

Orlando, when an act of terror and hatred took the lives of 49 people in the LGBTQ community.

After each of these tragedies, we say “never again” and “enough is enough.” But after each mass shooting, Congress fails to take action. The discussion fades into the background until another tragedy occurs, then this same cycle is repeated.

It is unacceptable that Congress has still yet to take meaningful action to address this epidemic. The victims who have been lost, their families, and those who have experienced life-changing injuries and trauma deserve action—as do all of our communities, because nearly every aspect of American life has been afflicted by gun violence.

Nowhere is the impact of gun violence and the way it has changed our lives more clear than in our Nation’s schools. Just this year, a friend of mine’s son started kindergarten. Shortly after the school year started, he and his other kindergarten peers had to participate in a drill—what to do if there is an active shooter or danger in your school.

At about the same time that my friend received information from the school that her son would be participating in a lockdown of sorts—a lockdown for 5-year-olds—she read an article by a teacher who had participated with her young students in such an active shooter drill. When the teacher got the kids still and turned off the lights in the room so they could practice staying safe, she noticed the little lights in the soles of their sneakers. You know those little light-up shoes that children have? The teacher wrote that she realized that if those children came to school with those shoes on a day when there was a shooter, even with the lights down, they would be targets. Well, needless to say, my friend’s son no longer has light-up sneakers.

It is time to finally meet words with action. It is time to finally take steps to keep the American people safe. It is time to finally pass commonsense gun laws.

A good start to address this public safety issue would be to improve our background check system. According to the Department of Justice, since 1994 background checks have stopped over 3 million dangerous individuals from obtaining guns, including people with violent criminal records, domestic abusers, and those with mental health issues.

But we know that there continue to be loopholes in that system. Research indicates that millions of guns are sold each year to individuals without background checks. We need to extend background checks to all gun sales and ensure that people who are legally barred from owning guns cannot easily access them.

I have joined with Senator MURPHY, who has been a passionate, dedicated leader on this issue, on legislation to do just that. Earlier this year, the

House of Representatives passed bipartisan gun safety legislation aimed at improving our background check system. There is real momentum and urgency on this issue. Strengthening background checks is a measure that the American people overwhelmingly support.

Unfortunately, Republican leadership in the Senate is more focused on putting the priorities of the gun lobby ahead of the will of the American people. It is outrageous that some in this body suggest that there is simply nothing that we can do to stop the gun violence that has plagued our country. The refusal to even bring up gun safety legislation for consideration is unconscionable. That must change.

I come from a State with a long tradition of responsible gun ownership. People across New Hampshire own guns for hunting, sports, and protection. I respect the tradition, and I am committed to upholding it, but I know that the people in New Hampshire don’t want dangerous weapons in the wrong hands. They are also deeply frustrated that Congress has refused to address the heartbreaking acts of violence that have become far too common in our country. Granite Staters, particularly our young people, are speaking out to voice these frustrations.

Last year, I was proud to march with students in Nashua who organized their own March For Our Lives rally, and students across our State have engaged in everything from writing to public officials to staging school walkouts. They are demanding that we take action, and Congress needs to listen to them.

I am going to keep pushing to pass commonsense gun safety laws, and it is long past time that the Senate finally take this issue up for debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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.

TRIBUTE TO RECIPIENTS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate this year’s winners of the Congressional Award. Established by Congress in 1979, the award recognizes the achievements of young Americans between the ages of 14 and 23 years old and celebrates their accomplishment in four program areas: voluntary public service, personal development, physical fitness, and expedition/exploration.

The award challenges participants to set goals in an area that interests them, encouraging them to pursue new

interests and grow along the way. If they successfully achieve their goals, they earn bronze, silver, and gold certificates and medals. Through the program, these young Americans gain new skills, earn greater confidence, and position themselves to be productive citizens.

Today, recipients of the gold medal will be presented with their Congressional Award at a ceremony here in our Nation’s Capital. On behalf of the U.S. Senate, I would like to congratulate all of the winners for their accomplishments and for the example they set for others. Among this impressive group, my State of Kentucky is home to eight gold medalists. Through their efforts, the recipients of the 2019 Congressional Awards are strengthening their communities and our Nation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a list of this year’s recipients of the Congressional Award Gold Medal be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Alabama: Warren Griggs.

Arizona: Chantel Abdulai, Morgan Cryder, Ryan Jiang, Baya Laimeche, Alexis Massie, Rosemary Richards.

Arkansas: Sarah Douglass.

California: Flora Ahn, Yuna Baek, Logan Bhamidipaty, Pooja Bhatnagar, Madeline Brown, Abigail Brown, Amanda Cai, Andrew Chang, Casey Chang, Ann Chen, Yujin Choe, Jiseon Choi, Jung-yoon, Choi, David Choung, Joshua Yoon-Ho Chung, Evelyn Chung, Wesley Dale, Harmeen Dhariwal, Julia Dillenbeck, Joseph Dong, Claire Fernandez, Teresa Fundter, Andrew Funk, Scott Funk, Trenton Gin, Jeseung Han, Ye-Eun Han, Jennifer Ho, Andrew Hong, Mirabel Zixin Hu, Jacqueline Huff, Priscilla Hui, Dayeon Hwang, Seung Hyun Hwang, Justin Hyon, Carmina Inquito, Andrew Jockelle, Mindy Jun, Sky Jung, David Jung, Rachel Kang, Maisha Khanum, Ami Kim, Andrew Kim, AnneClare Kim, Calvin Kim, Elissa Kim, Evan Kim, Grace Goeun Kim, Grant Kim, Josephine Kim, Junhee Kim, Renny Kim, Stephanie Kim, Steve Kim, Sungmin Kim, Tiffany Kim, Faith Kim, Alex Kim-Man Klassen, Erin Kwak, Yohan Kwak, Chaerin Chloe Lee, Claire Lee, David Lee, Ethan Lee, Ethan Lee, Jin Lee, Jisung Lee, Justin Lee, Kendra Lee, Seohyeong Lee, Suhwoo Lee, Sunghae Lee, Jae Hoon Lee, Jay Lee, Jeong Eun Lee, Kelly Li, Tina Xiaotian Li, Daniel Lim, Nicole Jiayi Liu, Mackenzie Lo, Megan Loh, Vinit Majmudar, Kenichi Matsuo, Kevin Mok, Evan Morgan, William Mun, Paris Nguyen, Hyerin Noh, Laura Noronha, Yuna Oh, Anthony O’Leary, Sena Oten, Aylen Park, Brian Park, Chelsie Park, Elisa Park, Esther Park, Hailey Park, Heejae Park, Hyoungjin Park, Julie Park, Noah Park, Rachel Park, Rachel Gia Park, Steven Park, Sung Yun Park, Weena Park, Eric Park, Akshat Patwardhan, Grace Pecheck, Isha Pema, Cris Plunkett, Nathan Pollon, Ethan Posard, Archit Raichura, Rene Servin, Sophia Shi, Jaeyong Shim, Katherine Simic, Helen Sohn, Joshua Son, Annette Son, Kenneth Song, Margaret Sugarman, Albert Sun, Colman Sun, Seraphine Sun, Loyalty Traster-Lee, Kenneth Jr. Um, Colin Wang, Jiahui Wang, Johnny Young Wang, Chuhan Wen, Samantha Wong, Richard Wu, Jack Xiao, Zifeng Xie, Qixiang Xiong, Andre Yeung, Aaron Yi, Danniell Yi, David Dongwon Yi, Brian Yoon, Na Won Yoon, Patrick Yu, Emily Yuan, Peter Ze, Tiffany Zha, Lin Yue Zhang, Yixuan Zhu.