

ordinary citizens who rushed to the Towers.

The generosity—I will never forget a man who had a shoe store about two blocks north of the Towers who just gave shoes to all the people. Some men and women who had to run 90 flight of stairs left their shoes behind.

I remember the next day, when President Bush sent us back up to New York, and the empty skies, a bunch of F-16s around our plane going down there, smelling the smell of burnt flesh and death in the air, and seeing over 1,000 people lined up with little signs, because we didn't know who was gone and who might be found: Have you seen my sister Mary? Have you seen my son Bob?

It was an awful day and a day we live with, but we know our resilience. Many predicted that Lower Manhattan would be a ghost town forevermore. It has more people, more jobs, and more business than before 9/11. Many thought that America would succumb to the evil brutality of the terrorists. We have fought back very successfully.

We think, finally, of those who are dying now as a result of their rushing to the Towers into the hours and days after, and we are also grateful that this body has now fully funded both the health fund and the fund to see that the families are taken care of.

It is an amazing moment. I live with it all the time. I ride my bike around the city, and every seventh or eighth block has the name of a street commemorating someone who died—firefighter this and police officer that.

But America, New York, and all of us have not been beaten by the terrorists and have not been beaten by adversity. On this issue, we have come together, and we will prevail.

I ask unanimous consent that there be a minute of silence in memory of those who were lost both that day and who are still being lost because of their heroism a few days after.

MOMENT OF SILENCE IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE LIVES LOST IN THE ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001.

(Moment of silence.)

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Dale Cabaniss, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of four years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Cabaniss nomination?

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 271 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Barrasso	Gardner	Paul
Blackburn	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hawley	Risch
Braun	Hoeven	Romney
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Inhofe	Rubio
Cassidy	Isakson	Sasse
Collins	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Jones	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Kennedy	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sinema
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	McConnell	Thune
Daines	McSally	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Young

NAYS—38

Baldwin	Hassan	Rosen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Peters	Wyden
Gillibrand	Reed	

NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Harris	Sanders
Bennet	Klobuchar	Warren
Booker	Roberts	

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James Byrne, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Byrne nomination?

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 81, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 272 Ex.]

YEAS—81

Baldwin	Fischer	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Peters
Blackburn	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hassan	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rosen
Braun	Heinrich	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cardin	Inhofe	Schatz
Carper	Isakson	Scott (FL)
Casey	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Jones	Shelby
Collins	Kaine	Shelby
Coons	Kennedy	Sinema
Cornyn	King	Smith
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Leahy	Tester
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Toomey
Daines	McSally	Udall
Duckworth	Menendez	Van Hollen
Durbin	Moran	Warner
Ernst	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
	Paul	Young

NAYS—11

Brown	Markey	Schumer
Cantwell	Merkley	Stabenow
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Hirono	Reed	

NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Harris	Sanders
Bennet	Klobuchar	Warren
Booker	Roberts	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Bowman nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michelle Bowman, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 14 years from February 1, 2020. (Reappointment)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11TH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we all know, today we commemorate the solemn anniversary of the attacks on 9/11/2001.

If you ask anybody who is old enough to remember where they were that day, I bet they can tell you. It is one of those rare moments that defines an entire generation.

I have always said that it is etched in my memory like the only other event in my lifetime that might rise to that level of shock and horror, and that is the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Eighteen years ago today, I was in Austin, talking on the phone to then-Governor Rick Perry. When I hung up the phone, my wife said, "You need to see this," pointing to the TV set. That was just as the second plane hit the World Trade Center, and we all know what came after.

It was the same image that millions of Americans struggled to understand on that morning and still struggle to comprehend today—how someone could be so evil and so determined to take innocent lives.

September 11 serves as a dividing line in American history. For people like me, there is before and there is after, but for an entire generation of younger people, there is really only after. I believe this 18th anniversary carries special weight because those young people who have only lived in a post-9/11 world will now be able to vote in our elections, serve in our military, and help shape the future of our country.

It is a reminder of our commitment as a nation to carry out the promise we made in the wake of the attack to "never forget"—never forget.

As Americans, we must remain vigilant, and we must remain with a strong sense of purpose and a strong moral clarity regarding confronting evil in all its forms. We vow to carry the memory of the nearly 3,000 lives lost that day in our hearts, the sense of patriotism that welled up inside of each of us, and the determination never to be intimidated, and never to back down.

Today, we remember the families who lost loved ones that day, the first responders who ran not away from but toward the danger, and the commitment of our Armed Forces, who fight to eradicate terrorism around the globe each and every day.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. President, on another matter, for a quarter of a century, the North American Free Trade Agreement has guided our trade relationship with Mexico and Canada. When NAFTA was created, it sought to remove the barriers that impeded free and fair trade to provide benefits to all three countries. While this agreement has certainly had its share of critics and champions, I think there is no doubt—certainly, in my mind—that NAFTA has been a benefit to the United States.

Last year, U.S. goods and services trade with Mexico and Canada totaled

nearly \$1.4 trillion. Across every industry, from major companies to small businesses, an estimated 12 million American jobs rely on trade with our NAFTA partners—12 million.

The importance of maintaining strong trade ties is certainly understood in my home State of Texas, and that is in large part because—and this will not surprise you—last year, Texas exported nearly \$110 billion in goods to Mexico, our next-door neighbor, 35 percent of our State's total exports.

We also imported more than \$107 billion in goods from Mexico, including everything from motor vehicle parts to computer equipment, to tractors and avocados. It is not uncommon to see certain products, like automobile parts, crossing the border multiple times during the manufacturing process before eventually making their way to the customer.

NAFTA has fueled the economies of every State across the country, but a lot has changed since NAFTA was ratified in 1993. At that time, the internet was in its infancy, smartphones didn't exist, and shopping at brick-and-mortar stores was the norm. Countless economic advancements and our digitalized marketplace have fundamentally changed the global trade landscape. So it is clearly time to modernize NAFTA and bring it up to current needs.

I was glad when the heads of all three countries signed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement last November and took major steps just to get that far, but the new NAFTA—or, as we call it, the USMCA—takes into account businesses and practices that didn't even exist when NAFTA existed, things like 2-day shipping, online micro-retailers, and digital products like e-books and music.

The USMCA will require Mexico and Canada to raise their de minimis shipment value levels, which will allow certain classes of shipments to enter all three countries with expedited entry procedures. That is a big win for small and medium-sized businesses, which often lack the resources to pay customs duties and taxes.

Overall, the USMCA takes steps to advance the digital economy, which accounted for nearly 7 percent of our total economy in 2017.

A few months ago, the International Trade Commission publicly released its analysis of the economic impact of the USMCA, which shows some positive indicators. The ITC concluded that, within 6 years, the USMCA will raise real GDP in the United States by \$68.2 billion and lead to the creation of 176,000 new jobs.

We can also expect a more than \$33 billion increase in exports and more than \$31 billion in imports. That is great news for North American workers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses that will reap the benefits of this agreement.

When I was traveling around the State during August, one of the most

frequent questions I encountered from my constituents was this: When is Congress going to pass the USMCA? I assured them that I am just as eager as they are to see Congress ratify this agreement, but we are still waiting on the House and the administration to iron out their differences.

I know that the U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Lighthizer, and Secretary Mnuchin are having constructive conversations with the Speaker of the House, and she has set up a process by which the House can provide its necessary input into the final product, but we are all waiting to see the Speaker turn on the green light to allow them to start the process—sooner, hopefully, rather than later. We know that, historically speaking, the closer we get to an election, the more challenging it is to get things passed, particularly in a divided Congress, like we have now. So I hope we can get this process moving soon.

Businesses, jobs, and communities in Texas rely on a strong trade relationship between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. While NAFTA has benefited all three countries, it is not able to propel our economies into the future. That is why the USMCA is so important.

The USMCA increases goods' market access. It supports small businesses. As I said, it supports digital trade, safeguards intellectual property, supports our agriculture sector, and keeps jobs right here at home.

Free and fair trade isn't just good news for our economy. It is good news for the people behind it. This is a trade agreement built for the 21st century, and it is time for Congress to pass the USMCA and provide greater stability and more opportunities for North American workers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF DALE CABANISS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, just a little bit earlier today, the Senate voted to confirm President Trump's nomination of Dale Cabaniss to lead the Office of Personnel Management.

I voted against this nominee, but now that she is confirmed, it is more important than ever for the Senate and the House to fulfill our oversight duties to protect our civil servants from political interference. I know the Presiding Officer has a keen interest in this subject as well, in his capacity as chairman of the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, overseeing Federal civil service, and I appreciate his work on that front.

In order to do their jobs for the American people, our Federal employees must be able to perform their duties free of politics. They must be judged on the merits of their work, not political favoritism or cronyism. They must be able to present factual information and analysis without fear of retribution. Yet time and again, we

have seen that this President, President Trump, views civil servants as his adversaries.

The President has sought to silence those whose work or words contradict him, even when the facts are clear. We saw that most recently when the National Weather Service tried to calm residents in the State of Alabama after President Trump falsely stated that Hurricane Dorian would put them at severe risk. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross reportedly threatened to fire the agency's leadership after they corrected the President's false statements about Hurricane Dorian and Alabama. Just within the last hour, the New York Times is reporting that the order to change the statements at NOAA came directly from the White House in the form of a directive from the Acting Chief of Staff to the President, Mick Mulvaney.

We have also seen this pattern at other times. We saw President Trump standing side by side with Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, while President Trump sided with Putin's claims about noninterference in the 2016 Presidential elections, and where President Trump threw our own U.S. intelligence agency experts under the bus.

These assaults on the Federal civil service and the efforts to undermine the integrity of the Federal civil service have also included an assault on Federal employees. This administration knows that workers are stronger when they are organized and have representatives who can speak on their behalf. Many—not all, but many—of the Trump agency heads have repeatedly refused to comply with the law and to bargain in good faith with their workers. Instead of trying to negotiate, they have tried to impose contracts and terms unilaterally. This has already happened at the Social Security Administration, where agency management has shown particular hostility to the unions representing their workforce. Some of these issues are now tied up in the courts, but I would hope we could work on a bipartisan basis to address these challenges.

Now, President Trump is trying to abolish the Office of Personnel Management. That brings me to the nomination of Ms. Cabaniss, because she will be directed to preside over the dismantlement of the agency—that is, if the President has his way. I know those of us in Congress with a different view will be weighing in as well.

The Office of Personnel Management is an independent Federal agency with an absolutely vital mission—to strengthen and protect the Federal civil service system. Their role is to protect the integrity of our Federal civil service and prevent it from being hijacked by political forces.

I know there has been a lot of talk that this is all about civil service reform. As I look at the proposals, I don't see it that way. I see these proposals as an attack on the institution that defends our civil service system.

The Office of Personnel Management needs a strong, independent leader who will protect the Federal workforce from partisan interference and defend agencies from the administration's attacks. After looking at Ms. Cabaniss's record, she is not the right person to lead OPM. When she chaired the Federal Labor Relations Authority, morale was dead last among small Federal agencies. That is the agency that is supposed to resolve disputes between Federal workers and management, but 55 percent of their decisions were overturned under Ms. Cabaniss's jurisdiction.

OPM's mission is vital to the success of our Federal civil service and their ability to deliver services to the American people. We need a leader who is going to stand up for the integrity of that system, not one who is going to preside over the dismantlement of that agency. So I hope we can work on a bipartisan basis to ensure that this country preserves one of its vital assets, which is a nonpartisan civil service.

Presidents come and Presidents go, and Presidents, of course, give direction to the different agencies, but we will be doing a great disservice to the people of this country if we allow political cronyism to seep into this system and create an environment where people fear speaking out, telling the truth, and providing the facts.

I want to take this opportunity today, as we discuss the nomination of the Office of Personnel Management, to raise that larger issue, and I hope we will be united in that effort because lots of countries around the world suffer from political cronyism. The United States has helped shield itself from that by establishing decades and decades ago a system that tries to immunize ourselves against that kind of political infection in terms of the day-to-day work that we ask people to do and carry on, on behalf of the American people. Let's work together to accomplish what I believe is a bipartisan goal.

I yield the remainder of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11TH

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, before I get into the substance of what I want to talk about, I am going to take my own personal opportunity to remember those whom we lost 18 years ago today. Like everyone else, I remember the events. I was at home with my family and young children, not knowing what was going to happen and seeing things happen. I can remember taking one of my kids to daycare when the second tower collapsed and the radio announcer simply saying, "They are both gone," and the emptiness we felt.

We remember today, we honor today, and we honor not only those whom we lost but honor those responders who were there and who still suffer the pain from having to deal with all of that.

FUTURE ACT

Mr. President, I rise today almost a year ago since I first came to the Senate floor to discuss the state of our Nation's historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

As I did then, and many times since, I am again making an urgent call to colleagues to act. At the end of this month, at the end of the fiscal year, nearly half of all Federal funds these schools receive each year, and have for a long time, is going to end. That is \$255 million annually that they have had available to count on for well over a decade. That is going to come to a screeching halt if we don't act, and we need to act now.

These historic institutions serve nearly 4 million students of color. Many of our Nation's brightest minds have matriculated at these institutions. HBCUs are the leading educators for African-American PhDs in science and engineering. They are foundational to building generational wealth in communities that have long faced headwinds in doing so. They are doing amazing work. They are doing incredible work with very limited resources and with their own individual financial headwinds to contend with.

In Alabama, we are home to 14 HBCUs—more than any State in the country—so they are an integral part of my home State's higher education system. Just as important, they are integral to the economy of Alabama.

Minority-serving institutions play a central role in America's higher education system. For example, Hispanic-Serving Institutions account for 13 percent of all nonprofit colleges. Yet they enroll 62 percent of all Hispanic students.

More than 75 percent of students at HBCUs and nearly 80 percent of students at Tribal colleges and universities receive Pell grants, compared to only 32 percent of all students. These schools have a very serious purpose for these kids who otherwise might get shut out, likely would get shut out of our higher education system. They are so important, and they face such strong headwinds financially to achieve.

Last year, we held our first HBCU summit where we brought all of our HBCUs in Alabama together to talk about the challenges, to talk about what they were facing but also to talk about opportunities to work together, to work with the State, to work with the Congress, to try to meet the challenges of our workforce of the 21st century, to try to meet the challenges of our educational system in general. What I saw was an amazing group of people—amazing group of people who were doing the work for their students and for their communities, people who

are committed from deep down in their heart. They love these kids. They love the purpose they are serving, and they are thinking ahead. They are thinking outside the box. These are not institutions that are so cookie cutter that they are not willing to explore new opportunities for their students. They are seizing every one of those opportunities.

I have seen firsthand, though, increasing concern from our HBCU community. Given their significance, it is frustrating that some of these schools continue to struggle. Public and private HBCUs face extensive capital project needs but have few funding sources to rely on.

On top of that, the Government Accountability Office found that HBCUs' average endowment is half the size of a similar sized non-HBCU. We have to change that. We have to make sure we provide to these schools because the bottom line is, they have no safety net. They struggle. They work. They do the things. The bottom line is, they have no safety net. If they have no safety net, neither do the students they serve.

This time last year, I was talking about legislation I had introduced called the Strengthening Minority-Serving Institutions Act, which would have permanently extended and increased mandatory funding to all minority-serving institutions. That bill was supported by one-quarter of the Senate. Unfortunately, it was simply all Democrats. We could not get the bipartisan support that I hope we will get in the future. However, now we are here and only have 19 days left in the fiscal year, and these schools still have no certainty about whether these critical funds will continue to be available.

We hear a lot in this body about the need to make sure we continue to fund government, that we continue to fund our military, and about how devastating even a continuing resolution might be to the Defense Department because it doesn't allow the military to plan. I agree with that. I see it. This is \$255 million that all of a sudden is going to be cut off completely from schools that have relied on it, that have planned, that have done their budgets around it. We owe it to them. We owe it to them to make sure that we get this funding because they give so much back to us.

Ensuring equal access to quality education should not be a partisan issue, and I worked over the last year to find a solution that I think should receive and could receive broad bipartisan support. I believe we have that in the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act. It is called the FUTURE Act, which I have introduced with my colleague Senator TIM SCOTT and Representatives ALMA ADAMS and MARK WALKER in the House.

The FUTURE Act reauthorizes funding for the next 2 fiscal years, maintaining just level funding of \$255 million a year. It is the least we could do.

Our bill checks all the boxes. It helps institutions in 43 States. It is bipartisan, it is bicameral, and it is paid for.

Let's not delay any longer. With this important bill, let's get this to the floor. Let's come up with something so we can show the American people how important these institutions are and just as important, we show the American people that, doggone it, we can get something done. That is the most frustrating part I heard about when I went back to Alabama over the recess: When are you going to get something done, Jones?

Well, it is difficult. You all know it. It is difficult, but this is a piece of legislation that ought to receive support in this body and across the aisle, across the Capitol in the House.

This week we have a lot of the HBCU presidents and administrators who are on Capitol Hill. They are coming up for their own benefit but also for the Congressional Black Caucus events that are later this week. They are here on the Hill. It would be the perfect time to get this to the floor. I don't see it on the schedule anywhere, but it would be the perfect time.

As people are looking here, as they are watching us and listening to us, they know we support their institutions. Let's show them we support their institutions.

I urge my colleagues to support the FUTURE Act. Get onboard with us. Sponsor this legislation and, in turn, support our Nation's minority-serving institutions of higher education. Their graduates deserve the same quality education as any other student, and they deserve a fair shot at a successful future. Let's get this done. Let's do our job and get this done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am going to be joined on the floor over the course of about an hour or so by Members of the Senate who are desperate for our colleagues to wake up and recognize that the time for action to quell the epidemic of gun violence in this country is now. It was also last week. It was also a month ago and a year ago and 6 years ago. It was also nearly 7 years ago, after the shooting in my State of Connecticut that felled 20 little 6- and 7-year-olds attending first grade at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

We tend to pay attention to the mass shootings—the ones in Odessa, El Paso, Dayton, and Newtown—but every single day in this country, 93 people die from gunshot wounds. Most of those are suicides, but many of them are homicides, and others are accidental shootings. When you total it up, we are losing about 33,000 people every year from gun violence and gunshot wounds.

Those numbers may not be that meaningful to you because it is a big country, but how does that compare to the rest of the world or at least the

rest of the high-income world? Well, that is about 10 times higher than other countries of similar income and of similar situation as the United States. Something different is happening here. It is not that we have more mental illness. It is not that we have less mental health treatment. It is not that we have less resources going into law enforcement. The difference is that we have guns spread out all over this Nation, many of them illegal and many of them of a caliber and capacity that were designed for the military in which this slaughter becomes predictable. We have a chance to do something about it right now in the U.S. Congress. We have a chance to try to find some way to come together over some commonsense measures.

I just got off the phone—a 40-minute conversation with the President of the United States. I was glad that he was willing to take that amount of time with me, Senator MANCHIN, and Senator TOOMEY to talk about whether we can figure out a way to get Republicans and Democrats on board with a proposal to expand background checks to more gun sales in this Nation. In particular, we were talking about expanding background checks to commercial gun sales. That is certainly not as far as I would like to go, but I understand that part of my job here is to argue for my beliefs and my convictions but then try to find a compromise.

There is no single legislative initiative that will solve all of these issues, but what we know is, if you want to take the biggest bite out of gun crime as quickly as possible, increasing the number of background checks done in this country is the way to go. All we are trying to do here is make sure that when you buy a gun, you prove that you aren't someone with a serious criminal history or that you aren't someone who has a serious history of mental illness.

In 2017, about 170,000 people in this country went into a store, tried to buy a gun, and were denied that sale because they had an offense on their record or a period of time in an inpatient psychiatric unit, which prohibited them from buying a gun. Of those 170,000 sales that were denied, 39 percent of them were convicted felons who had tried to come in and buy a gun, many of them knowing they were likely prohibited from buying those guns.

The problem is, that isn't a barrier to buying a weapon—being denied a sale at a gun store. Why do we know that? It is because just a few weeks ago in Texas, a gunman who went in and shot up 7 people who died and 23 who were injured failed a background check because he had been diagnosed by a clinician as mentally ill and had triggered one of those prohibiting clauses, but then he went and bought the gun from a private seller, knowing that he wouldn't have to go through a background check if he bought the weapon from a place in Texas that didn't have

a background check attached to it. He then took that weapon and turned it on civilians.

This happens over and over again every single day. Estimates are that at least 20 percent of all gun sales in this country happen without a background check. These aren't gifts of guns to a relative or a loaner to somebody who is going to go and use it for hunting on a Saturday or Sunday; this is about legitimate commercial transactions, 20 percent of which, when they involve guns, happen without a background check.

We also have plenty of data from States that have decided to expand background checks to make them universal. States requiring universal background checks for all gun sales have homicide rates that are 15 percent lower than States that don't have those laws.

In Connecticut, we have research showing that when we extended background checks to all gun sales through a local permitting process, we had a 40-percent reduction in gun homicide rates. Compare that with the State of Missouri, which repealed its permitting law, which was their way of making sure that everybody who buys a gun has to get a background check. They saw a 23-percent increase in firearm homicides immediately after they started allowing people to buy guns without a background check.

There is your data. It is pretty incontrovertible. You can get pretty immediate and serious returns—safety returns—if you expand background checks to all gun purchases. But the benefit to a U.S. Senator who has to go back for reelection every 6 years is that not only are background checks as a legislative initiative impactful, they are also very politically popular. In fact, very few things are more popular than expanding background checks to more gun sales.

Ninety percent of Americans want universal background checks. Apple pie is not that popular. Baseball is not that popular. Background checks are. You are not going to get in trouble with your constituents if you vote to expand background checks to all commercial sales or all private sales in this country. You are going to get rewarded politically if you do that. I don't argue that that is the reason you vote for background checks, but I think you should accept the plaudits that will come to you from your constituents if you support this measure.

I don't think the President has made up his mind yet. After spending about 40 minutes on the phone with him this afternoon, I don't know that the President is convinced yet that he should support universal background checks.

I was with the President right after the Parkland shooting, and he said he would support universal background checks, and then he didn't support them after speaking to representatives of the gun lobby. I am sure the gun lobby will come in and talk to the

President this afternoon or tomorrow and try to explain to him why he should once again endorse the status quo.

The status quo is not acceptable to Americans in this country. People are sick and tired of feeling unsafe when they walk into a Walmart. Parents are heartbroken when their children come home and tell them about the latest active-shooter drill they participated in. I know that from direct experience, having listened to my then-kindergarten tell me about being stuffed into a tiny bathroom with 25 of his other colleagues and told by his teacher to remain as quiet as possible because they were practicing what would happen if a stranger came into their school. Some of the kids knew what it was really about and some of them didn't, but my 7-year-old—6 years old at the time—knew enough to say to me: "Daddy, I didn't like it." No child should have to fear for their safety when they walk to school.

I am not saying that universal background checks can solve all of our gun violence issues in this country. I will say that beyond the lives that it will save, it will also send a message to our children and to families in this country that we are not encased in concrete, that we are trying our best to reach out across the aisle and come to some conclusion to at least save some lives.

I will tell you that peace of mind, that moral signal of compassion and concern that we will send, will have a value, as well, next to and beside the actual lives we will save.

Leilah Hernandez was 15 years old. She was a high school student when she was shot by the gunman in Odessa, TX. Her grandmother Nora explained how Leilah would spend a lot of her time with family and would drop by after school to visit her grandmother. She described Leilah as a happy girl who adored her parents. She was described at her funeral as "a naturally shy girl who became a quiet leader on the basketball court."

Lois Oglesby was 27 when she was killed in the Dayton shooting. Her friend Derasha Merrett said: "She was a wonderful mother, a wonderful person." According to the children's father, Oglesby face-timed him after she was shot, saying "Babe, I just got shot in my head. I need to get to my kids." She died that day in Dayton.

Jordan and Andre Anchondo were 25 and 23 years old when they were amongst the 22 who were killed in El Paso. The couple had dropped their 5-year-old daughter at cheer practice, and then they went to Walmart to pick up some back-to-school supplies. Their 2-month-old son Paul was with them. He survived the shooting, probably because it looks like Jordan died shielding her baby, while Andre jumped in front of the two of them. The baby was found under Jordan's body and miraculously suffered only two broken fingers.

On August 31 in Buffalo, NY, Norzell Aldridge saw an altercation happening

from a distance. He went over to the altercation to try to defuse the situation. He was a youth league football coach. As he tried to deal with this altercation, he was shot and killed. One of his friends said: "The guy died a hero trying to save somebody else's life." One of the folks who work in football with him said: "His legacy will always be never give up, give it your all, and now his legacy is through his son."

You haven't heard of Norzell because he didn't die in a mass shooting. He is just one of the routine gun murders that happen every single day in this country. It matters just as much as those that occurred in El Paso and Dayton and Odessa, and we can do something about those right now.

I am begging the President to come to the table and agree to a common-sense background checks expansion bill that will save lives. I am begging my colleagues here to do the same—figure out a way to get to yes. There is no political liability in it for you. There are thousands and thousands of lives to be saved.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

MR. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to follow my colleague from Connecticut after his powerful and eloquent description of the lives that have been lost, the stakes of this decision, and the clear path we have—an opportunity and an obligation to save lives.

Let me begin where he ended. The President of the United States has an obligation here to lead. If he does, we will have legislation that will literally save thousands of lives. He has an obligation, as we do, to find a way to save these lives.

All of us have seen all too often the needless, senseless, and unspeakable tragedy done by gun violence. We focus on the mass killings, but those 90 deaths a day consist of the drive-by, one-by-one shootings in Hartford and New Haven and Bridgeport and cities and towns and communities around the country. No one is immune. No family is untouched, through friends and relatives and workplaces and through suicides, which are a major part of those 90 deaths every day in this country. Domestic violence is made five times more deadly when there is a gun in the home.

The President must not only come to the table but lead. And if he will not lead, get out of the way because we have an obligation to move forward now and take advantage of this historic opportunity and obligation.

Just weeks ago, in one 24-hour period, massacres in El Paso and Dayton left 31 people dead. Eleven days ago, a shooter in Odessa, TX, killed another seven. Communities are forever changed by these events, and so is our Nation. The trauma and the stress done in schools to our children by the drills they conduct, by the anticipation that

is raised, by the fear that is engendered—the sights and sounds of gun violence echo and reverberate across our land.

I remember the sights and sounds of the parents at the firehouse in Sandy Hook on that horrible day in 2012 when 20 beautiful children and sixth grade educators died. The firehouse is where parents went to find out whether their children were OK. The way they found out was either their children appeared or they did not.

For them, in the cries and sobbing they experienced, the expressions of anguish, the look on those faces, it was only the beginning of their nightmare. It transformed Connecticut. What we did in Connecticut was adopt commonsense measures and comprehensive steps to stop gun violence.

The lesson of Connecticut is not only that those steps have reduced gun violence, including homicide, but also that States with the strongest laws are still at the mercy of the ones with the weakest because guns have no respect for State boundaries. They cross State lines, and they do damage and death in States like Connecticut with strong gun laws. Through the Iron Pipeline, it comes from other States to our south.

Since that day at Sandy Hook, there have been 2,218 mass shootings in the United States, and over 2,000 times, parents have sat, as did those parents at Sandy Hook, and waited to know whether their children were OK—children who left in the morning with no inkling about the violence that was to unfold.

There is no reason people have to live this way in the United States of America. America has no greater proportion of mental health issues than any other country. We have a higher rate of gun violence. We can prevent it through commonsense steps and comprehensive steps that will save as many lives as possible as quickly as possible by keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people. That is the principle of the two main proposals likely to come before this body.

To keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, do it through background checks, which have to apply universally to all States for them to be effective. Experts estimate that 80 percent of firearms acquired for criminal purposes are obtained from unlicensed sellers, and a recent study found that States that have universal background check laws experienced 52 percent fewer mass shootings. Background checks prevent people who are dangerous to themselves or others from buying firearms, and, likewise, emergency risk protection orders take guns away from people who are dangerous to themselves or others. These two concepts have a common goal, the same end. They achieve it by complementary means.

The vast majority of perpetrators of mass violence exhibit clear signs that they are about to carry out an attack. The shooter in Parkland, as my col-

league Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM has said, all but took out an ad in the newspaper saying that he was going to kill people at that school in Parkland. The police were repeatedly alerted to his violent behavior, including a call from a family member who begged the police to recover his weapon.

Today, in Florida, she could ask for an extreme risk protection order under a Florida law signed by my colleague Senator SCOTT when he was Governor. In the 17 jurisdictions that have passed emergency risk protection order laws, enforcers can petition courts to temporarily restrict access to firearms with due process.

At a hearing this morning in the Judiciary Committee, we learned from one of the judges in Broward County who enforce these laws that they have worked to prevent shootings, including many suicides, and they enable mental health help to be available as well. These laws prevent suicide. The majority of those gun deaths in the United States, in fact, are suicide, which is accounting for 60 percent of those 90 people killed every day.

Emergency risk protection orders are effective, but they are resource intensive, and that is why Senator GRAHAM and I have worked hard and we are close to finalizing a measure that will provide grants and incentives to other States that are considering or may consider these kinds of laws. Together with Senator GRAHAM, I have been working hard on this legislation, and we are close—after extensive discussion, not only between us but with the White House and with our colleagues—to a bill that can muster bipartisan support and pass this body.

The Charleston loophole must be closed. I have been leading that fight in the Senate to fix this problem for years. The House passed bipartisan legislation on background checks, H.R. 8, and on the Charleston loophole that would fix the problem of would-be murderers having access to guns simply because information is unavailable within the time limit that is set.

Guns should not be sold simply because a deadline for a background check is not met. Most are done literally within seconds or a minute, but some require more extensive work. There is no reason to wait to pass these measures.

Neither should we wait to pass a safe storage bill that we believe would have prevented deaths like Ethan Song's perishing in Guilford. This past January, Ethan Song would have celebrated his 16th birthday, but a year earlier, he was accidentally killed by a gun stored in his friend's closet, accessible to him and a friend. Like Kristen and Mike Song, thousands of other families across America lose children in gun violence every year. It is a parent's worst nightmare, and, in many cases, safe storage, including possibly Sandy Hook, would have prevented a mountain of heartache and a river of tears.

The Songs have been so strong and courageous, as have been the survivors

of the victims' families in Sandy Hook. They have been the powerful faces and voices of this effort and the most effective advocates.

The groups that have been formed in these past years, raising awareness and mobilizing every town—Guilford, Brady, Newtown Action Alliance, Sandy Hook Promise, Connecticut Against Gun Violence, Moms Demand Action, and Students Demand Action are only some of them. They are mounting a political movement, and we need to hear them.

History will judge us harshly if we fail to heed that call for commonsense reform. The voters will judge harshly, as well, the colleagues who fail to heed that call.

We need to keep in mind that gun violence is not one problem. There is no one solution. There is no panacea. We need to aim at all of these measures, including a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. The House, just this week, approved a ban on high-capacity magazines, as well as an emergency risk protection order statute.

Gun violence is many problems—not one. It is the loopholes in the background check system; it is the failure to safely store firearms; it is an arbitrary deadline for completing a background check; and it is the lack of emergency risk protection orders that take guns away from people who are dangerous to themselves or others with due process.

I have worked on this issue for more than two decades—almost three decades since I was attorney general first elected in the State of Connecticut. There has been progress. The progress has achieved results. Now it is this body's obligation to take that next step, and I implore the President of the United States to state his support, which my colleagues across the aisle have said is necessary for them to do what they think is responsible. I say to them: If the President fails to lead, you must do so.

We must continue to fight and never give up and never go away for the sake of the survivors and families who said from this Gallery when we failed to act in the wake of Sandy Hook: Shame.

Shame on us, in fact, if we fail to act. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I join with many of my colleagues to make a pretty simple request, and that is, the issue of gun violence in this country requires us to take action.

The Senate needs to do what it has historically been in place to do. The Presiding Officer is in his first term, and I am in my third term. The U.S. Senate is the place in which we debate and vote on issues, the greatest deliberative body in the world—at least that is what I thought I was running for.

It is time for Leader MCCONNELL to bring up gun safety legislation—well

past time to bring up gun safety legislation—and for us to act and do something about gun violence in this country.

Yes, we hope the President will lead, will provide that leadership that we hear about after every one of these mass shootings—that the President is engaged. We need his leadership to bring us together on sensible gun safety legislation, but if not, we still have the responsibility here in this body to act. We call upon Leader McCONNELL to bring forward sensible gun safety legislation.

The United States is an outlier on gun violence. When you compare the amount of gun violence in the United States to that in the other developed countries of the world, in every category, multiply it times 10, 20, or 30—more likely for gun violence episodes here in the United States than other developed countries of the world.

We have far more private ownership of guns in this country than other industrial nations of the world. We have far more mass killings. We have far more gun-related suicides, and the list goes on and on and on.

So we need to take action. This is one area where we don't want to be the outlier. We want safe communities, and inaction is not an answer.

Yes, there are many things we could do. Look, the people of Maryland and the people throughout this country have been victims of this gun violence. In my own State of Maryland, we had a mass shooting in June of last year at the Capital Gazette—outrageous. People trying to do their jobs were killed. We have had, of course, school shootings. It is time for this Congress to take steps to reduce this risk. Inaction is not an option.

What should we do? As my previous colleague said, there are a lot of things we should be doing. We should take a look at whether it is reasonable for there to be private ownership of military-style weapons. I think there shouldn't be. That is certainly a bill we can bring up.

We have seen these assault weapons used in a lot of mass attacks, where you have multiple casualties in a matter of seconds, where there is no possibility for law enforcement to respond to keep people safe during that short period of time.

We should get rid of the high-capacity magazines. I know the House is working on that. That is something that, again, is not necessary for the purposes of recreation.

We should identify extreme-risk individuals and be able to put a flag on their ability to purchase a weapon. We need to invest in mental health. All of that is important.

The bill we can pass today is a universal background check. The House has passed it. It has been here since February of this year. For 7 months, that bill has been here—universal background checks. It was passed with a strong bipartisan vote in the House

of Representatives and is consistent with the Second Amendment. The Supreme Court has said the right is not absolute, that certain individuals are not entitled to have firearms because of what they have done.

Since 1968, we have provided forms to determine whether individuals are entitled to own a firearm or not. Of course, in 1993, we passed the presale process for licensed dealers because that is where guns were being purchased back in 1993. So if you buy a gun from a licensed firearms dealer, you have to go through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. As my colleague has said, it takes a matter of seconds. You can get cleared or not cleared, and it works. Three million guns have been denied a transfer as a result of this check, but there are loopholes in it because of the way commerce is handled today. It doesn't cover private sales. Internet sales weren't even available back when we passed these laws. We have to close those loopholes, and it will save lives. States that have closed these loopholes have a lower amount of gun violence than those States that have not.

We need a national answer to this. A person from Maryland can go into Virginia or West Virginia where the laws are different. We need one Federal law to deal with closing this loophole.

Today and every day in this country 100 people are killed through gun violence—every single day. We can't wait. We have to act. That is what this body is best at.

So I encourage President Trump to lead on this issue. I know he had some meetings this week. I encourage our leader to allow this body to take up the universal background check bill that passed the House of Representatives by a strong bipartisan vote. Let us get that done. Let us tell the people of this country that we will not be silent and we will not be inactive in regard to the amount of gun violence in this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in discussing our country's horrific gun violence epidemic. I have risen to speak of this problem many times over the years, and to be honest it is exasperating to have to do it over and over again.

El Paso, Dayton, Gilroy, Odessa, Midland, Brownsville in New York—the list goes on and on—city after city, community after community, devastated by gun violence. We witness these tragedies. We watch heart-breaking and nightmarish footage on our televisions. We offer our thoughts and prayers. We have heavy hearts, deep disappointment and horror, and still nothing. The Senate has still not passed any meaningful legislation to address the problem.

So here we are once again in this Chamber. Democrats are speaking out on behalf of the American people, on

behalf of the citizens who are protesting and demanding action, and on behalf of our constituents who call and write and tweet to us every single day for commonsense legislation to help end this gun violence that plagues our communities.

We aren't just speaking out on behalf of Democrats because gun violence doesn't ask what political party you support. It touches the lives of everyone in this country. The majority of the American people—Democrats, Independents, and Republicans—all want action. They want their schools to be safe. They want a place to go and worship and be safe. They want to go and buy their back-to-school supplies and be safe.

Let's be really clear about the root of this inaction. It is greed. It is corruption. It is the rot at the heart of Washington. The NRA is no different. The NRA cares more about gun sales than they do about the people of this country. They care more about the gun manufacturers than they do our communities. Too many of my colleagues just don't have the guts to stand up to the NRA.

There are three effective solutions sitting right in front of us, all of which are bipartisan, all of which have been voted on before, getting lots of bipartisan support. I reject the false argument that because these commonsense proposals may not stop every single instance of gun violence that it is not worth doing them. We should do these. It makes no sense to stop doing the commonsense things just because it doesn't stop every gun crime because the truth is, it is time to do something.

We can and should ban assault weapons and large magazines. No civilian needs access to weapons of war. Those weapons are designed solely to kill large numbers of people very quickly, in minutes and seconds, and our military train heavily to be able to use those weapons well.

We can and should pass my legislation to criminalize gun trafficking. It will help slow the tide of illegal guns into cities like New York and Chicago and across the country where guns that are illegal are sold directly out of the back of a truck to a gang member or a criminal. It is one of the things that law enforcement keeps asking us to do and have been asking for a decade.

We can and should pass the red flag laws that are designed to make sure people with violent tendencies cannot have access to guns, but the first and most obvious solution should be a cakewalk for this Chamber, and that is universal background checks. This solution is supported by the vast majority of Americans. A great bipartisan bill has already passed our House, but it is not even being considered right now for a vote in the Senate.

So it is really on Senator McCONNELL right now. It is on him. It is his decision whether to protect our communities or not—to just protect our kids.

As a mom, when there was a shooting less than a mile from Theo and Henry's

school, all I could think about was getting there as fast as I possibly could just to make sure my child was safe. That is the fear every parent in America has today. We shouldn't accept living in an America where we have to worry that our kids aren't safe in school, where they are actually doing shelter-in-place drills instead of mathematical drills. We shouldn't accept that world. We shouldn't accept a world where you can't be at Bible study with your friends. We shouldn't accept a world where you can't go to a concert or go to a movie and know that you are safe, but that is the world we are living in.

The truth about all of this is, right now at this moment, we have Americans who are fueled by hate hunting down other people with weapons of war. That has to change.

We do have the will to do this. Congress can show courage. Congress can do the right thing, so why not do it now, when the American people are begging us to just have an ounce of strength in our spines, just an ounce of courage to stand up to special interests, to greed and corruption and lies that distort this debate.

We are bigger than this. We are stronger than this. We are better than this. Let's protect our kids.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the same issue my colleague from New York just spoke to, and I know others have preceded her on the floor. I am grateful to be a part of this discussion today.

What I could do—but I know I don't have to because it is so well known now—is go through the three or four most recent mass shootings which are the ones that get most attention, but I don't have to do that because we know so well now what happened just in the last number of weeks.

One way to remember them, of course, is by the names of the communities: El Paso, Dayton, Midland, Odessa—names like that where everyone in the country knows exactly what we are talking about because of what happened there. What we don't talk about enough, of course, are the places where there is daily gun violence and horror and tragedy and death and grievous injury because it doesn't get the same attention.

Tragically, another way to go through a list of tragedies that are connected to this awful epidemic of gun violence—this uniquely American problem of gun violence—is to use numbers. These numbers are now emblazoned on the communities that were so tragically destroyed, in large measure, by these events. In El Paso it was 22, in Dayton it was 9, and in Midland and Odessa it was 7. So doing the math, that is 38. That is the number of people killed in just three places. Of course, there are a lot of other deaths between those tragic events which aren't get-

ting the same attention. That is another way to measure—38 killed between August 3 and August 31. Another number is the number of injured. I think the number now is just about 76, just in those three tragedies. So there were 38 killed and 76 injured in three American communities.

One of the most disturbing realities after the fact is what happened in Dayton in just such a short timeframe. I know that timeframe. We could probably cite the other tragedies as well, but we know that in about 32 seconds in Dayton, 9 people were killed and 27 were injured. Law enforcement, the folks we often call the good guys—good guys not just with guns but good guys with a lot of training and a heroic willingness and heroic commitment to get to a place of danger to try to apprehend a criminal and to try to save people. In Dayton, law enforcement officials got there faster than Superman could get there, and it wasn't fast enough because in 32 seconds 9 were gone and 27 were injured.

We know that in Midland and Odessa, TX, the authorities reported that the gunman was prohibited from purchasing a firearm at one point, but he was able to avoid a background check because he purchased his assault-style weapon through a private sale. This is further evidence of why we need a background check bill that is rigorous—not just a background check bill that makes a nice headline but is rigorous enough to stop the guy in Texas who brought such horror to that community, including, as one of the wounded, a 17-month-old child.

We also know that through the month of August, in that same time period I mentioned, the 3rd to the 31st—but if you include every day of that month, the United States has experienced 38 mass shootings. So there were 38 times when four or more people were involved, which is the definition of a mass shooting.

When I think about it in terms of the scale of it—and I don't think there is anyone who would disagree with this—this is a public health epidemic, and it is plaguing our cities and our communities every single day. What we are talking about, in terms of the perpetrators of this violence, they are not just criminals, they are domestic terrorists, and we should call them that. That is what they are. We shouldn't try to remember their names or, frankly, even speak their names, but we should remember what they are: domestic terrorists who are, frankly, in terms of the whole scale of the problem, causing more problems in America than any other terrorists are causing. These domestic terrorists are using high-powered, military-style assault weapons to kill our children and to kill our families.

We know that last October, the most deadly active violence against the Jewish community in American history occurred at the Tree of Life synagogue in the city of Pittsburgh. Eleven were

killed there and six were injured, including four of the six being law enforcement officers who, again, got there very quickly—maybe not in seconds but in minutes. Of course, getting there that fast, with all of their training, all of their courage, and all of their commitment, was not fast enough because even though they got there in just minutes, that wasn't fast enough because of the nature of the weapon and because of the assailant.

How about Philadelphia? The two biggest cities in my home State are Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Philadelphia being the largest. Days before the horrible weekend of El Paso and Dayton, a mass shooting occurred in Southwest Philadelphia that left a 21-year-old dead and five others injured. Because only one person was killed, it is not ranked as a mass shooting. That happened in that same timeframe.

On August 14, an individual in North Philadelphia barricaded himself in a house and shot six police officers with an assault-style weapon. The shootout lasted nearly 8 hours and prompted a local childcare center to shelter in place for hours. I was at that childcare center just a few days later. Watching it on the news, I had envisioned a geographic distance of a lot more than it was. When I walked just to the side of the building where the childcare center was and looked across the street, it was closer than the width of this room we are in today. When you go out the back door of the childcare center, it was within feet across a very narrow street from where the shooter was barricaded. In this instance, you have one shooter in a house with a high-powered weapon who is able to hold off a number of law enforcement officials for hours at a time. That is just one example of the power of the weapon.

The issue of gun violence is a uniquely American problem. No country has the same problem on this scale. America has never had a problem like this in its history. It is uniquely American and unique in American history itself.

Some in Congress want to surrender to this problem. The argument is that there is nothing we can do except better enforcement of existing law. I don't think most Americans believe that—nor should they—because there is certainly more we can do. To have a position that I would say is a surrender to the problem, you would have to argue that the most powerful Nation in the history of the world can do absolutely nothing—except maybe tighten up a law by way of enforcement—that we can do absolutely nothing to confront this problem.

No one is arguing that if we passed a background check bill here or an extreme risk protection order bill that somehow the problem would magically begin to decline. No one is arguing that. But there is certainly something we can do to reduce the likelihood and we would hope substantially reduce the likelihood of more mass shootings. If we passed two bills in the Senate that

became law and 25 years from now, one mass shooting was prevented, it would be worth every minute of that effort and every degree of energy expended in furtherance of passing that legislation.

We have been talking about this for a long time just in the recent past. We now know that it is more than 195 days since the House passed H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019.

As I referred to earlier, in the Odesa-Midland shooting, we know that our Nation now needs a national background checks bill in order to make all Americans safer from the horrors of gun violence.

Reports indicate that in 2018 alone, 1.2 million firearm classified ads were posted on armslist.com that did not require a background check before purchase. This is a big loophole that helps feed an illegal underground gun market in cities and communities across our country. If implemented, the universal background checks bill known as H.R. 8 would close this loophole, requiring background checks for all firearm sales between private parties. We also know that since 1994, background checks have prevented 3.5 million gun sales to dangerous criminals and others prohibited from owning a gun.

I have to ask again, are we to surrender to this problem? I don't think so. I think most Americans don't want to surrender to it. What they want is for us to take action. They are a little bit tired of just speeches and debate. They may want a little more debate, but they want votes. They want us to be debating and voting several times at least, if not more so.

This is a grave, difficult challenge to confront, but the commitment to confronting it is a mission that I think is worthy of a great country. I ask Majority Leader MCCONNELL to give the Senate the opportunity to debate and vote on first the universal background checks bill, H.R. 8. And I am sure there will be other versions of that in the debate, and that is fine. We should debate all of them and vote on all of them and debate and vote on an extreme risk protection bill.

I would argue we should do more than that. We should have a series of commonsense gun measures to be debated and voted on, even if we are likely to know the outcome, because the American people expect that this uniquely American problem and the scale of it are worthy of that debate and worthy of those votes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINÉ, Mr. President, I also rise to talk about gun violence. I express my appreciation for our Republican colleagues. Those of us on this side of the aisle feel very strongly about this issue. I understand we have gone a little bit past the time. I will try to be quick. I feel very strongly about it too.

Let me just talk about two Virginia tragedies, and let me tell the story of a

hero whose name we should all know. It has been interesting. I sat on the Senate floor and listened to a number of my colleagues' speeches. As they talked about gun violence and mass shooting in the United States, very few have mentioned that 12 people were killed in Virginia Beach in a mass shooting on May 31. They mentioned Odessa, they mentioned El Paso, and they mentioned Dayton. Why not Virginia Beach? Because there have been so many tragedies since May 31.

The Virginia Beach shooting of 11 governmental employees and a contractor who was just there to get some permits for a building permit he was seeking happened barely 3 months ago, but it has already receded into the memory of virtually anybody outside of Virginia because the gun tragedies since have been the ones that have crowded into our minds.

The fact that that has been allowed to happen—that we are so used to it now that the killing of 12 people in a mass shooting barely 3 months ago escaped people's memories—tells us we have become used to a situation we should never have been able to tolerate.

In the Virginia Beach shooting, one of the reasons 12 people were killed quickly was the shooter used high-capacity magazines that would contain dozens and dozens of munition, which made the rescue operation conducted by brave first responders extremely difficult.

We say we care about our first responders. When I talk to our first responders, they say: If you care about us, do something to restrict high-capacity magazines. Don't you want us to be able to stop a shooting in progress? Don't you want us to stop a murder and keep the homicides and carnage down? It is hard to do it when we are up against somebody with such a massive amount of firepower. If you care about first responders, if you want us to stop crimes in process, then enable us to put meaningful restrictions on high-capacity magazines.

I think that was a powerful lesson from the Virginia Beach shooting, that had the magazines been smaller, they could have stopped the carnage earlier. There may have been those injured or killed, but it would have been less of a toll.

I want to point this out before moving to the next issue. As a society, we tolerate high-capacity magazines. Many in this Chamber are hunters. Many in this Chamber are familiar with hunting laws. In Virginia, as in most States, there are rules that have been on the books for years. If you hunt a deer in Virginia, we limit the amount of rounds you can have in a rifle or shotgun. We put a limit, and that limit has been accepted for decades. Why do we limit the size of magazines in hunting animals? Because it wouldn't be fair. It wouldn't be sportsmanlike. It wouldn't be humane to allow an animal to be hunted with a

magazine of near-unlimited capacity. If it is not humane to hunt an animal with a massive magazine, then why allow near-unlimited magazines to be used to hunt human beings? This is a rule we accept, and we should accept it for weapons designed to hurt humans as well.

The second tragedy in Virginia occurred when I was Governor a number of years ago—the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech. I won't go into it because I will segue when I talk about a hero, but the shooting at Virginia Tech happened because of a weakness in the background check system. The individual, the young man, Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people was prohibited from having a weapon because he had been adjudicated mentally ill and dangerous, but weaknesses in the background checks system enabled him to get a weapon anyway. We learned a powerful and painful lesson that day, which is that if your background check system has loopholes and gaps, disasters will result.

So I join with my colleagues who say H.R. 8—that has come from the House and is a comprehensive background check system bill that keeps weapons out of the hands of people who are dangers to themselves and others—is something we should absolutely pass.

Last, let me tell the story about an American hero. I have told this story on the floor before but not for a number of years. I want to tell this story because I think everybody should know this individual's name. The name of the hero I want to describe is a man named Liviu Librescu.

Liviu Librescu was one of the 32 people who were killed at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. Let me tell you about him. He was born in Romania—and he was Jewish—during the Holocaust. When Germany occupied Romania and began to take over the country, Jews were persecuted. Liviu Librescu was then a young child. His family was sent to concentration camps, and many of them perished just because they were Jewish. Liviu, as a young child, was hidden by relatives and friends and miraculously managed to survive the Nazi campaign of anti-Semitism against Jews. Many Jews left Romania because they felt their neighbors and friends didn't protect them. Liviu Librescu decided to stay. "I am a Romanian and am going to stay in Romania and make my country a peaceful place where Jews can live in peace with their fellow men and women."

He ran into a second problem. He went to the university. He was a talented scientist and engineer. But then the Soviet Union moved in and essentially occupied Romania. They punished him because he was Jewish and because he wouldn't join the Communist Party. He was a world-renowned engineer published in journals around the world. First, they prohibited his ability to travel to academic conferences and then prohibited his right to publish. Over the years, the

Soviet-dominated Government of Romania took away virtually every right he had.

He started to try to figure out a way to immigrate to Israel. In the early 1970s, at a time when some Eastern European Jews were allowed to immigrate to Israel, Liviu Librescu finally escaped Soviet-dominated communism after having survived the Holocaust and moved to Israel. It was his dream.

Liviu Librescu was teaching at the Technion in Israel, one of the premier scientific engineering institutions in the world. He got an offer after a few years to come be a visiting professor in Blacksburg, VA, at Virginia Tech for 1 year. He came in 1958. This Romanian Jew, professor at an Israeli technical university, came to Blacksburg, VA, in the mountains of Appalachia, for 1 year, and he fell in love with Blacksburg. He stayed in Blacksburg, at Virginia Tech, for the rest of his career.

On April 16, 2007, Liviu Librescu—now 22 years in Blacksburg—was teaching an engineering class in one of the two buildings that were the subject of the attack by the shooter, Seung-Hui Cho. On the morning of April 16, 2007, he had undergraduates and graduates in the class. When he heard shooting start in the classroom, he instinctively knew he should protect his students. Liviu Librescu was now over 70 years old, this Holocaust survivor.

He stood in front of the classroom door on the second floor of this building and told the students: You have to jump out the window. I am going to do everything I can to protect your life. Jump out the window.

He stood there in front of the classroom door and absorbed bullet after bullet. Every student of Liviu Librescu's was able to escape from that building, save one. There was one student who couldn't get out in time and who had let others go first. Liviu Librescu was killed, and one student in his class was killed, but he saved the lives of all of these other young people.

April 16, 2007, was a day that was a very special day in Liviu Librescu's life. Most in the classroom wouldn't have known it. That day was Yom HaShoah, which is a day that occurs every year on the Hebrew calendar and is a day that is celebrated and commemorated in Israel. It is a day to commemorate, remember, and never forget the Holocaust. That is what Yom HaShoah was. Liviu Librescu, a Holocaust survivor, knew what that day was. He knew what it meant. He made a choice.

The commemoration of the Holocaust is not just about remembering the violent perpetrators and is not just about remembering the victims; it is also about remembering that there wouldn't have been millions of victims had there not been so many bystanders. That is what Yom HaShoah is about. It is about victims, perpetrators, and also about bystanders in that the Holocaust would never have hap-

pened had there not been so many bystanders. What Liviu Librescu decided to do that day was not to be a bystander. As violence was occurring around him, he decided: I will not be a bystander. I will try to take an action to save someone's life.

Think about it. He survived the Holocaust. Think about it. He survived the Soviet takeover of his country. Then he came to this Nation and loved it, but he could not survive the carnage of American gun violence. He did, at least, decide he wouldn't be a bystander.

That is what we are called to do in the Senate of the United States—not to be bystanders. We do not have to demonstrate the courage of a Liviu Librescu and place our bodies in front of a classroom door and absorb bullet after bullet to save somebody else's life. I don't think I would have the courage to do that. I don't know how many of us would have. We are not called to make a sacrifice of that magnitude, but I do think we are called to make some sacrifices, and I do think we are called not to be bystanders. If we are going to be true to that calling, we have to be willing to take up and debate and to vote on commonsense measures to keep Americans safe from gun violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11TH

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise to honor those who lost their lives tragically 18 years ago and to make sure that we never forget what happened then.

I vividly remember that morning. I was in my own office in Jasper, IN. I didn't have a TV. Somebody there brought it up on the internet. The second plane flew into the building. I will never forget that image because we didn't know what had happened with the first one. We knew what had happened with the second.

Over the summer break, Senator RICK SCOTT and I took a trip to Israel and saw all of that which goes into its preparedness against the evil that lurks around the world. I saw it again up close, and it always makes me wonder: How can they live like that? How can they be prepared when they know there are always individuals and countries out there just like in 1941 and just like in 2001? Imagine living in a country in which your entire border is surrounded by a fence or a wall in order to keep people out—where, in the tough places, there is another barrier and where, in the really tough places, there is a dirt berm.

That drove home again how important it is to be prepared and to always be strong when it comes to defending this country and the liberty and freedoms we all enjoy every day. I never thought it could happen in 1941, and I didn't think it could happen in 2001. It can happen again because that is the world we live in.

When I came here as a U.S. Senator, I always knew the most important thing this body should do was foster the defense and the security of this country. When you see it has slipped so precariously over the last few years—and thank goodness that we have built it back up to a level that makes sense—it is because we always need to be prepared. If we are going to truly honor all of the lives that were lost in 1941 and 2001 and will be inevitably lost down the road, we need to be strong; we need to be prepared. We always need to be aware of the fact that we are blessed just as the State of Israel is blessed—despite all of that—with a thriving economy. They live with that danger every day, and they find a way to get through it. Let us never let our guard down or drop our defenses here. Our freedom and our liberty depend upon it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, as my friend from Indiana and others have pointed out today, this is a day that Americans remember as a day of unique tragedy. Earlier today, on the Senate floor, we had a moment of silence in the middle of a series of votes. The Senate floor was full of Members who paused to think about what had happened on that day.

I think almost every American alive knows where he was that morning. Just like this morning, it was beautiful and clear. If you were too young to remember where you were that morning—and there is a real likelihood that your parents told you where you were—it was a seminal moment. It changed how we look at so many things in our country. We reflect today where we were and the changes that occurred after that.

I was working on the other side of the building as a Member of the House 18 years ago, and I shared with the Capitol Police today my appreciation for what they do every day. On this day every year, I remember being one of the last people to leave this building. The Capitol Police were working hard to get people out as there was a sense that a plane was coming here and was going to either hit the White House or the Capitol. I remember walking out the door—I really was among the last to leave the building that day—and I remember looking into the eyes of a Capitol Police Officer who was still at the door and thinking and realizing that I was going to be out. If the building were a target, I was quickly going to be somewhere else, and she was still going to be here until those who work to protect us every day were sure that everybody who could possibly be found and gotten out of the building was already gone.

We clearly understand the world is a dangerous place. We just had a foreign policy discussion this week about the country that had served as really the haven for al-Qaida and what would happen if we were to totally leave that

country and it were to go back to the Taliban. Would it become a haven again? Almost certainly, I think it would.

We really need to think about a number of things. One is that so many people do so much to protect us all the time. We have thousands of Americans who are in uniform and in the intelligence community who spend their time every day being sure that we are as safe as we can be and that our freedoms are secure. They are deployed overseas. They are fighting terrorist groups like ISIS or the remnants of al-Qaida. They are working here to spot homegrown terrorists. They are doing what they can to find what somebody may be talking about or what somebody may be bringing across the border that would be of danger.

Senator CAPITO and I were just at the border last week. Some of the things we talked about were not only the drugs coming over the border but the other things coming over the border that are designed to harm us—who we are and how we live.

In St. Louis, MO, and Arnold, MO, we have the second biggest installation of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency constantly looking at the information that is out there. It looks all over the world to see if there is activity in places in which there wouldn't be activity. Yet, if there were activity, it would likely be activity that would be designed to harm us or others in the world. We need to understand that.

We also need to understand that in the society in which we live, there is never perfect security and perfect freedom at the same time. We have worked really hard not to allow ourselves to lose the freedoms we cherish in return for the security we would like to have.

We also need to remember those people who responded. As for the first responders who ran toward the tragedy on 9/11 as others were able to run away from the tragedy—passing each other—many of those first responders were numbered among the 3,000 Americans who died on that day.

Just last month, the President signed into law the National Urban Search and Rescue Parity Act, which allows Federal employees to be active participants on urban search and rescue teams whether the disaster is natural or man-made.

The third thing we need to keep in mind is how important it is to honor and care for the victims and heroes among us—those who ran toward the tragedy, those they left behind, and the people who still suffer today because of what happened to them on that day. As likely as not, those people to benefit from the Victim Compensation Fund are the people who stayed behind to help others or who rushed forward to help others.

We don't want to become afraid to be the great, diverse society we have become; we don't want to become a society in which we allow the terrorists to win by taking our freedoms away. Yet

this is an important time for us to think of those freedoms, of those who defend those freedoms, of those who rush to the scenes of danger when we have danger, and of those who try to do everything they can to minimize that.

We grieve, we pray, we remember, and we resolve today that we will continue to be vigilant against attack and unafraid of defending who we are.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote series begin following the remarks of Senators DAINES, COLLINS, LANKFORD, and COTTON.

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

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11TH

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, 18 years ago, on a bright, clear-skied, September morning, without warning, our Nation was attacked. Many of us probably remember where we were on that horrible day.

I had that morning off. I was at home with my nearly 2-year-old daughter. We didn't have the TV on. We had a couple of gentlemen at the house. I was getting a brandnew furnace on that day. What would normally be a couple-of-hours-long installation turned into an all-day event as those men would take time off from installing our new furnace to run into the other room so we could see what was going on on the television.

I had two phone calls that morning. The first was early. It was from a neighbor.

She said: JONI, do you have the TV on?

I said: Well, no, Wanda. I don't. What's going on?

She said: JONI, you just need to turn the TV on.

So I did, and I saw the horrible events unfolding right in front of us.

The second phone call I got was from my Iowa Army National Guard unit: Captain ERNST, we are doing a 100-percent accountability check. We need you to stay by the phone all day so we know how we can get ahold of you—100 percent accountability.

It was an experience many of us had never felt before—the terrifying shock of knowing that the country we love and our fellow Americans were under attack.

Our adversaries sought to tear us apart by their cowardly acts, but, instead, they brought us together as Americans, for in those terrible moments, we also saw the very, very best of our country—the firefighters, the police officers, the first responders, and the ordinary citizens who courageously put their lives on the line to save countless others.

On that day, as individuals and as a Nation, we came together in a unique way, and we also made a pledge to never forget—to never forget the nearly 3,000 victims and the families they

left behind, to never forget the heroism of both our first responders and those everyday men and women who selflessly acted to save lives, and to never forget the importance of defending our homeland and the great democratic principles that we stand for.

It is a pledge I personally take very seriously, and it is why I have organized this event for my colleagues to come to the floor today and to share their memories and thoughts on today, this eighteenth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

It is why I work so hard to make sure our Armed Forces have the technology, support, and resources they need to defend our Nation from threats both here at home and abroad.

It is why I cosponsored and helped to finally get signed into law a permanent reauthorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, keeping our Nation's promise to support the first responders who continue to sacrifice their health and even their lives from their work in the post-9/11 recovery efforts.

And it is why we should never ever take our Nation and our freedoms for granted.

I am one—just one—of the millions of Americans keeping that promise to never forget. In fact, today, back home in Iowa, there are countless folks who are honoring that vow in their own thoughtful way.

Many use today's anniversary as a day of service, performing acts of kindness throughout Iowa. Others come together with their communities to honor and remember those who were lost.

It is really wonderful to see all of the ways that folks are doing that, from walking in the 9/11 March to the Capitol in Des Moines to visiting the 9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit, currently at the Clay County Fair, to participating in the annual 9/11 Moment of Silence Motorcycle Ride in Mason City.

For some of our fellow Iowans, today will be spent remembering loved ones lost in the attack—folks like Newton's Jean Cleere's husband, Jim, a loving, good-natured, good-humored, and God-fearing giant of a man, who never came home from a fateful business trip to the World Trade Center 18 years ago.

For nearly two decades now, Jean has been on a crusade to keep Jim's memory alive and well. She helped to raise funds for Newton's very own 9/11 memorial. She speaks to local students, educating them about the events of that day 18 years ago, and she has given her testimony all over Iowa. For folks in Iowa, they have probably seen her driving across the State. She has a pretty special license plate, which reads "NVR4GT"—never forget.

Today and every day, Iowans are keeping that sacred promise. We will always remember Jim Cleere and the nearly 3,000 others who lost their lives that tragic day. We will always honor the heroes who selflessly sacrificed and saved countless lives. We will always

rise up to defend our Nation and its citizens. We will never forget. That is our sacred promise.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, 18 years ago today, Americans witnessed what evil looks like. Eighteen years ago today, Americans witnessed the loss of innocent life. Eighteen years ago today, Americans witnessed acts of cowardice.

Today, Montanans and Americans across our country are taking time to reflect upon the horrific acts of 9/11. Today, we take time to remember the thousands of lives lost on that horrible day. We remember the daughters who lost mothers, the sons who lost fathers, and the loved ones and friends and the communities that were broken by these tragedies.

I know I speak for most of us when I say that we remember that day like it was yesterday. That fateful morning, I was in Bozeman, MT. I typically like to get an earlier start at work. We are 2 hours behind eastern time. So it was early in the morning.

My wife Cindy called me. I was at my desk. I was working for a cloud-computing software company, just starting the day, and Cindy called me. She said: There is really strange news. There has been a plane that hit one of the World Trade Center towers.

I think many of us at that time thought it was maybe a small, private plane—sort of, kind of a strange bit of news coming out that morning. Then, as the minutes went by, we started finding out what was really going on, that it wasn't a small plane. It wasn't an accident. It was a 767 loaded with fuel because it was attempting to make a journey across our country from Boston out to the west coast.

The images of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers is one I will never forget, and it is one that will never stop hurting. I remember that after it was confirmed that it was a commercial aircraft, very quickly the speculation began that this was a premeditated terror attack. In moments like that you want to be with your loved ones. I quietly closed the door to my office, and I drove home to be with my wife and to be with family as we watched the rest of the horrible day unfold: 2,977 innocent Americans lost their lives, and 2,977 innocent Americans didn't return home that day.

I think it is important to think about every single human life that was lost and the pain of the families who remember that day today when they lost their loved ones. That pain is very real yet again today.

This was a slaughter of our fellow Americans that shook our Nation to its very core. Yet, in the face of extreme adversity, we are a nation that did come together and we carried on. I think about those moments when our churches and cathedrals were filled with Americans in prayer, reflecting upon what had happened.

Today, we honor and remember the almost 3,000 people who died that September morning. We remember the survivors, those first responders, the firefighters, and the friends and families of those we lost. While we take the time to remember today, we also reflect on who we are as a nation. As Americans, we are strong and resilient. After the 9/11 attacks, we responded with strength and we strengthened the homeland.

We are most grateful to those who served and to those who are serving today in our Armed Forces. Just recently, last December, I flew to Afghanistan. In fact, we carried 50 pounds of Montana beef jerky to deliver to the 495th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion of the Montana Army National Guard, who are deployed over in Afghanistan protecting us. As I received the briefs that day, I was reminded yet again that this war that we have against terrorism exists this very moment, and I can tell you this because of the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces, in intelligence, and in law enforcement across our Nation. It is because of them that we are able to stand here today without another terror attack like we saw on 9/11.

When I received the brief in Afghanistan in December, I was reminded again of the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan and that there are plots being created and attempts to hit the homeland again. There are many brave men and women there, many Special Forces.

I spent time with the four-star there, Scott Miller, who has had a career in Special Forces. He is overseeing the operations there. I am grateful that they continue to remain vigilant in this fight against global terrorism.

America's enemies want us to be afraid, but the thing is, here in America, we don't give up. When America is strong, so are our allies and so is the free world. We must remain vigilant to ensure that we maintain that Reagan doctrine of peace through strength.

The world will never forget what happened on this day 18 years ago, and despite the political differences and divisions that we have across our country and this city, we must always remember that we are all in this together, and Americans are strong when we are united.

There is no force of evil or terror that will ever overcome the will and the determination of a free and united people.

We ask that God continue to bless our fighting men and women, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, September 11 is a solemn anniversary. Eighteen years later, we still remember the toll from that terrible day. Nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives in the attacks on the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and United Flight 93, but

every American experienced the pain of loss that day.

Just as we mourn the innocent lives lost, we also remember the heroism of our first responders who ran toward danger and death to help their fellow Americans.

Out of the ashes of that terrible tragedy arose a strength and unity that the whole world came to admire. September 11 altered the course of our Nation's history in a blaze of fire and smoke, and for so many Americans, it altered the course of our lives.

Our fighting men and women deployed overseas just weeks later and remain in the fight today. So many Americans joined them, enlisting to defend our Nation. Young kids who witnessed firefighters rushing into the burning towers grew up and themselves joined units with old-fashioned names like "engine" and "ladder." A generation of intelligence officers dedicated themselves to preventing another 9/11, and they have and still do.

Our lives continue to be altered because the consequences of September 11 are still with us. The attacks of 18 years ago continue to claim new victims, as first responders and others succumb to injuries and illnesses that trace back to that morning.

The al-Qaida terrorists who attacked us are bloodied, yet undefeated, while the Taliban terrorists who gave safe haven threaten to regain control in Afghanistan.

Most tragic of all, our brave soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines continue to fall in the line of duty and defense of our country.

Just last week, Army SFC Elis A. Barreto Ortiz was killed on the battlefield in Afghanistan. September 11 is his story, too—the story of valor and sacrifice.

So the story of September 11 continues to unfold many years after the fact. May its memory strengthen our resolve to continue fighting the enemies of freedom, and may we never ever forget.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, 18 years ago today, in my office in Oklahoma City, a fellow staff member poked her head into the office and said to me: There is a freak accident that has happened in New York. A plane flew into the World Trade Center.

She went down the hallway and pulled in a rolling cart—the younger generation will have no idea what that is—but a rolling cart with a TV on top of it, and we plugged it in and watched it. As the second plane flew in, both of us stood there silently, thinking: That is no accident. That is murder on a massive scale and terror like I have never witnessed with my own eyes.

What I didn't know at that moment is how many thousands of lives would be affected and how much our Nation would be changed. That morning, 18 years ago, seven Oklahomans died, but

our Nation was forever changed. Common terms we think about today like “TSA,” or “terror watch list,” or “Department of Homeland Security,” or “Global Entry,” or “body scanners,” or “PATRIOT Act”—those didn’t exist on September 10, 2001. They have all come since then as our Nation learns how to do more security, learns how to engage, and has learned a painful lesson that what people think in an isolated village in a remote country—what they think matters to us because what they may carry out, if left alone and ignored, could kill our family members and our fellow Americans.

Almost 3,000 Americans died that day, but since that time period, we have pushed back not against the people of Afghanistan or the people of Iraq, not against Muslims or a faith but against a specific ideology that intensely hates the freedom of America and who intentionally plans to kill Americans they have never met.

We learned a new ideology as a nation that day; that we have to not only take it seriously but that we must not wait until they carry out a fight. If they are planning it, if they are preparing it, if they have the capability, we should assume they are actually going to do it.

Since that time period, American men and women have taken the fight to people who want to come and kill more Americans, but it has also been at a great cost of American blood and treasure: 4,432 Americans have died in Iraq; 2,353 Americans have died in Afghanistan. Fifty-one of those are my fellow Oklahomans in Afghanistan; 72 of those are my fellow Oklahomans in Iraq.

Today, I pulled out of my closet a specific tie that I rarely wear. It was a tie given to me by a Gold Star Wife who never ever wanted to be a Gold Star Wife. She just wanted to be the wife of Chris Horton, whom she intensely loved, who went to Afghanistan to serve his country in the Oklahoma National Guard and died for our freedom. Two years later, she handed me this tie and said: He hated wearing ties, but you have to wear them all the time. Just remember him.

We, as Americans, will not forget, and we have not forgotten. There are flags out all over America today just to remember. There are moms and dads who really hugged their kids tight this morning before they left for school, and the kids didn’t even know why. They just did. There are places where people are gathering to pray for peace because as a nation we are a nation of peace, and we have no desire for war. In fact, we detest the pain and penalty and blood and loss of war, and we have no desire to be at war across the world, but it came to us, and we look forward to the day when guns are silent again and this finally concludes and a time of peace can be restored again.

Today, though, we are just a nation remembering and praying for that time of peace that will come, and we are

telling Gold Star families and families who have sent their loved ones around the world to places they had never seen before: We have not forgotten, and we are grateful that we serve together as a nation.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me say at the outset, I join with the sentiments expressed by the Senator from Oklahoma and our colleagues on the floor, starting with a moment of silence until this last speech, in remembering the historic American significance of September 11.

The fact that both political parties came together shows there is hope that when it comes to this Nation and its values, what brings us together is a powerful force. Today it is the force of memory, the force of promise, and the force of the future of this country. I want to salute my colleagues, particularly my friend from Oklahoma for his moving statement about families in his State touched by this tragedy.

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. President, I would like to change topics for just a moment to another important issue that has risen today and I believe is worthy of comment.

Just a few hours ago, the White House, the President, the First Lady, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration made a historic announcement when it comes to vaping and e-cigarettes.

They just finished the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey. What they have found is that in a 1-year period of time, the number of our kids who are using these vaping products and e-cigarette products has gone up from 20 percent to 27.5 percent. In the previous year, it had gone up by 80 percent, and it is continuing to skyrocket because it is an addiction which is so popular with children.

Our kids don’t know any better. They are being told by JUUL and other companies that somehow this vaping is really a healthy alternative to tobacco cigarettes. That has yet to be proven, and the Food and Drug Administration challenged JUUL and the other companies to come up with clinical proof of that statement before they repeat it again and again and again.

In the course of the last several years, the sale of these e-cigarettes and vaping products has mushroomed dramatically in the United States. Just ask any school principal, teacher, and many parents, and they will tell you what is happening. Kids don’t understand that these flavors they are buying—flavor pods like Unicorn Milk, Gummy Bears, Bubble Gum—sound like some sweet candy treat, but when you inhale it into your lungs, you run the risk of real damage.

So far, over 450 American kids have been admitted to hospitals because of lung problems from vaping. Six have died. These young people do not understand how risky this is.

Have you walked down the street and seen somebody with a big cloud of white smoke over their head as they exhale from one of these vaping devices? They don’t realize that what they are ingesting in their lungs could be deadly.

The Food and Drug Administration and the Secretary of Health and Human Services made an announcement today that is significant. They announced that the e-cigarette device and flavors that are now being sold are going to be taken off the market, out of retail stores, off of online sales. Then, come May of next year, those who want to bring these flavors back have to justify them as being consistent with being good for public health.

I ask that the RECORD note that Senator MURKOWSKI and I have joined in a bill we introduced last year, a bill which went after these flavor pods. I want to thank her. There weren’t a lot of Senators who were willing to step up, and she did. On a bipartisan basis, we set out to ban any of these flavor pods that were dangerous to children and couldn’t be proven to be harmless. I thank her for that leadership. I believe our legislation and our constant pressure on this administration came to this moment today where we are stepping forward.

We are making it clear in the United States of America that we know vaping targets kids. We know these targeted kids are risking their health and their life by continuing to use e-cigarettes and vaping. With this administration today, on a bipartisan basis, we are banning these flavor pods once and for all. We are going to try to move forward.

The last thing I will say is this: I hope the Surgeon General or one of the other leaders in public health in our government will step up now and notify every school principal in America to call an assembly, to gather the parents, and let them know about this danger. There are 5 million kids in this country vaping today. Let’s hope they can stop, and stop soon, before they harm themselves.

I salute the administration for its leadership on this matter. I worked on it for quite a few years. It is a good moment in our history that we are moving together on a bipartisan basis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Maine.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11TH

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, earlier today we paused and commemorated those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

Eighteen years have passed, but the memory of that day remains as vivid as if it were yesterday. We each have our own recollections of where we were and what we were doing as the horrifying terrorist attacks on our country began to unfold.

I remember having the television on and watching a report that a plane—

originally reported as a small plane—had struck one of the Twin Towers. I then shortly thereafter saw the second aircraft strike the World Trade Center. It was then that I knew our country was under attack. I told my staff to stay away from the Capitol Building because I feared it, too, could be a target.

Today, we all still share the powerful emotions of shock, anger, and grief. I was worried about not only my staff, those in the buildings, but also staff members who were on their way back from Portland, ME, which turns out to be where some of the terrorists began their journey of death and destruction that day.

On the evening of that terrible day, Members of Congress gathered together on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. With tears in our eyes and sorrow in our hearts, together we sang “God Bless America.” The emotions of shock, anger, and grief were joined by unity, resolve, and patriotism. That sense that swept over us as we sang was a source of strength in the challenges that we faced in the fight against terrorism.

So many were killed that horrific day. In my State of Maine, we remember Robert and Jackie Norton of Lubec, a devoted retired couple who boarded Flight 11 to celebrate a son’s wedding on the west coast. We remember James Roux of Portland, an Army veteran and a devoted father, who was on his way to a business meeting in California. We remember Robert Schlegel of Gray, who was celebrating his recent promotion to the rank of commander in the U.S. Navy and was still settling into his new office at the Pentagon when the plane struck. We remember Stephen Ward of Gorham, who was working on the 101st floor of the North Tower that terrible morning.

On this solemn anniversary, we join all Americans in remembering the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives that day—lives of accomplishment, contribution, and promise. Each loss leaves a wound in the hearts of families and friends that can never be fully healed.

We honor the heroes of that day. We are still moved by the selfless courage of the men and women on Flight 93 who wrestled that plane to the ground in Pennsylvania, sacrificing their lives so that others might live. We are inspired by the firefighters, EMS personnel, and police officers at the World Trade Center who continued to climb upward to rescue those who were in peril even as the Twin Towers were tumbling down. The New York City Fire Department alone lost 343 firefighters who responded to the attacks.

We pay tribute today and every day to the first responders, the military personnel, and the civilians who rushed into the smoke and flames at the Pentagon to lead others to safety.

We express our gratitude to those who have given so much to defend our Nation against terrorism, the men and women of our Armed Forces.

While millions of Americans watched in horror as the tragedy unfolded on that terrible day, the thousands of courageous first responders who rushed to the World Trade Center, who rushed to that field in Pennsylvania, who rushed to the Pentagon to help search for victims and to help bring anyone they could to safety, still inspire us. They put themselves in imminent danger to save the lives of others.

Later on, years later, we learned that the toxic dust and debris that many were exposed to have caused chronic illnesses. The overwhelmingly bipartisan vote in the Senate in July to permanently reauthorize the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund ensures that those first responders who risked their lives to save their fellow Americans will always be supported and their illnesses treated.

September 11 was a day of personal tragedy for so many families. It was also an attack on the United States of America and an assault on civilization. We must never forget what was lost and what remains at stake. We must continue our pledge—the pledge we made that horrific day—to do all we can to prevent future attacks.

The fundamental obligation of government is to protect its people. Since September 11, 2001, we have done much to meet that obligation, but more work remains. In the aftermath of those attacks, former Senator from Connecticut Joe Lieberman and I, as the leaders of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, worked in a bipartisan way with the leaders of the 9/11 Commission and the families of those who were lost to terrorist attacks on that day to pass the most sweeping reforms of our intelligence community since World War II. It is significant that the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act passed the Senate by a vote of 96 to 2 and that, of the hundreds of amendments that were considered, not a single one was decided by a party-line vote.

In what seemed like a moment, September 11, 2001, was transformed from a day like any other into one that forever will stand alone. The loss we re-live reminds us of the value of all that we must protect. The heroism reminds us of the unconquerable spirit of the American people. Our accomplishments remind us that we can meet any challenge. As long as we keep this day of remembrance in our hearts, we shall meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Michelle Bowman, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the

Federal Reserve System for a term of fourteen years from February 1, 2020 (Reappointment).

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Rounds, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, James E. Risch, Jerry Moran, David Perdue, Roy Blunt, Kevin Cramer, Roger F. Wicker, Tom Cotton, John Barrasso, Steve Daines.

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 Michelle Bowman, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of fourteen years from February 1, 2020 (Reappointment), 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 62, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 273 Ex.]

YEAS—62

Alexander	Fischer	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hassan	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Carper	Isakson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Johnson	Shaheen
Collins	Jones	Shelby
Coons	Kaine	Sinema
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Tester
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Warner
Daines	McSally	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Young
Ernst	Murkowski	

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Smith
Cardin	Markey	Stabenow
Casey	Menendez	Udall
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Feinstein	Paul	
Gillibrand	Reed	

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Roberts	Warren
Harris	Sanders	
Klobuchar	Tillis	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 62, the nays are 31.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in this series be 10 minutes in length.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Thomas Peter Feddo, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Investment Security. (New Position)

Mitch McConnell, James E. Risch, John Boozman, Mike Crapo, John Cornyn, Pat Roberts, Richard Burr, Lindsey Graham, John Kennedy, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Roy Blunt, Roger F. Wicker, Todd Young, Thom Tillis, Ron Johnson, Rick Scott.

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 Thomas Peter Feddo, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Investment Security (New Position), 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. BOOKER. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 92, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 274 Ex.]

YEAS—92

Alexander	Burr	Cortez Masto
Baldwin	Cantwell	Cotton
Barrasso	Capito	Cramer
Bennet	Cardin	Crapo
Blackburn	Carper	Cruz
Blumenthal	Casey	Daines
Blunt	Cassidy	Duckworth
Boozman	Collins	Durbin
Braun	Coons	Enzi
Brown	Cornyn	Ernst

Feinstein	Manchin	Schumer
Fischer	Markey	Scott (FL)
Gardner	McConnell	Scott (SC)
Gillibrand	McSally	Shaheen
Graham	Menendez	Shelby
Grassley	Merkley	Sinema
Hassan	Moran	Smith
Hawley	Murkowski	Stabenow
Heinrich	Murphy	Sullivan
Hirono	Murray	Tester
Hoehn	Perdue	Thune
Hyde-Smith	Peters	Tillis
Inhofe	Portman	Toomey
Johnson	Reed	Udall
Jones	Risch	Van Hollen
Kaine	Romney	Warner
Kennedy	Rosen	Whitehouse
King	Rounds	Wicker
Lankford	Rubio	Wyden
Leahy	Sasse	Young
Lee	Schatz	

NAYS—1

Paul

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Klobuchar	Warren
Harris	Roberts	
Isakson	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 92, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant 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 Jennifer D. Nordquist, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Rounds, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, James E. Risch, David Perdue, Roy Blunt, Kevin Cramer, Roger F. Wicker, Tom Cotton, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, John Thune.

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 Jennifer D. Nordquist, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years, shall be brought to a close?

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 275 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Gardner	Peters
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Portman
Barrasso	Graham	Reed
Bennet	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Blunt	Heinrich	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Braun	Hoehn	Sasse
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Burr	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Isakson	Scott (FL)
Capito	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Jones	Shaheen
Carper	Kaine	Shelby
Casey	Kennedy	Sinema
Cassidy	King	Smith
Collins	Lankford	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lee	Tester
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Thune
Cotton	Markey	Tillis
Cramer	McConnell	Toomey
Crapo	McSally	Udall
Cruz	Menendez	Van Hollen
Daines	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Moran	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murkowski	Wicker
Enzi	Murphy	Wyden
Ernst	Murray	Young
Feinstein	Paul	
Fischer	Perdue	

NOT VOTING—6

Booker	Klobuchar	Sanders
Harris	Roberts	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 94, the nays are 0.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jennifer D. Nordquist, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stephanie L. Haines, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Haines nomination?

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.