

## CRA RESOLUTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, earlier today, President Trump signed into law a Congressional Review Act resolution that repealed a particularly egregious overreach by President Obama's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Federal regulators found a loophole, skipped the standard period for review and public comment, and issued unilateral guidance that made life needlessly complicated for the American auto industry and its customers.

Thanks to Senator TOOMEY's tenacity, the GAO ruled that this intrusion did indeed constitute rulemaking that ought to be subject to congressional review. So Congress got to have its say. Accountability won out in the end. Thanks to this resolution from Senator MORAN, yet another onerous regulation is now headed to the wastebasket.

Our record use of CRAs is just one of the tools Republicans are using to get Washington out of the way of American workers and job creators. Republican tax reform is providing historic tax cuts for middle-class families and small businesses, and it repealed the individual mandate penalty at the heart of ObamaCare.

Tomorrow, the House will vote on the Senate-passed legislation championed by Senator CRAPO, which will give community banks and credit unions relief from the crushing burden of complying with Dodd-Frank.

Of course, in the executive branch, the President's team has turned the page on the last administration's hostility toward American business. The result is a palpable shift that is improving the entire economy.

Back in 2013, more than three-quarters of U.S. manufacturers said that a hostile climate due to taxes and regulation was a major business obstacle. Three-quarters of the U.S. manufacturers said that in 2013. Today, 16 months into the unified Republican government, fewer than 20 percent say that. It went from 75 percent who were concerned about taxes and regulations in 2013 down to 20 percent today. Nearly 95 percent are optimistic about their future economic prospects.

Everyone is taking notice. Here is a New York Times headline from a few months ago: "The Trump Effect: Business, Anticipating Less Regulation, Loosens Purse Strings." That is from the New York Times.

One Texas homebuilder told reporters, "It's an overall sense that you are not going to face any new regulatory fights."

There is more investment, more prosperity, more job openings, and higher wages all across the country. Good things happen when Republican policies get Washington out of the American people's way.

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Dana Baiocco, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2017.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

## NAFTA

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I am here today to discuss new legislation to help Puerto Rico gain a stronger fiscal footing, but before turning to that, I would like to make a few comments regarding the current NAFTA trade talks.

Over the past few weeks, there has been a lot of discussion in the press about potential deadlines for concluding negotiations on NAFTA. While speculation about timelines is natural, let me be clear. As I have said from the beginning of these talks, the most important thing for determining when and how Congress will vote on an eventual North American Free Trade Agreement outcome is the quality of the agreement.

I understand that the current negotiations are about an existing agreement that American businesses and workers rely on in dealing with two of our largest trading partners. I understand that continuing negotiations means a level of uncertainty about these important relationships will continue to persist. Nevertheless, it is critical that the administration take the time necessary to get these negotiations right. I believe the administration understands that.

A modernized NAFTA will help American businesses and workers only if it includes strong and enforceable protections for America's creators and innovators, supports cross-border data flows, and maintains and expands market access for American goods and services exporters to the Canadian and Mexican markets.

The bottom line: Substance is what matters, and we should not allow other considerations to impede achieving our goals.

I am confident that with continued discussions between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, we can create a strong agreement that will meet the high standards set by Congress in trade promotion authority. I will continue to support the administration in achieving that outcome.

## PUERTO RICO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ACT

Mr. President, having said my piece about NAFTA, I would like to turn to

the main purpose for which I am standing here.

Last Thursday, I introduced a bill, cosponsored by Senator RUBIO, titled the Puerto Rico Economic Empowerment Act of 2018. The bill works to help the people in Puerto Rico as they continue to face a stagnant economy and recover from massive damage caused by recent hurricanes.

This bill will be a critical step toward resurrecting growth in Puerto Rico. It directly targets relief to Puerto Ricans themselves and small businesses on the island.

In brief, the bill provides the following: First, the bill provides a payroll tax holiday for employees in Puerto Rico for 2 years, cutting their payroll taxes in half in order to give economic relief to the hard-working people of Puerto Rico who face an economy that has been stagnant and mismanaged for far too long.

Second, the bill provides equal treatment with respect to the Federal child tax credit for Puerto Rican families with one or two children, not just for those who have three or more. This will provide more equitable treatment for Puerto Rican families with respect to the Federal child tax credit, to help families to reduce child poverty.

Third, the bill provides greater flexibility for Puerto Rico in various Small Business Administration programs to assist Puerto Rico's small business owners during a time of prolonged economic downturn.

Fourth, the bill confronts the longstanding problem in trying to monitor Puerto Rico's economy, which stems from lack of inclusion of Puerto Rico in many Federal statistical surveys. The bill also calls for the establishment of a Federal statistical research data center in Puerto Rico.

These and other provisions in the bill follow recommendations of the bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico. I had the opportunity of chairing that task force with four Members from the House and four Members from the Senate. We also made sure the task force was evenly split with regard to political affiliation. I know such even-handed bipartisanship and compromise is rare around here, but we were able to do it, and we came up with a 125-page report that made many different suggestions. Not wanting that work to go to waste, Senator RUBIO and I have been working hard to draft those proposals into this bill, and I am confident it truly embodies the purpose and bipartisan spirit of that bicameral task force. Although I do not have a score on the bill yet, previous scores on similar provisions would add up to over \$3.25 billion in relief, largely in tax relief to our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Once I obtain an updated score, I will recalibrate the offset accordingly, if necessary.

In the meantime, the fiscal cost of the bill is entirely offset by redirecting funds from the Prevention and Public

Health Fund established under the so-called Affordable Care Act. Redirecting from that fund helped provide offsets for the 21st Century Cures Act and for the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, both of which received bipartisan support.

I hope all of my colleagues can join Senator RUBIO and me in support of this bill. After all, our prior efforts have not solved many of the ongoing issues in Puerto Rico. For example, toward the end of 2015, we passed PROMESA into law.

PROMESA was the result of the efforts by the Obama administration officials to share in Puerto Rico's outstanding debt obligations. It largely took their bankruptcy scheme but usefully added provisions intended to spark economic development in Puerto Rico, particularly in the energy space. One promise of PROMESA touted by the Obama administration officials was that it would circumvent a viscous and wasteful sequence of lawsuits. Theoretically, the law was going to stop creditors and the government of Puerto Rico from facing off in prolonged court battles.

I voted for PROMESA because Puerto Rico's long span of fiscal irresponsibility needed to be stopped, and a promise of limiting litigation was inviting. Unfortunately, the law has failed to prevent a tidal wave of litigation as was promised.

PROMESA also set up an oversight board to facilitate voluntary debt resolution negotiations or movement of disputes to a court-supervised, bankruptcy-like process. The promise of voluntary debt resolutions has not been fulfilled, even for a restructuring agreement between creditors and Puerto Rico's power authority called PREPA, which had been agreed upon by both sides.

The oversight board was also intended to oversee and monitor budgets for the various indebted arms of the government of Puerto Rico. On this front, I have also been disappointed as it seems the oversight board has largely been operating in the dark, often relying on the government of Puerto Rico for information of questionable validity. That said, I am not without hope. The oversight board has recently been slightly more aggressive in its demands for transparency from the government of Puerto Rico, and I hope they are successful in obtaining useful, verifiable information.

However, the government of Puerto Rico has been and remains largely opaque. As just one example, I have asked government officials in Puerto Rico for audited financial statements for nearly 3 years now. Let me repeat that. I have been waiting nearly 3 years for audited financial statements from Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, the government of Puerto Rico has not provided audited financial information since fiscal year 2014. This is obviously problematic when trying to figure out how to best help Puerto Rico, and this is

not a one-off issue. Recently, following numerous claims by government officials in Puerto Rico of severe, even crisis-level liquidity shortages, Puerto Rico finally got around to looking into hundreds of scattered government bank accounts and revealed late last year that it found nearly \$7 billion of stranded cash. This is just one of many examples of how disorganized and inconsistent accounting continues to prevail in Puerto Rico, damaging the credibility of the government, but it doesn't end there.

There have recently been attempts by the government in Puerto Rico to potentially politicize the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics. Obviously, this is concerning. In a report by the Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico, Members of Congress from both Chambers and both sides of the aisle expressed that the Institute of Statistics "has emerged as a highly professional, autonomous, and apolitical organization that is bringing greater transparency to economic, financial and fiscal conditions on the island." Indeed, a recommendation of the task force was for the institute to continue to protect its independence. Unfortunately, the institute has been forced to litigate its independence, given an ill-conceived effort by the government of Puerto Rico to overhaul and potentially politicize the institute.

I know there is bipartisan support for our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Indeed, I heard a lot of support by Members on the floor following the devastating hurricanes that hit the island. Some Members seemed genuinely concerned, while others seemed more interested in trying to cast doubts on or politicize the disaster response from the Federal Government led by the administration. Nonetheless, I remain committed to working with anyone from either side to help and support the people of Puerto Rico.

However, that work must involve compromise and mutual understanding of each other's concerns, and that has not always been the case, in my view. I have tried to work to provide tax relief to people in Puerto Rico. Yet I continue to hear from some, including former Obama administration officials, that I must include access for Puerto Rico to the earned-income tax credit.

I have been clear about my concerns that administration of such a provision carries with it many possible problems, as highlighted by a report by the non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation. Moreover, Puerto Rico already had its own earned-income tax credit, which it subsequently did away with. It seems to want to resurrect the idea now, and they have every right and ability to institute such a credit on the island. However, I cannot support the "advice" from some that I must support a provision involving cutting a big check from the Federal general fund to the government of Puerto Rico for them to administer such a credit.

I also cannot support the views of some in Puerto Rico, including govern-

ment officials, that they were somehow left out of our tax reform efforts because they did not receive a special carve-out unavailable to anyone else.

Subsidiaries of firms headquartered in the United States that are organized as controlled foreign corporations in Puerto Rico for Federal tax purposes were treated the same as similarly situated taxpayers anywhere else. In addition, if being somehow left out of tax reform means provisions to provide some sort of tax haven status, as some in Puerto Rico asked for, then I think proponents of such a view do not understand recent history. In my more than 40 years in the Senate, I have always been a proud advocate of accountability and oversight. That is why I support greater transparency in the Puerto Rican government, as well as the oversight board.

I also support ongoing Federal efforts, including those of the Treasury Department, to carefully and closely monitor Federal funds provided to Puerto Rico for disaster and other relief. As always, we owe a duty to taxpayers to prudently safeguard their hard-earned dollars from being channeled to inefficient or wasteful uses.

These and other reasons are why, in conjunction with Senator RUBIO and anyone else here who wishes to join us, I am advocating for the provisions contained in the Puerto Rico Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 that I introduced.

Let me end by reiterating that I want to work on a bipartisan basis and in the spirit of compromise with anyone in this Chamber to help our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico. Truly, theirs is an uphill battle as they continue to face many different adversities. That has been the case for years, and I hope we can set our troublesome partisan politicking aside and get to work.

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. SCHUMER. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Friday morning there was yet another shooting in a school in America. Another community was torn apart by senseless violence. It was another week when parents must bury their children. We are still learning the tragic details of what happened in Santa Fe, but the basic reality in America remains unchanged: Far too many people are dying from gun violence.

What we need now more than ever is real, substantive debate on gun violence in America—a real debate about universal background checks, a real debate about protective orders, and a real

debate on regulating assault weapons, which are often the weapon of choice in the most deadly mass shootings.

In the wake of Parkland, it looked like President Trump would finally get religion on this issue. He promised a serious debate on gun violence, but as soon as the NRA and their special interest cronies closed ranks around him, he backed off. That seems to be the pattern of this administration. The President says something one day, and then some powerful interest says: Don't do it, and he backs right off. That is not the kind of strength he wishes to show, and he sure hasn't shown it on this issue.

After this most recent tragedy in Santa Fe, we have heard no new calls for commonsense gun safety from the White House, but this Chamber can still act. I implore my friends across the aisle to take up this debate. We owe it to the people of Santa Fe, TX, to the people of Parkland, FL, and to every other community that lives at the mercy of the gaping loopholes in our gun laws.

#### TRADE WITH CHINA

Mr. President, on the matter of ongoing trade negotiations with China, as I have said many times, when it comes to being tough on China's trading practices, I am closer to President Trump than to either President Obama or President Bush. I think the President recognized that fact in a tweet this morning.

When President Trump threatened tariffs and investment restrictions in the face of China's blatant theft and extortion of our intellectual property, I gave the President a pat on the back. Our companies need to be able to sell our goods and services in China without having to turn over intellectual property.

I have mentioned this before, but here is one example that pains me, and it is so typical. GE employs thousands in Schenectady. They have intellectual property and know-how to make turbines spin very fast and not overheat, but China wouldn't let them sell them. So what did they do? The Chinese blackmailed them, and GE went along. There is a 51-49 company that now makes those turbines in China. That is great for the heads of GE, great for their board, and great for the stock for a few years. But after that, once China—now in this 51-49 company—has learned how to make these turbines themselves, we are gone. More good-paying jobs could be lost in upstate New York, as they have been throughout America.

President Trump's actions at first helped bring China to the table, but now President Trump and his team have to stick with it, be strong, and negotiate a strong, concrete agreement. The worst thing to do would be to sell out for a one-time, temporary purchase of goods without addressing the real issue: the theft of intellectual property and know-how, which costs us millions of American jobs.

Unfortunately, it seems too strong a possibility that President Trump is headed down the road of not being strong. The President said this morning: "China has agreed to buy massive amounts of ADDITIONAL Farm/Agricultural products." Secretary Mnuchin, hardly a tower of strength on this issue, has said that the administration would "follow this up" on this vague commitment and that \$150 billion in proposed tariffs would be put "on hold."

It is deeply disappointing that thus far President Trump has won no concessions on intellectual property and has locked in no new market access. In reality, there were not even specific commitments of U.S. good purchases, not that such a commitment would undo the damage China continues to do to us in its other activities.

If nothing else changes, this deal is a win-win for China. They avoid tough actions on intellectual property and give us some temporary and relatively small relief by buying some goods. China's trade negotiators must be laughing themselves all the way back to Beijing. They know what they are doing. They are playing us for fools. A temporary purchase of some goods, while China continues to steal our family jewels, the things that have made America great, the intellectual property, the know-how in the highest end industries—it makes no sense. China is pushing the President around, and he seems to accept it.

Worse still, the President's team is still talking about giving relief to China's state-backed telecommunications giant, ZTE, a company that violated our sanctions laws and is considered a national security threat. It is totally backward. The way to win real concessions from China is to stay tough, not to bluster and then back off at the first sign of friction.

So I say to President Trump, who knows I genuinely want him to succeed with China: Stay strong. Don't back off sanctions on ZTE. You have to pursue the course, or China will continue to enjoy the upper hand.

Congress also has a say on this issue. I was gratified to see that last week, Democrats and Republicans, in a House Appropriations subcommittee, approved a measure that would block the President from weakening sanctions on ZTE. Senate Democrats will also consider additional measures, if necessary, to block relief for ZTE, and we hope our Republican colleagues will join us in that effort.

The United States cannot let China continue to steal America's lifeblood, our intellectual property, and flout international trade laws. If President Trump doesn't get tough with them now, China will know he is willing to back down at the first sign of resistance. It will be a sad day for America—for America's workers, for our future wealth, and for our future prosperity. It will help make China replace us as No. 1. It is crucial.

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Finally, Mr. President, on the probe into Putin's interference in our elections, in a series of tweets yesterday, President Trump demanded that the Justice Department start a counterinvestigation of the Russia investigation itself. That he would issue such an absurd and abusive demand based on no evidence shows just how little regard the President has for the rule of law.

President Trump seems to have the terribly misguided view that the Department of Justice is there to protect his political interests and prosecute his enemies. It is not. The Department of Justice is required to follow the law, not the political bidding of the President's, particularly when they are investigating him.

The President's demand is a blatant abuse of Executive power, an ill-informed, sloppy attempt to discredit a duly-constituted investigation led by the special counsel. As we speak, the President is reportedly meeting with Justice Department officials to press his case, even after they have already called on the inspector general to look into this matter. The President's behavior is the kind of grossly autocratic behavior we would expect in a banana republic, not a mature democracy. By now, we should all recognize that President Trump's latest demand is just another example of a relentless campaign to distract from the serious wrongdoing being uncovered by the Russia probe.

This weekend, it was reported that members of President Trump's inner circle met with emissaries and companies from several other foreign countries during the campaign to discuss manipulation of American voters in order to sway the election. This is exactly what our Founding Fathers feared—attempts by foreign capitals to influence American elections. As a reaction, the President does what he always does when faced with alarming news about the conduct of his campaign and the people in it: He kicks up dust. He tries to distract. He issues a flurry of tweets pointing people in every direction. That is all this demand for a counterinvestigation is—another distraction.

With sadness and some reluctance, I must add that a good deal of the blame for the President's undemocratic behavior lies with congressional Republicans who have engaged in a scorched-earth campaign to discredit the Justice Department broadly and the special investigation specifically. Representative NUNES has been at the center of much of this campaign, but the circle of blame is widening. PAUL RYAN is not doing his duty when he just stands aside and lets NUNES and his cohorts do what they are doing.

Members of the majority here in the Senate have recently demanded that the DOJ hand over copious amounts of information and documents—including potential evidence—about an ongoing criminal investigation. Any prosecutor

would tell you that is not how criminal investigations operate. It is hard to view these requests as anything but a coordinated campaign with the White House to interfere with or impede Mr. Mueller's investigation. Frankly, these kinds of actions are enabling and encouraging the President to test the bounds of the rule of law in this country. When the President sees Republicans in Congress go after the special counsel investigation, he feels even more emboldened, and that is a shame for our country, broadly defined in history.

There is a disturbing trend emerging. Chairman NUNES and the Republicans on the Hill concoct a plan to tear down the chain of command of the Mueller investigation. They feed it to the right-wing press, which churns out innuendo-laden and often factually inaccurate story after story. The President tweets, and the fringe conspiracy theories of far-right Republicans in Congress land themselves on the front pages of mainstream media outlets, all in the service of the President's despicable attempt to distract and deflect from the legitimate probe into Russia's interference in our elections.

Republican, Democrat, Independent—it shouldn't matter—all Americans should want Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein and Special Counsel Mueller to continue the Russia probe and follow the facts to their conclusion without interference and without intimidation.

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. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, to my shock and surprise, 10 people were killed Friday in a little town outside of Houston known as Santa Fe, at Santa Fe High School, about 20 miles northwest of Galveston, TX. As we know now, a male student walked into an art class with a pistol and a shotgun that he got from his parents, perhaps without their knowledge. After stashing makeshift explosives elsewhere, he then engaged in a killing spree. The dead included eight students and two teachers. A brave police officer was among the 13 wounded.

When I heard of the shooting, I made plans to immediately go to Santa Fe, where I met with Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Senator CRUZ, and others, and we spoke to the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the FBI representatives, as well as the Santa Fe Independent School District officials to find out what happened. The families there, of

course, remain in shock that something so terrible could happen in their small, tucked away little community—one that was recently shaken by Hurricane Harvey last fall and had previously seemed far removed from the violence that has touched other parts of the country.

As I said last Friday, we have seen this before. Just last fall, we saw a similar story unfold in Sutherland Springs, outside of San Antonio, when a man opened fire at a Sunday church service. Then we saw it in Florida earlier this year at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland. Unfortunately, in recent years there have been plenty of examples—too many examples, actually—with too many lives lost and far too few solutions for families reeling from the aftermath.

There are two things that strike me are clear, though. The first is that we need to better protect our students, secure our schools, and keep weapons out of the hands of those who are a danger to themselves and others. The second thing is to acknowledge that we haven't yet been able to do this effectively. Something is wrong, because these school shootings keep happening.

It is no coincidence that these shootings mostly happen at public schools—or soft targets—and the shooters are usually male teenagers who attended these schools. These young people, I should add, are surrounded by a culture that condemns violence, on one hand, excoriating public officials for not doing more to prevent it, but celebrating violence on television, in movies, and in video games, which at least has the potential to desensitize especially vulnerable young people.

Many proposals on how to address this pervasive problem focus on the guns themselves, not on the individuals who actually use them. They focus on restricting access to guns or banning specific firearm components for even law-abiding citizens. But any proposed fixes must also consider the root nature of the problem; that is, the deranged minds, the twisted rationalizations, and the tragic decisions of the people who commit these terrible acts of violence.

These shooters are obviously incapable of self-regulating their own behavior. How could we possibly address that? That is part of what we need to be thinking about. A gun can kill someone only if a person—a very sick or a very bad person—pulls the trigger.

So what have we done here in Congress to try to respond, as incompletely as I know we have? Well, last year, we introduced a bill called the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, which was signed by President Obama in 2016. It is part of the answer. It provides more resources for communities and schools and mental health providers to deal with people before they become a danger to themselves or others. But there is more we can do, certainly in that space. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Cen-

ter has expanded the use of technology that can help us better utilize telemedicine to reach out to those in a mental health crisis and offer them an alternative course of treatment when they don't otherwise have access. We should consider that and other ideas in the days ahead.

The parents that lost their sons and daughters at Santa Fe High School are obviously still grieving today, and we should be grieving as well, not only for the people who lost their lives but also for the state of our Nation—one that continues to watch its young people self-destruct, engaging in violence that takes the lives of brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends, and classmates.

We have been told in recent days that grief and prayers are not enough. I agree. It is not enough to send our condolences to communities like Santa Fe. We need to look the families of the victims in the eyes and say: Here are the concrete steps we have taken and intend to take to make sure something like this never happens again.

I believe we did that earlier this year on a broad, bipartisan basis by passing legislation called the Fix NICS Act. Passing that bill was important because the last time I saw a major shooting in my State, it was at Sutherland Springs, where a man who had been discharged less than honorably from the Air Force for domestic violence convictions fell through the cracks of our background check system. He was able to lie and buy a firearm, even though, under existing law, he was disqualified and prohibited from doing so. But because of the broken background check system, he was able to get away with it. Our Fix NICS Act will help to fix that broken background check system. It was widely supported by Republicans and Democrats. We had 78 cosponsors in the Senate alone, demonstrating that solutions can enjoy broad bipartisan support if they actually make sense as opposed to engaging in ideological battles.

I am glad Congress worked together also to pass the STOP School Violence Act earlier this year, which I was proud to cosponsor. This legislation will help to provide our schools with the tools and resources they need to prevent violence through better equipment, planning, training, safety infrastructure, and law enforcement presence on campus. In this year's appropriations bill, we were able to allocate \$75 million to start getting this initiative off the ground.

Now, people wonder: Can we possibly do this? Can we succeed in making our schools a safe place for mothers and fathers to send their children and where they are confident that everything humanly possible is being done to protect them? Well, I am not suggesting that we turn them into an airport, but my colleagues will recall that post-9/11, we have hardened our airports and our Nation's air travel in such a way as to make it virtually impervious to terrorist attacks. I think given the proper

attention, the creative thinking, and the proper resources, we can also come together and make our schools impervious to this sort of attack in the future. If we can do it at our Nation's airports against terrorist attacks, we can do it in our communities and in our local high schools.

Finally—and thank goodness—we have seen the Justice Department prioritize firearm prosecutions with the number of defendants charged with unlawful possession increasing significantly over the past few years. This is because of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has made this a priority, and thank goodness for that. It has long been overdue. U.S. attorneys are now focused on enforcing laws that criminalize gun buyers who lie on their Federal background check. Previously, somebody could come in and lie on the background check, get caught, and nothing would ever happen to them. Now, thanks to the Attorney General and the U.S. attorneys, people are being prosecuted for lying, acting as a further deterrent on people who are felons or otherwise disqualified from legally purchasing firearms. And vehicles like Project Safe Neighborhoods, which the Senate passed unanimously last week, would fund task forces that target serious firearm offenders and get them off the streets.

All of this is a good start, but the shooting in Santa Fe shows we have a long way to go because every one of these shootings seems to be a little bit different.

Obviously, in Sutherland Springs, the failure seemed to be a background check system which allowed the shooter to buy a firearm, lie on the background check system, and not get caught. In places like Las Vegas, the bump stock allowed the person to essentially turn a semiautomatic rifle into an automatic weapon, which was otherwise illegal. We all learned about bump stocks. As an avid shooter and hunter myself, I had never heard about it before. Now the President has taken care of that problem.

We have acted in the wake of Parkland, FL, to try to ensure we get resources to our schools so they can better protect their students and deal with other aspects of this challenge, but we need to be more methodical in figuring out the solutions, then seeing what, if any, solutions would have actually prevented a shooting, and then look to see if those same proposals would have prevented other similar events.

In the case of Santa Fe, we know the shooter was somewhat socially withdrawn, but he was also a high school athlete and involved in his church. He posted troubling pictures and statements on social media, but as Governor Abbott said, he was not your typical troubled youth who people guessed one day might snap.

We also know Santa Fe High School had lockdown drills recently and that police officers were stationed on cam-

pus. Both of these likely prevented the event from becoming much worse; so good for them for the lockdown drills and having police officers on campus. We should be grateful for that, even in the wake of so much violence that leaves us with so many unanswered questions.

One of the two officers who rushed in to stop the shooter was John Barnes, who was, himself, shot by the gunman. He is a former Houston police officer who now works for the Santa Fe Independent School District. I am told his heart stopped twice while doctors and paramedics were trying to stem his bleeding, but he is a fighter and he held on. He is now in critical but stable condition in Galveston. We, of course, appreciate him and all other first responders and the other officers who courageously confronted the shooter and saved other lives. We wish Officer Barnes and his entire family the best as he fully recovers from his injury.

Another hero who has emerged, from accounts of the shooting, is Christopher Stone, a 17-year-old junior who, once the shooting started, blocked the classroom door, protecting his fellow students from the gunman. Tragically, when the gunman shot through the door, Christopher Stone was hit, and he did not survive, but we will remember him and all the other lives which were lost this week as we pledge to do better, to work harder, to work together, and to find new ways to protect our schools and our children from harm.

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. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I rise to speak today in the wake of another tragic school shooting. This time, it was in Texas. Ten innocent people—eight students and two teachers—were gunned down Friday when a gunman walked into a high school in East Texas and opened fire.

Tragedies such as this are becoming too common in our society. At some point, we have to say enough is enough. How many times have we said that? Just 3 months ago, I stood right here on the Senate floor after 17 people were killed at MSD High School in Parkland, FL. I pleaded with our colleagues to set aside partisan politics and work together to enact commonsense reforms that will help make what happened at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School a pivotal moment in our Nation's history—not because it was one of the deadliest school shootings, but because back then, 3 months ago, it was the last one. I hoped it would be the last one.

I am so proud of the students who spoke out and the parents who spoke

out, such as Fred Guttenberg, whose daughter was gunned down as she was trying to flee at the other end of the hall. That bullet from that AR-15 caught her right in the spinal cord just as she was about to exit the hall. I thank Fred and others who have been speaking out, especially the students—so eloquent, so bold.

We all hoped that the shooting in Parkland was going to be the last one, but it was not. Here we go again. With the tragedy that took place in Parkland so fresh in our minds, here we go again. Our students deserve better. You have seen the articles since Friday's shooting about how students are frightened that their school will be next. Our schools and our communities deserve better. America deserves better than this. Our students certainly deserve better.

Since the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting, this Congress has passed two bills into law—only two. While this Senator supported both of those, they alone are not nearly enough. We can and we must do more.

You have heard me say over and over that we need to ban assault weapons and the long clips. We need to close the gun show loophole. We need a comprehensive, universal background check for the sale or the transfer of any firearm, regardless of where it is purchased.

By the way, those comprehensive background checks would have picked up red flags on the shooter in Parkland, who had some real mental problems. They would have also picked up the shooter in the Orlando Pulse nightclub 2 years ago because he had been on the terrorist watch list and had been taken off. If those kinds of things are picked up in a comprehensive background search, then—when a person goes to buy a gun, those kinds of things will be picked up.

We also need to do more to provide our students with access to the mental health professionals they need. Because of the NRA locking down their votes, if we are not going to get anything on assault weapons or the gun show loophole or a comprehensive background check, then surely we ought to be able to come together in a bipartisan way to do something about mental health.

I have met with parents and teachers and students across the State of Florida, and the one topic that keeps coming up is the lack of mental health services available to our children. How true is that in society at large? We are talking about school violence perpetrated by other students.

You will not like this statistic. Florida has 1 school psychologist for about every 2,000 students. That is according to a report from the Florida Association of School Psychologists. If you compare that to the nationally recommended ratio of 1 psychologist for every 500 to 700 students, that means Florida only has about one-fourth of the number of school psychologists it needs to properly care for its students—one-fourth, 25 percent. And that

is just Florida. Nationally, 35 million children in this country have had at least 1 traumatic experience, and nearly two-thirds of children have been exposed to violence. That is why we have another piece of legislation that Senators cosponsored to provide better care to children and their families who have experienced trauma.

We have finally done something with regard to PTSD and our veterans. Everybody understands that you don't actually have to get an injury to have PTSD. As a matter of fact, it can manifest itself years later. We are getting mental health counseling for our veterans, particularly those who have come home from a war zone.

Are these children now experiencing a war zone? Is the trauma they are experiencing at ages 12 through 17, at that tender age, not comparable to some of the trauma our young soldiers are now experiencing?

If we are going to be serious about curbing this type of violence that we are going to continue to see in children's schools—oh Lordy, we hoped that Parkland was the last one, but it was not, and there are going to be more. If we are going to be serious about this, we must hire more school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals to get ahead of the problem and ensure that any student who needs help is able to get it.

Later this week, midweek, I will be introducing legislation aimed at doing exactly that—increasing the number of mental health professionals in our children's schools across the country. Kids suffering from trauma or depression or any other sort of mental problems shouldn't be denied the help they need because the school or the school district can't afford it.

The bill I will file on Wednesday—I hope with a whole bunch of Senators sponsoring—will provide grants to colleges and universities that set up programs to train future school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals in the school districts that need them the most. It will create a Federal student loan forgiveness program for mental health professionals who take jobs in the districts that need them. That has often been a problem—not only the supply but getting the supply in the school districts that need them. This is not unlike the loan forgiveness we give to government workers or to, for example, doctors who will serve, practice, in an underserved area, such as a rural area. We do it for those professionals; let's do it for the mental health workers who are desperately needed in underserved areas, such as—which is obviously becoming apparent—our schools.

When we give our students the tools they need to succeed, such as access to mental health treatment, everyone is going to benefit. Our students know this. They have been asking for our help to make these services more available. Parents, teachers, and school ad-

ministrators across the country know this, too, and they are pleading for Congress to act.

Let's give our schools and our communities the help they need, the help they have been asking for. Let's start taking steps today to change the course in which the country finds itself with another school shooting last Friday. I hope many Senators cosponsor this legislation. We can't allow what happened in Parkland, FL, and in Santa Fe, TX, to become the new normal in this country. We have to do more to protect our kids in school and ensure that any student who needs mental health services is able to get those services.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Dana Baiocco, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2017.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Roy Blunt, Ron Johnson, Mike Rounds, Lindsey Graham, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Thune, Todd Young, John Hoeven, Cory Gardner, David Perdue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Dana Baiocco, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 102 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Burr	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Collins	Inhofe	Sasse
Corker	Isakson	Scott
Cornyn	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	Manchin	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	
Flake	Paul	

NAYS—45

Baldwin	Harris	Murray
Bennet	Hassan	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Peters
Booker	Heitkamp	Reed
Brown	Hirono	Sanders
Cantwell	Jones	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	King	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murphy	Wyden

NOT VOTING—6

Capito	Hoeven	Shaheen
Duckworth	McCain	Tester

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, all postcloture time on the Baiocco nomination be considered expired at 12 noon tomorrow; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. For the information of all Senators, there will be two rollcall votes at 12 noon tomorrow: a vote on the confirmation of the Baiocco nomination for the CPSC, followed by a cloture vote on the veterans' healthcare bill.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for 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 BILL MILLER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to a true legend in South Louisville, KY: Pleasure