

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