

tragically murdered last year while serving their community and all of us.

On February 10, 2018, Westerville Police Officers Anthony Morelli and Eric Joering were fatally shot while responding to a 911 call. Sadly, it was fatal. They had rushed to the scene. They had arrived to help. They were under fire. Officer Joering was killed at the scene. Officer Morelli died in surgery later that day.

I have had the great honor of meeting the families of both of these fallen officers—amazing women and amazing kids. Linda Morelli and Jami Joering are incredibly strong women and incredibly strong mothers. I was able to express condolences and gratitude from all Ohioans for their husbands' service.

The memorials I saw today were a moving tribute to those two police officers, two fallen officers who served their fellow Ohioans with honor. Soon their names will be inscribed on the police wall I talked about at the memorial. Their names will be inscribed there for the ages for all of us to see and so that we can all remember the ultimate sacrifice they and other officers have made for us.

We continue to hold up their families and the families of the fallen. We continue to hold them up in our prayers and to show our support and express our enduring gratitude.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this Sunday, I have the honor of joining some of the most courageous, faithful, and inspiring Texans whom I ever met for the grand opening and dedication of their new church.

These men and women are part of the congregation at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs. For the vast majority of its 100-year history, this small church was adored by members of the community as a place of worship, but it didn't get much attention on the national stage. On November 5, 2017, all of that changed when a deranged shooter opened fire on their Sunday service, killing 26 parishioners—adults, teenagers, children, and an unborn baby. The church became the site of the deadliest mass shooting in Texas history.

This violent attack rocked the entire small, tight-knit town to its core. Every home, every family, and every person felt the impact of the shooter's actions, but what emerged wasn't more of the hatred and anger displayed by the shooter. Instead, Sutherland Springs became a beacon of love and hope. The day of the attack I spoke

with Wilson County Sheriff Joe Tackitt and offered my condolences and complete support. Sheriff Tackitt told me about the day's events and said the bloody scene inside the First Baptist Church was horrific, but the response to the tragedy was instantaneous. First responders from the surrounding area, as well as State and Federal law enforcement officials, inundated Sutherland Springs with resources and help.

In the days and weeks following the attack, the support continued. Folks from across the country made their way to this small town outside of San Antonio to pay their respects, leaving flowers outside the church, singing songs of worship, and extending a caring hand to those grieving.

I joined the congregation 1 week after the shooting for their Sunday service, and it was an emotional experience, to be sure. I was there to offer what I could in terms of support and hope to this grieving community, but what happened was just the opposite. They were the ones giving me inspiration.

That day, as the associate pastor pointed out, the church smashed attendance records. It was remarkable to see not only the church community but also complete strangers embracing one another, offering a shoulder to cry on or a hand to hold.

There was perhaps no more moving occurrence than Pastor Frank Pomeroy. He and his wife lost their teenage daughter in the shooting.

One week after that occurred, he opened that service saying: "We have the freedom to choose, and rather than choose darkness like the young man did that day, we choose the light."

Coming from a man who lost 26 beloved members of his congregation, including his own daughter, those words are tough to get your brain around. When he was going through what I have no doubt was the toughest moment of his life, Pastor Pomeroy was comforting those of us in the audience and reminding us not to let evil triumph.

As more details about the shooter emerged, that message of hope was even more important to recall. We learned that the shooter had a long history of violence, and a number of red flags had been raised—school suspensions, comments about wanting to kill his superiors, animal abuse, and violence toward those closest to him. He had choked his wife, fractured his stepson's skull, and done time in military prison.

Under existing Federal laws, the shooter was prohibited from ever purchasing or possessing a firearm. It was illegal. So how did he get his hands on this weapon that he used to take 26 innocent lives?

Well, in short, it was because of a broken system. He was able to purchase four firearms because information about his criminal history was never uploaded into the National In-

stant Criminal Background Check System, also known as NICS.

In the wake of the tragedy, you always wonder, how did this happen and, more importantly, what can we possibly do to prevent something like this from happening again? Well, in this case, one answer was pretty clear. We have to fix the National Criminal Instant Background Check System so gun purchasers can't lie and buy firearms that they are already legally disqualified from purchasing or possessing.

Eleven days after the shooting, it became clear to me how this system had broken down. The Air Force had simply failed to upload this information into the background checks system so it wasn't there when this shooter bought those guns. In response, I introduced the Fix NICS Act to reform the system and ensure that all Federal agencies accurately and correctly upload these required conviction records. This legislation also encourages States and local jurisdictions, to the extent possible under the Constitution, to do exactly the same. We can't make them do it, but we can encourage them to do it and facilitate their doing so.

It has been estimated that some 7 million records, including at least 25 percent of felony convictions and a large number of convictions for misdemeanor domestic violence, are absent from NICS—7 million records, including 25 percent of felony convictions, and a large number of convictions for domestic violence were absent from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

How in the world can we expect that system to work to protect us and our communities if, in fact, the required information is not being uploaded? Each missing record represents a unique opportunity for someone like the shooter at Sutherland Springs to slip through the cracks. So we knew what we had to do to change that.

I worked with my colleagues in the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, and encouraged them to support the Fix NICS Act. I was heartened and encouraged by the bipartisan support we got. This legislation passed with 77 Members of the Senate serving as cosponsors. When the President signed this bill into law, it marked a major achievement and step forward and delivered on the promise I made to myself following Pastor Pomeroy's advice: focus on the light and not on the darkness.

I am grateful for the support of my colleagues who cosponsored and voted for this legislation, which has made our background check system stronger. It actually made it so it will work the way Congress originally intended when it created the National Instant Criminal Background Check System maintained by the FBI.

I have and will continue to work with the officials at the Department of Justice to ensure that this law is fully implemented as soon as possible.

I look forward to joining my friends at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs this week to honor those they lost and to celebrate the grand opening of their new worship center and education building.

Today I once again extend my deepest condolences to the families of those lost and to the community that continues to grieve. They have my full support, and I vow to do everything in my power to prevent this type of senseless violence from becoming the norm. No family, no congregation, no community should ever lose a loved one because of an entirely preventable crime. I hope because of this legislation, they never will.

I will just say, in conclusion on this topic, what consolation, what comfort can you give to someone grieving the loss of a loved one? I can only think of one thing; that as a result of their loss and their sacrifice, some good will come out of it. I think the only way to reconcile your grief and your loss is knowing that out of your loss, something good will come out of it. I can genuinely say that as a result of the loss of these 26 parishioners at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, we will save lives in the future. There will be lives saved and lives lived as a result of their sacrifice and what we have done working together to try to prevent those types of acts of senseless, preventable violence from occurring in the future.

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, throughout our country's history, we welcomed men and women and children from other countries who are inspired by the freedoms and the prosperity made possible by our Constitution and by our democracy. Whether those immigrants crossed oceans generations ago or were more recently naturalized, we are glad they chose to bring their dreams and talents to the United States because ours, after all, is a proud nation of immigrants. I believe the contributions of those who have chosen to seek citizenship in our country have made us stronger, smarter, and the preeminent force on the world stage.

It is important to remember, as we debate immigration reform or what to do about the humanitarian crisis and security crisis on the border—it is important to remember that the United States is the most generous country in the world when it comes to legal immigration. Every year, our Nation admits more than 1 million new legal immigrants, and I am proud of that fact. I am also proud of the fact that these individuals—these 1 million individuals who immigrated to our country—do so in compliance with the laws of the land that they now call home. Perhaps one of the ultimate demonstrations of respect is recognizing the responsibilities all of us have to abide by the laws of the land.

We know our immigration system is not perfect. It has flaws. I would argue it is outdated and inefficient, and it

hasn't kept up with the needs of our economy. Our immigration system needs a fundamental review to determine what is working and what isn't so we can create a new legal immigration system that benefits both immigrants and our success as a nation.

I know there is widespread agreement in the Senate that our legal immigration system could be made better, and I hope there is enough will in Congress to have serious discussions about how to fix it.

This afternoon, the President is expected to announce his proposal to reform our legal immigration system, and I am glad he and his administration have made this a priority. I look forward to reviewing the final text of the proposal once it is available.

For those who would criticize the proposal made by the Trump administration, I believe it is incumbent on them to say what they would do to fix our broken immigration system, to improve our system of legal immigration, so we can continue to welcome immigrants from around the world who want to make America their home and truly become Americans.

Those who just sit on the sidelines and throw brickbats and criticize, I think they demean this system of legal immigration, which is really one of the great treasures of the American way of life.

I continue to be hopeful that we can work our way through this. I am glad the President is making this a priority, and I look forward to hearing more about the details of his plan.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### TAX PROVISIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, some time ago, specifically February 28, I came to the Senate to visit with my colleagues about the more than two dozen tax provisions that expired at the end of 2017. That same day, I joined with Finance Committee Ranking Member WYDEN of Oregon to introduce a bill entitled "Tax Extender Disaster Relief Act of 2019" to extend these two dozen tax provisions through 2019.

I very much thank Ranking Member WYDEN for his cooperation on this effort. Actually, we have a lot of cooperation on a lot of different subjects within the Finance Committee.

Now, unfortunately, we are still waiting on House Democrats to send us a tax bill that includes those provisions so taxpayers who have relied on them can finish their 2018 tax returns. I have had some discussions with the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and I don't have any reason to believe he doesn't believe some of these extenders should be extended. I suppose because they are new to run the House of Representatives, and they have dissonance within their own caucus, it takes a while to get an active group of people pushing for this particular legislation, but it ought to be easy to happen because these tax provisions have

traditionally been extended every 2 or 3 years over the last 20 years—maybe longer than that in some cases.

I remind my colleagues in the House of Representatives that taxpayers have all but run out of time. Part of my purpose in introducing the Tax Extender and Disaster Relief Act way back in February was to provide additional certainty for the current year for those businesses that have made use of these tax credits in the past.

I noted that in most cases, Congress enacted those provisions to provide an incentive for taxpayers to engage in certain actions like investment and job creation.

In February, I also reminded my colleagues that those incentives are most effective when taxpayers can rely on them during the tax year. For the most part, over the last three decades, they have had that certainty by the renewal of these tax provisions.

Regrettably, we are now one-third of the way through 2019 with no certainty for affected taxpayers in sight. I also said, in my February remarks, that my broader objective of including an extension through 2019 was so we could have some maneuvering room to examine the temporary provisions overall and try to identify longer term solutions. Through efforts in the last Congress, we identified potential long-term solutions for two of them—the short-line railroad tax credit and the biodiesel tax credit—but we have the opportunity now to do more.

While we continue to try to help taxpayers who still need to resolve their 2018 tax returns, we need to press ahead on more permanent solutions so we can end Congress's continual bad habit of waiting until the eleventh hour or months after to extend temporary tax policy.

Accordingly, today, I am announcing, along with Ranking Member WYDEN, that the Finance Committee will form several bipartisan task forces to examine the temporary tax policies. These task forces will consist of members of the Finance Committee and will focus on provisions that expired or will expire between December 31, 2017, and December 31 of this year. That is a total of 42 expiring tax provisions.

Each task force will be charged with examining temporary tax policies within one of five identified issue areas. These issue areas are: workforce and community development, health taxes, energy, business cost recovery, and a combined group consisting of individual, excise taxes, and other temporary policies.

We will ask the task forces to work with the stakeholders, other Senate offices, and interested parties to consider the original purposes of the policies and whether the need for the provisions continues today. If so, we will ask the task force to identify possible solutions that would provide long-term certainty in these areas. That may mean the credit or deduction phases out over a period of years to provide an affected