has been disastrous, causing far too many veterans to wait even longer for an appointment. But because of the leadership of Chairman ISAKSON and Ranking Member BLUMENTHAL, the Veterans' Affairs Committee came together in May and approved the Veterans First Act, which includes provisions that I and Senator BURR authored to fix the Choice Program. It also includes critical provisions to hold the VA accountable, increase veterans access to care both inside and outside the VA, and better deliver on the commitment this Nation has made to the folks who have served.

Since this bill was unanimously passed out of committee back on May 16, it has fallen victim to politics as usual, and a combination of anonymous holds and the majority leader's decision not to bring it to the floor have put this bipartisan piece of legislation, this good piece of legislation for our veterans, in limbo. And now there are only 21 days left until the Senate is set to recess for nearly 2 months.

I am concerned that the clock is running out and that this bipartisan bill will fall victim to the Senate's inaction. We cannot let business as usual here in Washington, DC, derail critically needed reforms. Veterans will not and should not accept excuses for the Senate not acting.

This is a good bill. It is a bill that gives the VA the flexibility to work directly with community providers to connect veterans to the care they need so that the VA does not need to work through a middleman. This bill also provides the budget flexibility necessary to ensure veterans are routed to care in a manner that makes the most sense for them. It imposes stricter rules to ensure the VA is reimbursing community providers in a more timely manner. It also includes critical provisions that I helped author to ensure the VA is able to more quickly fill leadership vacancies at VA medical facilities.

That is why today I am calling on the Senate to put politics aside, put personal agendas aside, and get this bill to the floor for debate and for an up-or-down vote. The millions of veterans who are still being forced to wait more than 30 days to schedule an appointment deserve that vote. The veterans who are still kept on long wait lists deserve that vote. And the folks who have sacrificed so much to protect and defend this country deserve that vote.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, early in the morning this past Sunday, the worst mass shooting in America's history took place. Forty-nine people were killed and 53 more wounded at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, FL. We don't know all the details, but we know that this was an act of terror and that it was an act of hate directed at the LGBT community.

I want to begin by expressing my condolences to the victims, to their families and loved ones, and to the city of Orlando. I thank the first responders who ran toward the sound of gunfire, who literally risked their lives to save the lives of others.

I express my support and solidarity with the LGBT community in Orlando and throughout the Nation. Many of the patrons at the Pulse nightclub were members of that community. They were simply enjoying a fun night out at an establishment that welcomed them.

June is Pride Month. It is a month where we should take pride in the advances we have made toward equality since Stonewall in 1969. The LGBT movement has come a long way in protecting Americans' right to love the person they love. Yet this weekend's shooting is a sobering reminder that this community still remains a target of vicious hatred.

As we mourn those we lost in Orlando, we must not lose our pride in what the LGBT movement has accomplished. We must stand in solidarity with our fellow LGBT Americans who will not let the hate of a few overcome the love of an entire community.

The shooter who perpetrated this horrific attack has been identified as a 29-year-old U.S. citizen who was living in St. Lucie County, FL. The shooter reportedly entered the nightclub at about 2 a.m. on Sunday morning, armed with an AR-15 assault rifle and a handgun. He opened fire on the patrons and engaged in a shoot-out with an off-duty Orlando police officer who was working security at the nightclub. The shooter apparently held a number of hostages in the nightclub for several hours, until a SWAT team swarmed the building, killing the gunman at about 5 a.m.

Reportedly, the shooter called 911 to pledge allegiance to ISIS, even while the attack was under way. We do not yet know when and how this gunman may have been radicalized. Reportedly, he had been the subject of at least two FBI investigations in recent years regarding possible ties to terrorist groups. The shooter reportedly bought the two guns he used on Sunday within the last several days. He was able to buy these guns legally, despite the past

investigations into his potential terrorist ties.

Let's be clear. In America, our laws currently allow dangerous people to buy guns. That has to change. I respect the Second Amendment to our Constitution. That amendment protects the responsible use of guns for lawful purposes. But the Supreme Court has made it clear that it is constitutional to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. Our lawmakers are simply not doing enough to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

Right now, the FBI cannot stop a known or suspected terrorist from walking into a gunshop and walking out with an AR-15, an assault weapon. The GAO found that between 2004 and 2014, suspected terrorists bought guns lawfully at least 2,043 times from American gun dealers.

What are we thinking? Last December, when the Senate took up this measure, we failed on the floor of the Senate to pass legislation to close this terror gap loophole. The gap remains open, and we have failed to close the gaping loopholes in our own background check system that allow terrorists, criminals, and others to get guns without a background check from gun shows or over the Internet. Why do we make it so easy for people that we suspect of being involved in terrorism to buy guns—assault weapons, military-style guns?

Last December, this Senate failed again to pass Manchin-Toomey, a bill that would close many of these loopholes. This was a bipartisan bill, yet we couldn't pass it on the floor of the Senate.

We know our weak gun laws make us vulnerable, but we have not acted to strengthen them. In fact, almost every week we see efforts in Congress to further weaken gun laws in America.

Hundreds of men, women, and children are shot every day in America, and on average 91 of those victims die. It is an epidemic of gun violence that has devastated families and communities in every State. No community has been hit harder than the city of Chicago—the city I am honored to represent and the city I love and a city where this past weekend, 44 people were shot, 7 of them fatally. More than 1,650 people have been shot so far this year in Chicago, with at least 282 victims dying from their wounds.

The tragedy of Orlando is that it all happened in a few hours. The tragedy of gun violence in Chicago is that it happens almost every day.

Across the Nation, we have seen Americans gunned down in nightclubs, elementary schools, churches, temples, movie theaters, health care clinics, malls, colleges, and our homes and our neighborhoods.

We need to wake up and act to reduce this violence. Thoughts and prayers are important but not sufficient. We need votes and laws to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. Can't we agree on that? The responsibility lies

right here. We have that responsibility and that opportunity.

This weekend's act of hate and terror in Orlando has been condemned by Americans of all backgrounds and all faiths, and Orlando has received an extraordinary outpouring of support and solidarity from all across the United States and around the world.

We do stand united against ISIS and its efforts to promote mass shootings and acts of terror. We stand in support of the LGBT community—the latest target of this terrorist attack. This solidarity is important. Our efforts to defeat ISIS and keep America safe from hate and terror are strengthened when our Nation and the world stand united. We must not let the actions of a hateful few divide us and prevent us from working together to combat this evil.

We also must not let this act of hate and terror lead to hostility against the Muslim community in America. The American Muslim community has stood with all Americans in condemning Sunday's mass shooting. American Muslim leaders immediately spoke out and condemned the attack. Muslim Floridians donated blood and money to help the victims and survivors.

In the coming days, there will be those who say we should respond to this attack by discriminating against innocent American Muslims and immigrants. But the solution to hate is not more hate; it is unity.

In Orlando, they understand this. In a news conference after the shooting, a representative of Equality Florida recognized the unity between the LGBT and Muslim communities, stating that his organization “stands in solidarity with the Muslim and Islamic community in opposition to the intolerance, discrimination, and hate crimes that both of our communities experience.”

That was a statement by the representative of Equality Florida about Muslims in Florida itself. It is unfortunate that the presumptive Republican Presidential nominee, Donald Trump, does not understand this. In response to the Orlando attack, Mr. Trump wasted no time calling again for a ban on all Muslims immigrating to the United States.

General Michael Hayden is no softy, no liberal. He was Director of the CIA, and the National Security Agency under President George W. Bush. Here is what General Hayden said of Mr. Trump's response to the attack: “Prejudiced, simplistic, and frankly inaccurate.” General Hayden has pointed out that banning all Muslim immigration would not make us safer and actually helps ISIS recruit those who hate the United States.

As we mourn those we have lost, we must also roll up our sleeves and get to work. We must pursue smart, common-sense reforms to keep dangerous, hateful people from getting their hands on dangerous weapons. America just suffered its deadliest mass shooting event

in history—worse than San Bernardino, worse than Newtown, worse than Virginia Tech. If there was ever a time for Congress to do its job and keep guns out of dangerous hands, this is it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, first and foremost, I wish to send my heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost loved ones in Orlando, FL, in Orange County, yesterday in a tragic event. I want to express my great appreciation to the people of Orlando who volunteered their blood, their families, and their houses to help support those victims; to the EMTs who rushed into harm's way to save lives—and they did save lives—and to the hospital trauma team that did an amazing job of responding instantaneously to a tragedy beyond anybody's comprehension.

We are very sad in America today by the terrible attack that took place and those who would perpetrate it. I, for one, am going to roll up my sleeves and work to see to it that wherever radical Islamic terrorism is, I want to root it out and I want to destroy it. You cannot accept or tolerate what happened yesterday, and we must redouble our effort to follow it wherever it leads us and to wipe it out and to eradicate it. I, as one Senator, will promise to do that.

COMMERCE-JUSTICE-SCIENCE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. President, I am one of those guys who usually is very supportive of going to cloture and going on motions to proceed on just about anything because I think the Senate is the most deliberative body in the world and we ought to do that. But tomorrow, shortly after 11 o'clock, I am going to vote no on the motion to proceed to the Commerce-Justice-Science bill. I want to memorialize why on the floor of the Senate tonight so everybody is clear and understands.

There is report language in the Commerce-Justice-Science portion of the appropriations bill that directly interjects this Congress, this Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives into a tristate water compact misunderstanding among the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida that has gone on for 27 years.

I know that is of no interest to the Presiding Officer from Indiana, nor to the Senator who just preceded me from Chicago, IL, nor anybody else, but what is of interest to you would be any time that Congress decided to interject its nose in your business. Tomorrow, if the motion to proceed brings it to the floor, it will be injecting 100 Senators into an issue among 6 Senators. That is not the right way to do it. In fact, the tristate water compact, which has been off and on in negotiations for 26 years,

is at its closest point of being finally decided in a court of law. The judge and the special master recently notified us that they will hear the final case on the tristate water compact in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida this November. So the issue is going to be resolved.

We have no place as a Senate or as a Congress to inject ourselves into a case that is pending litigation in the courts between States on issues that are purely theirs—except for the fact that over the years, for nefarious reasons and unpleasant reasons, sometimes Congress has from time to time thwarted water control manuals, thwarted the authority of the Corps of Engineers from doing its job, all over litigation of the ACF and AC basins in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama.

I want to bring a resolution. I want all the States to have an adequate supply of water. I want us to be cooperative and work together, and I want us to do it the right way. The right way is to not interject ourselves at the last minute in an appropriations bill with nefarious language that can't be touched that is in the report language but, instead, to pull that language out, as I will try to do with an amendment on the floor. If I am unsuccessful, I will try to do an amendment that counteracts that language, to see to it that Congress does not stick its nose in a place that it does not belong.

I like to be cooperative. I like to move forward. I don't want to slow down progress. But I was sent here to represent 10.4 million people in the State of Georgia and, by golly, I am going to do it. If somebody is trying to inject themselves beyond the appropriate place, I am going to do everything I can to stop them. The way I will start that tomorrow will be to vote no on the motion to proceed to go to the Commerce-Justice-Science bill.

I yield back my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the horror of Orlando, and I know so many Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle have been thinking about those who lost their lives and talking about this horror that once again has impacted everyone from one end of America to the other.

I won't speak for a long time tonight other than to say—which I think is

plainly evident from the evidence we have right now at this point in the investigation—that this was first an act of terror and it was also an act of hate. I think both are significant because of the impact they have on our country over time.

I think there is a strong belief that the first thing we must do is to express not just condolence but solidarity with the people of Orlando, the people of Florida, and to do what we can to help them and help those communities and families who lost so much in such a short timeframe. At last count, there are 50 dead and more than 50 injured. There will be some who say that beyond that, there is not much we can do, that we should just stay where we are now and not change the laws. I don't agree with that, and I won't dwell on a long list tonight, but I hope at some point we can begin to reengage on a number of issues and at least have a full debate and also a series of votes on a couple of measures which I think are common sense. These are issues that we voted on I believe most recently in 2013, and I was hoping we would vote on them after that.

One of the votes had to do with a ban on military-style weapons. I think it would be appropriate to at least debate and vote on it. I would vote in favor of it, and some would not. We should certainly have a vote on the size of the clips, or the magazines. To put it plainly, how many bullets should one person have in their possession or as part of the weapon at any one time? Should someone be allowed to go into any kind of establishment and start shooting, thereby releasing rounds and rounds of ammunition and hundreds and hundreds of bullets? Should that be permitted to anyone at any time or anywhere? I don't think so.

If someone is on the terror watch list and that person has been deemed so dangerous that we have labeled him or her as a terrorist or potential terrorist and he or she can't get on an airplane, certainly that person should not have a weapon. That seems to make sense. If they are too dangerous to get on a plane because of their tendency to commit acts of violence or engage in terror, they shouldn't be able to have a firearm. I think it would make sense to have a debate and vote on that issue.

Another issue is background checks. That was one measure where there was a lot of consensus or substantial bipartisan support, but it didn't pass in 2013. I hope we can have another vote on that.

If a person is not able to get through a background check due to a whole variety of reasons, such as having a criminal record or otherwise, you have to ask yourself, should someone with a criminal record have access to a firearm?

Mr. President, today I have introduced the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, S. 3053. That is a new proposal to do what some States have done already. I think it is essential to add this to the

other pieces of legislation that have been talked about and some that I just itemized.

This bill, first of all, would define what a misdemeanor hate crime is because the intent of the bill is to say: If you are convicted of a misdemeanor hate crime, you shouldn't have access to a firearm. This category of misdemeanors would be under Federal, State, or tribal law that are found to be motivated, at least in part, by hate or bias against the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. In essence, these eight categories are what some would call, to use the more legal jargon, the protected classes. That is how we would define a misdemeanor hate crime.

This bill, upon passage, would keep firearms out of the hands of those convicted of misdemeanor hate crimes. It would prohibit the purchase, possession, or shipment of a firearm by anyone convicted of a misdemeanor hate crime. That is the basics of the bill. Obviously it doesn't have direct application to what happened in Orlando; however, upon further investigation, we may find that it does. Part of the reason for this is because there has been a rise not only in hate crimes but in hate groups across the country, with hundreds more in just the last couple of years, and literally thousands more, if not more, hate crimes have been committed.

Those issues I mentioned are among the many things we need to address. I also think that in addition to taking these steps on commonsense gun measures, we have to make sure law enforcement has the resources it needs to take on the challenge of not just criminal activity but increasingly almost terroristic activity within our communities—the so-called lone wolf terrorist, the homegrown terrorist, the individual who is self-radicalized, which seems to be part of the horror of Orlando. We have to make sure that if law enforcement professionals tell us they need more money in the COPS Program, we should appropriate more money. If the law enforcement professionals say: Please fund that program that has worked for so many years, such as the Byrne Justice assistance grants, we should make sure they have those appropriations. If you are tough on law enforcement—that is nice to say, but it is better to prove it by how you vote.

Finally, of course, we have to continue to focus on what is a major component, of course, of Orlando and San Bernardino and so many other places, and that is violent extremism in communities across the country. We have to make sure we are working with local law enforcement and Federal authorities not only to give them the resources they need but to be able to coordinate and do our best to unearth plots before they transpire and to be able to take this fight directly to a terrorist, many of whom are in our midst here in the United States.

We have a lot to do. It is not simply a question of what we do on a series of commonsense gun measures, it is also a question of what we are going to do to help our law enforcement and to work as hard as we can in a bipartisan way to debate and vote on measures that will keep our country safe and protect our homeland.

Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more of a rise in these individuals who are, as I mentioned before, self-radicalized and sometimes categorized as a lone wolf. We have to make sure we are doing everything possible to identify them, apprehend them, and make sure we are thwarting these plots ahead of time. It may not work in every instance, but we have to take every measure possible. I think part of that is doing what I hope we can do as a matter of preventive steps. If someone is engaging in hate and taking action against others, even if it only rises to the level of a misdemeanor, they shouldn't have access to a firearm. We want to nip this in the bud, stop it long before that hate continues and develops into the kind of hate that leads to a much greater and more lethal attack on Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING ROLAND "KEN" TOWERY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today I would like to pay tribute to a great American veteran, public servant, leader, and Texan, Mr. Roland "Ken" Towery. Ken passed away on May 4, 2016, at the age of 93. Ken personified integrity, sacrifice, and hard work as a member of the Greatest Generation. He will be sorely missed by the family he leaves behind, those whose lives he touched, and a grateful Nation.

Ken was born in 1923 in Smithville, MS, but quickly moved to Texas a year later. Ken grew up on his family's farm in Willacy County. When Ken was 14, they moved to farm land on the Medina River near San Antonio. The day Ken turned 18, he enlisted in the Army. He was later asked about why he enlisted, and he said, "I wanted to see the world and signed up asking for service as far away from home as the Army could

send me." A few short months later, Ken sailed to the Philippines on the USS *Republic*. He received basic and advanced individual training on Corregidor Island in Manila Bay; he served as a crew member for the 75mm anti-aircraft guns with Battery C, 60th Coast Artillery.

In the initial months of America's involvement in World War II, the 60th Coast Artillery joined with the 59th Coast Artillery to defend the Bataan Peninsula, blocking the Japanese Navy from Manila Bay. Ken and his fellow soldiers fought gallantly; many, including Ken, were awarded the Purple Heart for injuries received in defense of the island. In May of 1942, the island fell to the Japanese, and Ken was captured.

For the duration of World War II, Ken was a prisoner of war in Manchuria. As a POW, he worked in the MKK factory making equipment to be exported. Ken eventually acquired an extra duty serving prisoners their meals, more commonly referred to as "slop," filling a role referred to as the "chow dipper." Serving as a chow dipper was often a short-lived and precarious position because they were subject to fights and disagreements from prisoners who were unhappy about their meager rations. This changed when Ken became the chow dipper. He employed the lesson that his parents taught him to "do unto others." He remedied disagreements by first filling his own bowl and placing it beside the serving bucket. Any man who was unsatisfied with his serving was invited to replace his serving with Ken's. This small action demonstrated Ken's dedication to fairness and firmly established his role as a leader amongst his fellow prisoners.

In 1945, Ken returned home, where he faced a steep recovery from multiple parasitic diseases common amongst former prisoners of war. Additionally, Ken returned with a serious case of tuberculosis, which forced him to spend the bulk of the next decade in isolation wards of TB sanitariums. As he battled TB, Ken studied at Southwest Texas Junior College and was later admitted to Texas A&M University to study soil biology. It was during this time that Ken met his future wife, Louise Ida Cook, from Knippa, TX.

After their wedding, Ken continued college until another bout with tuberculosis occurred and ended his formal education. After his hospitalization, Ken cleaned poultry houses to make a living. In 1950, the Cuero Record, Ken's local newspaper, announced they were looking for a reporter. Ken applied for the position but lacked one critical skill: the ability to use a typewriter. Louise taught Ken to type, helping him to land the job.

Ken's hard work led him to investigate allegations regarding businessmen who were abusing the State's veteran's land program and State officials who chose to ignore the issue. This later became known as the Veteran's

Land Scandal. As a result of his research and reporting, 20 people were indicted, and the Texas land commissioner was removed from office and imprisoned. In 1955, Ken was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his work.

Soon after, Ken, Louise, and their two children moved to Austin, where Ken worked as a political reporter for the Austin American Statesman. His insight into politics was noticed by recently elected U.S. Senator John Tower, who asked Ken to serve as his press secretary. He quickly climbed the ladder and became Senator Tower's chief of staff.

After leaving Tower's staff, Ken remained influential in Republican politics for more than 20 years, during which time he managed several reelection campaigns, including Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign in Texas.

Ken's political impacts extended beyond the United States. He also served the U.S. Information Agency as deputy director and assistant director. While there, he played a major behind-the-scenes role in the fight against communism and the demise of the Soviet Union. He said the years spent at USIA "were among the most gratifying 'employed' years of my life . . . I could go home at night feeling like I had struck a blow for liberty, for mankind . . . There was the feeling that our labors were directed towards the interest of the nation as a whole."

Ken then returned to Texas, where he started a political consulting business in 1976. In 1981, President Regan appointed him to the board of directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and he served as the elected chairman of the board twice. Ken eventually returned to the newspaper business in the 1990s when he purchased three small town publications: The Floyd County Hesperian, the Lockney Beacon, and the Crosby County News-Chronicle.

Of all his many accomplishments, this humble man will rest in the Texas State Cemetery beneath the headstone that reads "The Chow Dipper." Ken Towery's story of perseverance, work ethic, and fortitude should inspire us all. I offer my thanks and appreciation to this great and humble man who epitomizes the American spirit.

HOUSE PASSAGE OF S. 337, THE FOIA IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Freedom of Information Act, our Nation's premier transparency law, is on the eve of its 50th anniversary, July 4, 2016. It is fitting that FOIA shares its birthday with our Republic itself. Our democracy is built upon the principle that a government of, by, and for the people cannot be one that is hidden from them. Today we recommit ourselves to this ideal by sending to the President the FOIA Improvement Act. This bill, which I coauthored with Senator CORNYN, ushers in the most significant reforms to FOIA since its enactment 50