

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of our Democratic colleagues.

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

The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

GUN CONTROL MEASURES

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise this evening with many of my Democratic colleagues to speak about an issue that is on the minds of families all across our country. I thank Senator MURPHY for organizing this very important action this evening.

Back-to-school always brings back such great memories of my own children, my son and daughter. I remember them packing crayons and paper in their new backpacks and eagerly heading off to meet their new teachers and catch up with friends to talk about what they did during the summer. It had always been such an exciting time of year for them. Unfortunately, it is not the same now for their children, my grandchildren.

I have two grandsons and a granddaughter who are now in school. The first new question that was asked when buying their backpacks was: Do you want a bulletproof backpack? Do you want a bulletproof backpack, was one of the questions in buying their backpacks for school.

I also think of 2 weeks ago when my youngest grandson started second grade. My daughter and I were talking about the fact that in addition to all of the excitement and the energy around starting school, there were changes—like a new front door and bulletproof windows and a new way to get into the school, walking in and having to stop and buzz and go through another door, and all of the changes and the costs that have gone into reconfiguring the school so you can't walk directly into classrooms.

It was important for the school to do that, but I am sure that what they would rather have been doing is adding more music and art classes and teachers and technology and other things for the children in that elementary school, rather than bulletproof windows and safety doors to stop a gunman from getting into the school.

Americans have learned that whether it is a school, a store, a church, a country music festival, a movie theater, or even sitting on your front porch, no place is safe anymore. Thanks to this country's epidemic of gun violence, even a child playing football in his own backyard or doing her homework at the kitchen table in her own home can become the target of a stray bullet.

Last week, Senate Democrats released a report that shows 100 Americans are killed by guns every single

day—100 people every single day. That is enough people to fill every desk in this Chamber day after day after day—100 people killed by gun violence every single day.

In fact, since the House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, there have been an estimated 20,200 people killed by gun violence, 12,322 suicides using a gun, and 808 children—808 children—killed by firearms.

Those are some of the numbers, but we are not here tonight to just talk about numbers. We are talking about people's lives. These people have names like Judy and Barbara, Mary Jo and Mary Lou, and Richard and Tyler. These six people were killed in 2016 when an Uber driver went on a shooting spree across Kalamazoo County, MI. Two other people, Abigail and Tiana, were gravely wounded.

Tiana watched the car coming toward her and saw the driver pull out a handgun. Tiana told her daughters to run and stood still to shield them. Once she knew they were safe, she tried to get away too. The gunman pulled the trigger 15 times. Tiana was shot four times. Only when she laid on the ground and played dead did the bullets stop.

Broken bodies, shattered families, grieving communities. This story is one that is repeated across this country every single day now, and it has to stop.

The American people expect the Senate to do its job and take action to make their lives better and safer. Unfortunately, that isn't happening, and the American people are paying the price.

Two hundred and two days ago—202 days ago the Democratic House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act—202 days ago—which would require a background check for every gun sale, something pretty simple and common sense. That could have stopped the shooter in West Texas who killed 7 innocent people and wounded another 25. It makes you wonder how many of the 301 mass shootings that have happened since January 1 could have been prevented and how many lives could have been saved.

Requiring a background check for every gun purchase isn't controversial. In fact, it is what Americans are asking for. It is pretty common sense.

I come from rural Michigan, and in Northern Michigan my whole family is involved in hunting and all of the great outdoor sports. I have lived with legal, safe gun ownership my whole life. No one in my family believes that someone should be able to buy a gun without getting a background check. It is just common sense.

That is why more than 90 percent of Americans want Congress to do just that—to pass universal background checks. Yet the bill sits on the Senate Republican leader's desk, Senator McCONNELL's desk, waiting, waiting, waiting for action for 202 days. While MITCH McCONNELL and President

Trump wait for approval from Big Money special interests, Americans are dying. It is time to act.

The beginning of school should be something our young people look forward to, not fear.

Next year, students at Fruitport High School in West Michigan will attend a brandnew school in a brandnew building. It has all sorts of amenities—10 science classrooms with spacious labs, a drafting lab with a 3D printer, and art studios complete with pottery kilns. It will also feature curved hallways to reduce a shooter's sight line, shatterproof glass, and wing walls that will provide places for students to hide in classrooms.

It is great that the school district is investing in the safety of its students, but it is also heartbreaking that they have to do so. Students in Fruitport and across Michigan should be focused on next week's math test or tomorrow night's football game, not where they can duck and take cover in their school.

It is time for America to stop failing our young people. Majority Leader McCONNELL, what are you waiting for?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Michigan and those who have joined together on the Democratic side to speak out on the issue of gun safety this afternoon and this evening.

I guess one of the real blessings in life is to have a grandchild, and I have got six really good ones. One is a little girl who has just entered the third grade in a public school in Brooklyn, NY. She is a sweetheart, and I love her to pieces.

She came home to tell her mom and dad last year, when she was in the second grade, that they just had a drill in her classroom, and they told her what to do if someone showed up in the hallway or outside with a gun: hide under the desk, stay away from the windows.

To think that little 7-year-old girl had to receive that kind of warning in America today breaks my heart. Why?

Does anyone really honestly believe that when the Second Amendment to the Constitution was written they envisioned the fear that would go through the minds of children who, after Connecticut, worry that some shooter will come in with a semiautomatic weapon and kill dozens of kids in one moment? That is the reality of gun violence today. That is one of the realities, and it is one that just breaks my heart as a father and grandfather.

Over the past few weeks, our Nation has been rocked by mass shootings in El Paso, Dayton, and Odessa, TX, that left 38 victims dead and dozens more injured.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, so far this year there have been 300 mass shootings. That means shootings where more than four people were shot in one event. This is in addition to

the daily toll of gun homicides, suicides, and accidents that kill nearly 40,000 Americans a year.

Every week, I see the grim statistics of people killed and wounded by gunfire in my home State of Illinois. Just this past weekend—just this past weekend, in Chicago, at least 8 people were killed and 19 more injured by gunfire.

Gun violence is an epidemic in America. It affects communities large and small. I have met countless people who have lost loved ones or who have been traumatized by gun violence.

Millions of Americans now live in fear that when they send their kids—or grandkids—off to school, when they go to a movie theater, a concert, or to church, or even when they sit on their front porch, they could be shot. This is unacceptable. America is better than this.

There are many people in this great Nation who are doing all they can to try to reduce the epidemic of shootings—parents, community leaders, teachers, faith leaders, law enforcement, the medical community, and public officials, but what are we doing in the U.S. Senate? The answer is nothing—nothing.

There is no single reform that can prevent every shooting, but we know there are big gaps in our gun laws that make it easy for felons, abusers, and mentally unstable people to get their hands on guns. Closing these gaps and loopholes in our background checks system would significantly reduce shootings and save lives.

It is estimated that 22 percent of gun sales nationwide currently occur without a background check. Now, I know the critics say: Oh, great, Senator. You are going to have better background checks. Let me tell you, the people who want these guns are not going to go through that process. It turns out that, last year, 100,000 of them were ignorant enough to try, and they were caught in the act. They had been disqualified from purchasing a firearm under Federal law, and yet they made that try. Why would we ever let them successfully buy a firearm? Without a real background check, they will.

Gun show and internet loopholes are the problems that haunt us today. They enable unlicensed sellers to make sales without even checking on the background of the buyer. According to news reports, the gunman in the Odessa, TX, mass shooting bought his gun through a private sale with no background check because he previously failed a check. Clearly, there is a gap in the law that needs to be closed.

Polling consistently shows that 90 percent of Americans support closing these gaps in the background check system. How many other issues do 90 percent of Americans agree on, to have that kind of number, for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents?

The people of America are trying to tell the Senators to do something, and yet Senator MCCONNELL refuses. Even the conservative Republican Lieuten-

ant Governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, has called for closing these gaps in the background check system. I hope the Senators from Lieutenant Governor Patrick's State are listening. The House of Representatives have listened, and they have done so.

The bipartisan House background check bill, H.R. 8, passed the House 240 to 190, on a bipartisan rollcall on February 27. Here we are, over 200 days later. The Senate, which does virtually nothing every single day, through Senator MCCONNELL's leadership, refuses to even consider this bill. Senate Republicans refuse to even consider the bipartisan House-passed gun safety legislation that Americans of both political parties overwhelmingly support.

In fact, they are avoiding taking up any bills at all. Week after week after week, we vote on nomination after nomination after nomination. We hardly ever debate. We hardly ever vote on legislation to address the needs the American people say are the primary concerns on their minds.

While Republican leadership in the Senate these days doesn't seem to like to vote, they do like to tweet. Perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised when one of our Republican colleagues, the junior Senator from Texas, responded to a recent mass shooting by tweeting criticism of gun laws in the city of Chicago.

There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding by this Senator and some other Republicans who believe that, despite what the maps show us, Chicago is actually an island. Well, it is not. They seem to think there is no way that people could actually drive 20 minutes into northwest Indiana, go to a gun show, buy a truckload of guns, and sell them in the alleyways of the city of Chicago at night. It happens. It is the reason why a State law can't solve the problem.

Chicago's mayor—my friend—Lori Lightfoot, pointed out the obvious to the junior Senator from Texas. Sixty percent of illegal firearms recovered in Chicago come from out of State. That is why we need a Federal background check reform bill like the one that passed the House.

Mayor Lightfoot is right. She graciously invited Senator CRUZ, our colleague, to come visit Chicago, to see that it is not an island—it is connected to other States—and to see what the city is doing, trying to work to reduce the scourge of gun violence, and how Republican Senators, if they really want to help, can help by passing legislation for true background checks. I hope that the Senator from Texas accepts the invitation. It is a great town. We would like to show it to him.

Another area in which this do-nothing Senate has fallen short is when it comes to public safety threats posed by violent White supremacists. I have introduced the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act. It is the only legislation pending in the Senate to address White supremacist violence.

The gunman in the August 3 mass shooting in El Paso posted a White supremacist manifesto before he shot and killed 22 people and injured 24 others at a Walmart. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident.

An unclassified May 2017 FBI-DHS joint intelligence bulletin found that "white supremacist extremism poses [a] persistent threat of lethal violence." It also found that White supremacists "were responsible for 49 homicides in 26 attacks from 2000 to 2016 . . . more than any other domestic extremist movement."

At a July hearing, FBI Director Mr. Wray told me that the majority of domestic terrorism arrests this year involved White supremacists, White nationalists—and now they call themselves White identitarians, whatever that means.

It is clear that violent White supremacists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing America today. What have we done to address this? Nothing. Just like H.R. 8, just like the gun safety legislation, which we should be considering, Senator MCCONNELL refuses to bring anything before the Senate.

My bill, cosponsored by 21 Senators, including the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, would establish offices to combat domestic terrorism at the Justice Department, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security. These offices will be required to take concrete steps to prevent domestic terrorism, including assessing and publicly reporting on domestic terrorism threats, focusing limited resources on the most significant threats, and providing information, training, and resources to assist State and local and Tribal law enforcement.

This would produce a sustained and coordinated effort with significantly more resources directed towards combating White supremacist violence. It would make America safer.

It is time for the Senate Republican majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, to let the Senate be a Senate, to actually debate. I stand tonight on the floor—and I am honored to be here, but let's face it, I am giving a speech to a largely empty Chamber in the hopes that some following the speech on C-SPAN or reading it later may take some information of value from it. I would much rather be engaged in a debate at this very moment on H.R. 8, how to pass it—if necessary, how to amend it—but to do something to respond to gun violence in Chicago, in Illinois, and across the entire United States.

It is time for Senator MCCONNELL to let the Senate be the Senate and vote on the House-passed gun background check bill. We need to take up other critical legislation as well to prevent gun violence and domestic terrorism. I hope he will consider my bill to address White supremacist violence. This legislation can make us safer and save lives if we can just bring it to a vote.

I yield the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling on Leader McCONNELL to immediately bring to the floor commonsense gun violence prevention legislation that is supported by the majority of the American people.

We must take action in response to the tragedies that have touched too many communities across the country, including in Gilroy, El Paso, Dayton, Midland, and Odessa just this summer. Time and again, we saw the American people respond with courage—the courage of a mother who shielded her child from gun fire, the courage of first responders who ran into the line of fire to save lives. It is time for the United States Senate to find the resolve to act with courage; the American people cannot afford any more inaction.

There are three bipartisan bills sitting on Leader McCONNELL's desk that will help to save lives: the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, which requires a background check for the sale of all guns; the Enhanced Background Checks Act, which closes the Charleston loophole and gives law enforcement more time to complete a background check; and the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which includes a provision based on my bill, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, to keep domestic abusers and convicted stalkers from buying or owning a gun.

We should also take action to ban the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines and encourage States to enact extreme risk protection order laws to allow law enforcement or family members to intervene when a person is a danger to themselves or others. In a nation plagued by gun violence, passing these commonsense provisions will help save lives.

There are more shootings and more tragic losses all too often, and every time, we hear expressions of sympathy, but we have yet to see votes or action. The time has come to act, and we must act now.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, as we grieve with the communities of El Paso, Dayton, and Midland, I can't help but be reminded of the Seattle Jewish Federation, Marysville, Seattle Pacific University, Freeman High School, and so many other communities in my home State of Washington and nationwide that are suffering as a result of tragic and tragically preventable gun violence.

After each of these heartbreaking events, families in Washington State ask me, Why does this keep happening, and why can we not stop it?

The answer is the same every time: We can't stop it because Republicans, led by Leader McCONNELL and, now, President Trump, will not let us. Because of this inaction, we have entered

a very destructive cycle. People going about their days—to school, a movie theater, place of worship—to places where they should feel safe—lose their lives to gun violence.

Communities and Democrats speak out and call for commonsense reforms, such as the universal background checks, which the vast majority of Americans support. Meanwhile, Republicans stand by and refuse to take any meaningful action to stop these violent, senseless, preventable deaths, so nothing happens in Congress.

And then, months, weeks, days, or even hours later, the cycle starts all over again. Every time we have seen this cycle—across all of the terrible shootings that have plagued our country in recent years—there are two common threads. The first is that, in response to tragedy, communities have banded together to make their voices heard and press for change. I have been proud of gun advocates in Washington State, like the Alliance for Gun Responsibility and Moms Demand Action chapters in Spokane and across the State, who are leading the way and staying determined.

The second common thread is Senate Republicans. Every time we push for lifesaving reforms, it always ends at the same place, with the same thing standing in the way of change. The most frustrating part of this is that there are steps we could take right now—today—that will save lives.

The House has passed the universal background check legislation, H.R. 8, with bipartisan support. It is now languishing in the Senate, despite our calls for a vote, all because the majority leader just will not bring it up.

President Trump, who is so willing to use his bully pulpit for far less worthy causes, hasn't used it to take action in ways that could save lives right now. In other words, the President and Senate Republicans continue to make clear they are more interested in protecting the NRA than the families in my home State and across the country. That is simply unacceptable. Democrats are not going to stop calling for action.

Leader McCONNELL should break the cycle here and now by putting H.R. 8 up for a vote, which would implement universal background checks and close inexplicable gun show and internet loopholes.

Considering that more than 80 percent of Americans support universal background checks, this bill should be a no-brainer. It is the first step we need to take to curb gun violence in our country, but it can't be the only one. If we are serious about truly putting an end to this epidemic, we should look at legislation to expand access to extreme risk protection orders—which has, by the way, been implemented in my home State of Washington—to get guns out of the hands of those who are in crisis. We should limit magazine sizes. We should revive the assault weapons ban and invest in gun violence research prevention.

These commonsense reforms can help us begin to break this cycle. We have to take action now to curb gun violence. That means starting with the universal background check legislation that is waiting right here in the Senate to take action.

My Democratic colleagues in the Senate and I have repeatedly called for a vote on H.R. 8, and we are going to keep putting pressure on Republicans in the Senate until we get one. We can't do it alone. We need to keep lifting up our voices together to demand change, as we did after Sandy Hook, after Parkland, after Marysville, and now following the terror in Texas and in Ohio.

It is not easy. I am not going to give up, and I know the millions of parents and grandparents and students and so many across our Nation are not going to give up either. Together, we can break this senseless cycle. It starts with the majority leader.

While we often disagree on the steps we believe need to be taken, I believe that all of us who are elected in the Senate would say that we came here to make a difference and certainly to do whatever we could to ensure the people we represent are safe. Right now, far too often, they are not. So the Senate is not doing its job.

I call on the majority leader to let us vote on H.R. 8. Let's send it to the President's desk. Let's do what the vast majority of Americans want us to do and take this first step to stop gun violence so we can finally begin to put a stop to this terrible deadly cycle.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, we are all coming to the Senate floor this evening to demand that we finally take real steps to address our Nation's gun violence epidemic. This epidemic is wide-reaching and knows no bounds. We need to listen to the students and to the young people who have grown weary from so many shootings at our schools.

In my home State of New Mexico in recent years, we have seen gun violence tragically take the lives of high school students in Aztec and Clovis and, just last month, college students in Hobbs. Every student and teacher should feel safe at school. No parent should have to live in fear of their child not coming home at the end of the day.

Across our Nation, we have witnessed, with grave horror, mass shooters armed with assault rifles gun down Americans in churches, in synagogues, in concert venues, and in shopping centers. Amid our grief and anguish, Americans have come together to call on their leaders to not let this senseless, heart-wrenching violence continue unabated. They are calling on us to do something. We can no longer accept these horrific shootings as the status quo.

In my hometown of Albuquerque, just last Thursday night, five people,

including three teenagers, were shot to death in multiple shootings across our city, and six others were wounded. While police are still investigating these senseless acts of violence, no one can tell me that this level of gun violence is somehow acceptable.

There are things we can do. There is no doubt that this debate brings up very emotional and difficult questions, and there are large challenges we need to grapple with that are fueling gun violence in America. Many of the most horrific acts of violence and terror that we have witnessed have been inspired by hateful ideologies, by racist bigotry, and by divisive rhetoric. But we need to acknowledge that they were carried out with deadly weapons, weapons that we are clearly not doing enough to keep out of the hands of those who would seek to cause us harm.

We may not all agree on what steps should be taken at the Federal level to address this crisis, but can we at least agree that something needs to be done to combat the epidemic of gun violence in this country?

We need to listen to our Nation's students and mothers who are calling for us to come together on the things we can agree on. At the very least, that includes universal background checks. There is bipartisan legislation on background checks that passed out of the House and is sitting on the majority leader's desk right now. Let's vote on that bill.

Someone who can't pass a background check should not be allowed to purchase a firearm. We shouldn't be putting guns in the hands of those convicted of domestic violence or sexual assault who continue to be a threat to their victims. Someone who has been found by family and friends to be a danger to themselves and their community should not be in possession of a deadly firearm. If our government has put someone on a no-fly list because of the risk that they pose, we should not allow that potential terrorist to buy a gun. I can't, frankly, understand how any of that is controversial.

The Senate majority is refusing to act. They are hoping that if they hide long enough—if they hide long enough—this will just blow over. Can we at least agree that more public health and scientific research is needed on this gun violence epidemic?

All of us in some way are grasping for answers on our Nation's unparalleled violence, but even funding research into gun violence is being vetoed by the NRA. It is hard to believe that Senate Republicans could find a way to be against so many common-sense solutions. Nearly every solution is being rejected. The overwhelming majority of Americans, including gun owners like me, agree that Congress needs to finally take these real steps to address gun violence.

Look, this is not an issue I take lightly. Like many Americans, I am a gun owner, but with that privilege should come a great deal of responsi-

bility. I am teaching my two sons how to responsibly use firearms. In fact, when our family sits down to a meal that includes red meat, it is almost always from the wild game we have harvested.

I think you will find, when you talk to most gun owners and most sportsmen, they, more than anyone, know how much we need to respect the deadly force inherent in these tools. Most agree we should make sure that firearms are used responsibly and safely.

Those of us in Congress should never hide behind phony arguments that use fear to intimidate us away from action. Americans are desperate for us to act.

I join my Democratic colleagues once again in calling upon Majority Leader MCCONNELL and President Trump: Enough is enough. It is long past time to do something and to stop hiding. It is long past time for us to finally turn our Nation's grief and frustration into meaningful action to protect our kids and our communities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to join my colleague Senator HEINRICH and others who have come before. I am calling on Senator MCCONNELL to act now to address the gun crisis in our country.

Every day that the Senate Republican leaders refuse to act, they are making a choice to be complicit as more lives continue to be lost. People across my State and the country want to see action, and they are tired of waiting for it.

I have met with countless families across New York who have lost their children, spouses, friends, community members, and neighbors to gun violence. I have met people who have survived mass shootings and people who live every single day with the threat of gun violence in their neighborhoods. I have heard their stories and seen how their lives have been torn apart by gun violence. Today I want to tell some of those stories to you.

Robert Gaafar, one of my constituents from Long Island and a father of young children, was at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas for work. He heard loud popping noises and soon realized they weren't coming from the performance on stage but from a gun. As the shooter fired round after round, Robert hid behind a metal vending machine for protection. The bullets being fired around him were so powerful he could actually feel the shock waves. He said that he would never forget the silence of 20,000 people at a concert or the horrific screams of grown men and women he could hear as the gunman reloaded. He was lucky. He survived. But 58 people did not, and many more were injured.

Another New Yorker, Trenelle Gabay, had to make the unthinkable decision to take her husband off of life support after he was shot in the cross-fire of two rival gangs at a community

festival in Brooklyn. He was just an innocent bystander, and, ironically, he was an attorney for the State who helped draft the NY SAFE Act, which set a precedent for one of the strongest gun laws in the country. He was not immune from gun violence himself. As Trenelle told it, her husband's life and bright light were extinguished by guns.

At the trial, Trenelle heard a criminal testify about how easy it was for him to purchase a gun and traffic it from Georgia to New York. It should not be this easy for criminals to get access to dangerous weapons. It should not be so easy for lives to be taken so senselessly.

One mother I met in New York, Jackie Rowe-Adams, lost not one but two sons to gun violence. One of her sons was shot when he was 17 years old outside of a bodega in Harlem. The reason? Two men with a gun believed that her son was staring at them, so they killed him.

Ms. Rowe-Adams lost her second son to gun violence during a robbery outside of her apartment. The boy who shot him was only 13 years old. He should never have had access to a gun. Imagine the horror of being a mother and losing two of your sons to gun violence.

Then there is another one of my constituents, Edwin Vargas. His 16-year-old son Luis was killed on Halloween when an unknown gunman decided to fire his weapon into the crowd in a neighborhood in the Bronx. The gunman was irritated by a group of teenagers who were throwing eggs in his neighborhood, so he began to randomly shoot into the crowd. The gunman hit three innocent bystanders, including Luis. Luis was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

These are the tragic and heart-wrenching stories that New Yorkers have shared with me. They are by no means unique. In every State around the country, there are too many stories just like these. The reality is that mass shootings can and have happened in every corner of this country in all types of places.

Gun violence is becoming the new normal in America. Certainly it has happened in Arizona. We do not have to live in a country where mass shootings occur in our schools, our houses of worship, our movie theaters, our playgrounds, our stores, our community gatherings, at festivals, at concerts, at nightclubs, and at Congress on your corner.

Madam President, I am speaking to you and to every other Republican in this Chamber. We all have a responsibility to do the right thing and stand up to the NRA and stand up to the greed and corruption that is in this country today that makes every decision about whether we have a vote on commonsense gun reform.

I can poll your State for you. I can ask every NRA member in America: Do you support universal background checks, banning large magazines, military-style weapons? Leave them in the

hands of military members, not someone who walks into a store and buys them because he wants to shoot large numbers of people in minutes and seconds. That is what is happening in America today.

I would like you to look up because I have to say this is something all of us should be caring about, especially from Arizona, where my dear friend Gabby Giffords was shot for doing her job and a young girl showing up for “Congress on Your Corner” to meet her Congresswoman died. It is not OK. The time for turning a blind eye is over.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Thank you for the recognition, Madam President.

Last month, on August 22, an 86-year-old grandmother, born and raised in my hometown of Santa Fe, NM, was gunned down while she was shopping at Walmart in El Paso by a White supremacist with an AK-47 style assault weapon. The gunman said he “wanted to shoot as many Mexicans as possible.” The shooter told police he had purchased 1,000 rounds of ammunition.

Less than 24 hours later, it took the shooter in Dayton, OH, only 32 seconds to kill 10 people and wound 27 others with his .223-caliber, high-capacity rifle with 100-round drum magazines. Had the Dayton police not responded immediately, the numbers of dead and injured in the crowded Dayton downtown area could have been exponentially higher.

On August 31, in Odessa, TX, a shooter killed 7 and injured 25, including a 17-month-old girl, who was shot in the face. The shooter had failed a background check in 2014 because a court had found he was mentally unfit to own a gun. He purchased his AR-15 style weapon in a private gun sale, which is not subject to a background check.

Assault rifles, often paired with high-capacity magazines, were used to slaughter innocents at Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, Aurora, Orlando, San Bernardino, the Sutherland Springs church, and the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh.

According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been 10,552 gun-related deaths this year. That includes 2,681 children and teens. Mass shootings number 300. That is more than one mass shooting every day of this year.

The American people support commonsense gun safety legislation in overwhelming numbers. Recent polls confirm that 90 percent or more registered voters support background checks for all gun sales—90 percent. Think about that. The American people support a ban on high-capacity magazines. They support a ban on assault weapons. They support keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals.

People all across the country are worried about their communities, their schools, their churches, and their chil-

dren. They are worried that they will be caught in the next mass shooting, that their community will be the next El Paso, the next Sandy Hook, or the next Aztec.

When I was in school, we had safety drills in the event of a nuclear strike from the Soviet Union. Children now have safety drills in the event of a shooter from within our own communities.

The American people are demanding that Congress take action on this national crisis. After El Paso and Dayton, many of us implored Leader MCCONNELL to call us back into session to vote on the gun safety bills sitting on his desk gathering dust. Leader MCCONNELL says he will only bring bills before the Senate that the President will sign.

We are the legislative body. We are sent here by our constituents to pass laws, to do their will, to protect their welfare. We do not depend on the President to pass gun safety legislation. We do not have to wait for him while the NRA lobbyists try to wear him down. He can take his cues from us for a change. We are not his lapdogs. Protecting our communities, schools, and churches cannot wait, cannot be relegated to the leader’s legislative graveyard. Too many lives have been lost, and too many lives will be lost if we don’t act.

The fact is, too many Republican elected officials are beholden to the scandal-ridden National Rifle Association. The NRA no longer even represents gun owners; it represents the gun industry. Now we know it also represents dark campaign spending and internal corruption.

There is no mystery why the Republicans refuse to take up gun safety legislation that Americans overwhelmingly support. The NRA has poured millions into campaign coffers, and they use that money to intimidate Members of Congress into opposing bills with 90 percent support nationally. This is yet one more example of why we need to overturn Citizens United and enact comprehensive finance reform. Our Democratic institutions are not representing the people.

We need to pass the bills on Leader MCCONNELL’s desk, but we should not stop there. We also must halt the rise of White nationalism and White supremacy in our country. Hateful views have fueled too many of these tragedies—the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC; the Tree of Life synagogue; and in El Paso.

The El Paso shooter’s fear of “the Hispanic invasion of Texas” too closely echoes the President’s repeated warnings of an “invasion” at our southern border. The shooter’s anti-immigrant screed rings of the President’s attacks on immigrants as criminals and rapists who need to be kept out of our country by a border wall. Las Cruces, NM, is only 45 minutes from El Paso. El Paso is like a sibling to us. New Mexico, like

El Paso, takes great pride in our diversity. Our diversity does not divide us. It defines us. It unifies us. The President’s anti-immigrant, nativist rhetoric is not only deeply offensive to New Mexicans, it also fuels the worst elements of our society—elements that now have ready access to military-style weapons.

The FBI Director recently reported to Congress that the Bureau had arrested almost as many domestic terrorists as foreign terrorists this year. He said most of the racially motivated domestic terrorism cases were likely connected to White supremacy.

It is up to this body to stand up to the President’s anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric and unequivocally affirm this Nation’s values—equality, tolerance, and inclusiveness. It is up to this body to stand up to the NRA and stand with the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, last month, over 50 Americans were killed in mass shootings in this country while we were on the August recess when we should have been here doing our job. One hundred Americans are killed every day from gun violence. There are 100 desks in this room. There are 100 chairs by those desks. And if these were the Americans killed by gun violence, they would add up to every single desk that is in this room. Yet the majority leader didn’t bring us back during the August recess. He didn’t say we should cancel our vacation and come back to work for the American people. He hasn’t put a bill on the floor or given an opportunity for anybody else to put a bill on the floor now that we have been back in session for the last 2 weeks.

In the last 18 months, Colorado alone has lost 885 people to gun violence. That is a record in my State.

The House of Representatives has done their job. I think more than 200 days ago, they passed background checks over there, and we haven’t even taken them up over here. This isn’t a matter of bringing up the bill and voting on the bill; we can’t even get the bill to the floor. For 200 days, we haven’t been able to bring the bill to the floor. Why? Because the majority leader of the United States of America says that he is only going to bring gun legislation to the floor if he knows what the President will sign. He is not capable, as the majority leader of the United States, to put an amendment on the floor for an up-or-down vote even when that amendment passed the House of Representatives 200 days ago and 96 percent of the American people support it. Ninety-six percent of the American people support it.

Why can't he bring it to the floor? He says that only if the President tells him that he will sign it will he bring it to the floor. We all know how hard it is for the President to make up his mind about anything—particularly about guns when he has one thing to say right after a tragedy has happened, and then 2 days later, after he meets with the NRA, he is singing from a completely different song sheet.

Here is what MITCH MCCONNELL said in 2014:

The Senate should be setting national priorities, not simply waiting on the White House to do it for us.

I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment. This is an independent branch of government. The 100 people sitting in this room have been sent here to represent the people who voted for us and the people who didn't vote for us. And 96 percent of them say they want background checks on guns, but we can't even have a vote.

I would like to see a vote just so I could see who in this Chamber wants to vote against background checks. I think it would be amazing for the American people to learn that, instead of just hiding behind this myth that the President of the United States gets to decide what comes to the floor. He is not the majority leader. There is one person in America who gets to decide what comes to this floor—one person in America—and that is the majority leader, MITCH MCCONNELL from Kentucky. It is not Donald Trump. He knew that in 2014, and he knows it today. But the NRA is too scared to see this thing come to the floor because they know that it will pass and that they will lose as a result of that. It is long past time for us to beat the NRA on this issue.

I know my colleague from Washington State is here, so I will not go on for too long, but if I could, I will just take a couple of minutes.

I am also from a Western State, the State of Colorado, and 20 years ago, we had one of the very first school shootings in this country. It was at Columbine High School. In the wake of that, we passed background checks. We passed the same bill that MITCH MCCONNELL will not bring to the floor—the same bill almost 20 years ago.

My oldest daughter is 20 years old. She was born right after Columbine. Our two other daughters are 19 and 15. Like so many children across this country, they have grown up thinking that going to school is unsafe, that they could be shot at school. They have had to do drills that we never had to do when we were kids—never had to do. They have the knowledge that the U.S. Congress doesn't care about them because for 20 years we have done nothing.

In Colorado—a Western State, a Second Amendment State—we passed these background checks. As a result, every year, 2 or 3 percent of the people who come to buy a gun can't buy a gun

because they are murderers or they are rapists or they are domestic abusers. They are people who shouldn't have a gun. I would like to see anybody come to this floor and tell me why Colorado would be safer if we didn't have those background checks; why we would be safer if murderers got guns and rapists got guns and domestic abusers got guns. They can't come here and do it.

They are hiding from the vote, and it is their responsibility to vote. There is only one person in America who can hold that vote, and that is MITCH MCCONNELL. I can tell you this: It is not because we are too busy around here. We were in session last week for 27 hours. That is not even a French workweek. That is pitiful—pitiful—27 hours. Do you know how many amendments we have considered in the 9 months that we have been here this year? We have considered 18. That is two amendments a month. We have passed four amendments in this broken place. It is pitiful.

Before he became majority leader, MITCH MCCONNELL came down here and said that we were going to work on Fridays, that we were going to have regular order. We had a 27-hour workweek. I can tell you this: It is not because we are considering the election protection legislation, which is one of the bipartisan bills the Senators in this Chamber want to vote on to respond to the Russian attack on our democracy. It is not because we are too busy with those bills. We are doing nothing here except for confirming judges for Donald Trump.

I think I speak for my colleagues when I say I am willing to work more than 27 hours. I am willing to work a French workweek or a U.S. workweek if it means we could actually have votes on amendments that 96 percent of the American people support.

I close by saying there is no one else to do this job but us. The House has done its job. Donald Trump can't make up his mind about anything. Maybe he would like us to send him the background checks to help him make up his mind about what he can do for the American people, but I can tell you this: Our kids can't do this. They are too busy. They are in school. They are trying to learn reading and math. They should not be asked to try to figure out how to stop these mass shootings in this country or what it would look like to have a representative body of the United States actually represent the people who sent us here instead of sitting around in our offices, trying to avoid hard votes. How is it a hard vote when 9 out of 10 Americans support it? It is only a hard vote because the NRA is taking names and watching this.

I say to my colleagues: We would be so much better off, Democrats and Republicans, with our ripping this band-aid off and getting on with the business that the American people sent us here to do. MITCH MCCONNELL should put on this floor these background checks.

I thank my colleagues for their patience.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I join my colleagues on the floor tonight.

I thank the Senator from Colorado for an articulate and very passionate speech about the reasons the U.S. Senate should be voting on sensible gun laws.

That is what we are really here to say tonight—that it is past time we take action and that we in the U.S. Senate should let the American people know where Members of the U.S. Senate stand on these important issues.

Too many Americans have been impacted by gun violence, and too many places have been the sites of these attacks, whether they be churches, synagogues, or mosques or whether they be our schoolchildren or people just going about their everyday lives with their shopping, going to a concert, or even watching a movie. Too many families and friends are left waiting, trying to understand whether their loved ones are going to return home, and too many have been devastated to find out that their loved ones aren't coming back.

It is time that we act here in the U.S. Senate and support legislation that we know the American people support. In my home State, there are places like the Seattle Pacific University and the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, Freeman High School outside of Spokane, Marysville Pilchuck High School, the Burlington shopping mall in Skagit County, and White Swan. All of these communities have taught us that we need to act. It is past time for us to act here.

The good news is that the people of Washington State did act. Those people rose up and helped to support legislative initiatives that went to a vote of the people. Not only have they been successfully passed, but they are showing successful results.

In the State of Washington, we passed universal background checks by a popular vote in 2014, and we saw amazing results in just the first 14 months. They helped to prevent over 50 gun sales to felons. My colleague from Colorado mentioned a similar thing in his State. And after closing private sale loopholes, it resulted in 144 denials to those with expanded background checks. It does mean that the people of Washington State are at least safer in this regard because we have more tools in our toolbox with which to deal with this.

I also want people to understand that we passed a law to allow extreme risk protection orders. That was passed in 2016 with nearly 70 percent of Washington State voters helping and voting in that election. What we saw was that in a State where we probably have 27 percent gun ownership, we saw in 32 out of 39 counties people supporting this measure to say that people who pose an extreme risk should not be allowed to get their hands on a gun. This

was supported in rural communities, suburban communities, and urban communities.

In front of the Senate Judiciary Committee last year, King County Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Kimberly Wyatt testified. She called this measure a “critical, evidence-based, harm reduction tool.” Now, how does that sound so threatening—a tool that law enforcement is telling us is critical and evidence-based that is going to help us to reduce harm to our fellow citizens?

Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Kimberly Wyatt told a story of a doctor who contacted police because a patient who had wanted to obtain a concealed weapon permit had repeatedly talked about making a hit list and “doing harm to people.” In using the extreme risk protection order, we are allowed to help to keep these people from getting their hands on gun and doing harm to themselves and to fellow citizens.

These measures supported in my State are initiatives by the people. As I said, they are supported by wide majorities across all geographic areas of our State. Yet we can’t find out here in the U.S. Senate how our Senate colleagues would vote on these very important measures.

I hope those on the other side of the aisle will consider these. We will go State by State if necessary. We will get the people involved in passing these laws. Why? It is that they know they are common sense, and they work, and we want to keep the public safe. We know that we want to have these tools so law enforcement and others can do their jobs. It is long overdue to have a vote in the U.S. Senate on these issues, and I hope our colleagues will give us that opportunity.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I rise to echo the sentiments of the Senator from Washington State. She has absolutely articulated the reasons this Senate should just stop what it is doing and bring these bills to the floor for a vote so we can begin to make it more difficult for the wrong people to be able to buy guns in our country. We have no background checks, no ability to identify who they are.

This debate is one that should have already taken place in August after what happened in El Paso and after what happened in Dayton. We should have had the debate out here on the Senate floor. The House has already passed legislation that deals with the background checks of any person who wants to buy a gun in our country. That is the least we should be able to do.

By the way, it polls out at 89 percent. There aren’t many issues that poll out at 89 percent. The reason it does is that the country is horrified by what it is seeing day after day on its televisions as the carnage continues to rise, as the

hemorrhaging of communities continues unabated across our country.

The NRA retains a vice-like grip on the Senate of the United States. It is almost as though it is able to put a lock on these doors—courtesy of the Republican leadership—so that no bill can come down here into the well of the Senate to be debated on background checks. The NRA just refuses to allow those bills to come out here. So we have no debates. We have no votes. We have no accountability. This is the status of the U.S. Senate in September of 2019 as we see an epidemic of violence across our country.

Bring those bills onto the floor, Republican Party. Forget the money from the NRA. Forget all of its spending. Let us not put a price on the lives of 34,000 Americans who died just last year on top of the lives of those who died the year before and the year before and those who will be part of a preventable epidemic in our country next year and the year after and the year after into the future.

After we finish debating background checks, we should then have a debate on military-style assault weapons and whether they should be sold in our country and a debate on high-capacity magazines and whether they should be sold in our country. Those were the weapons that were used in Dayton. Those were the weapons that were used in El Paso. Let’s have a debate here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Let’s have people have to be made accountable for allowing these dangerous weapons that belong on battlefields but not on the streets of our country. In fact, when they are on the streets of our country, they turn our streets into battlegrounds, whereby the criminal—whereby the bad person—has a weapon, in many instances, that is more powerful than that of the police. That is just plain wrong. We can do something about it if the Senate allows these doors to open, if the Republicans allow this debate to take place. Of course, it will not because the NRA controls access to the floor of this Senate.

Then let’s have a debate on the loopholes that allow abusers—domestic abusers and terrorists—to be able to purchase guns in the United States. Let’s have that debate here on the floor of the Senate.

Let’s have people have to vote on whether or not they want domestic abusers to be able to purchase guns in our country or if they should be able to keep their guns if they have already been identified by the local police as being a danger because they are domestic abusers, and the same thing is true for safeguards against terrorists purchasing weapons.

And when we are going to have the debate on research at the Centers for Disease Control on the causes of gun violence in our country?

I have introduced that bill for 10 years to have that research done. The House has now moved legislation to deal with that issue, but over here, so

far, these doors are locked. That legislation cannot make it to the well of the Senate so that we can have a debate.

The NRA guards these doors. The NRA will not give permission to have a debate on whether or not we do research on gun violence in our country. What are the causes? Why are we the highest among industrialized countries? What is it that differentiates us from other countries in the world?

So for me, I say it is time for us on this floor to ensure that NRA stands for not relevant anymore in American politics, in senatorial politics, and that the doors are open, that the legislation can come down, and that we can have a full debate here on the Senate floor after all that we have learned in these last weeks and months and years about how unnecessarily easy it is for people to be able to purchase these weapons.

This is a debate that the American people want, and we are either going to have that debate in the course of regular Senate business or we are going to have it next year in the Presidential and House and Senate races all across our country, because this issue now is completely changed in terms of how the public views it except among the Republican leadership in our country.

So if that is how they want it, then, just be sure that young people especially are outraged across our country. They are outraged that we don’t debate climate change in the well of the Senate. They are outraged that we don’t debate gun safety legislation in the Senate.

So there is a kind of a “sow the wind, reap the whirlwind” political consequence that is going to occur, and all I can say is that we can hope and pray that the Senate Republican leadership allows for this debate and does not wait for Donald Trump to give them permission to have this debate. There shouldn’t have to be a complete and total excision of senatorial prerogatives to another branch of government. We should be able to do this ourselves—the Senate.

This issue goes right to the core of the safety of every family in our country, and if we do it, I actually think that almost every Senator here will be praised for ensuring that we have background checks. That is what the polling says.

If we don’t, then perhaps a small handful of Republican Senators will be praised by the NRA, but it will be at a terrible price in terms of the lives that are lost.

In Massachusetts, we have the lowest gun fatality rate in the country. If Massachusetts’ laws were the laws for the whole country, 34,000 people would not have died last year, but only 6,000 people would have died.

And what is our key law? If you want to buy a gun and get a license in Massachusetts, you have to go into the police station and talk to the police chief. We have 351 cities and towns. That is how you get a gun license. It is the police.

So we know how simple it is to have a background check to make sure that we know who is buying these guns. Down in Parkland, the home of that young man had been visited over and over and over by the police, but he didn't have to go to the police to get a license. He got right around that system.

Who knows you best? The local police do. We don't want to keep guns out of the hands of those who should be able to purchase them—hunters and others—but you do want the police to be involved. You do want background checks to make sure that the wrong people can't buy them. We know that is at the heart of this problem.

So for me, this is an absolute necessity for the Senate to have to have dealt with before the end of this session. It would be historically inexcusable for us to have avoided having that debate here.

I just say that enough is enough. Let's just end business as usual. Let's put in place the process by which this Senate—this greatest deliberative body in the world—reclaims the reputation that it has lost, and let's debate gun safety legislation here on the floor of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am here after talking to my good friend Fred Guttenberg, who visited my office just minutes ago to talk about what we are doing here on the floor of the Senate—what we are failing to do, more precisely, and what we have an obligation to do at this moment in history.

Fred Guttenberg lost his precious, beautiful daughter Jamie in Parkland at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in a tragedy that we all recall—at least I do—as though it happened yesterday.

Fred Guttenberg has made it his life's mission now, in his daughter's memory, to fight for commonsense steps to save other children from that kind of violence and other parents from all of our worst nightmare—I say that as a father of four.

But Fred Guttenberg, being the enormously hopeful, energetic, and positive person that he is, talked to me about Florida's extreme risk protection order statute—or, as it is known there, red flag statute—and about how it is working to save lives and how it has been used more than 2,000 times since it was passed barely a year ago and how it, in fact, worked most recently in the case of a young man who made threats online with a stash of firearms in his home that were turned over to law enforcement voluntarily when they came to his home. They were turned over voluntarily by his parents.

They didn't need to use the warrant because his parents knew that a risk warrant was telling them something they already knew, which is that their son was dangerous and that firearms in

that home posed a clear and present and urgent threat of another Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy.

So using that red flag or emergency risk protection order statute was actually unnecessary there, but it provided the police and law enforcement with a means to an end, and it has been used more than 2,000 times.

In fact, in our Judiciary Committee, a nominee for the Southern District of Florida, who is now a sitting State court judge, related to us how he has applied this statute. What he said to us is it works. It saves lives. It prevents suicides. It helps stop domestic violence that can lead to fatalities. These laws work.

These laws work to save lives, as we have seen in Connecticut, where proudly we have led the Nation in adopting a comprehensive set of gun violence prevention laws. The experience of Connecticut, the empirical evidence, the facts on the ground, the testimony of law enforcement all tell us these laws work. It isn't just one law. There is no single panacea. There is no one solution. It is a comprehensive set of commonsense measures.

The opponents of these measures will point to one tragedy or another that could not have been prevented by one law or another, and that is the reason that it has to be comprehensive, and it will never prevent all of the tragedy. There will still be gun deaths in this country, but these laws work to save lives.

And as Fred and I said to each other, if one life has been saved in the State of Florida by its emergency risk protection order statute, it was worth doing. If one daughter of one potentially grieving parent was saved, it was worth doing.

But it is many more than one life that will be saved if we adopt the measures that are before us. Ideally, H.R. 8, universal background checks that has come to us from the House, the closing of the Charleston loophole, which I have long championed and I have introduced as a separate measure here, emergency risk protection order or red flag statutes that my colleague and I, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, have worked on, negotiated over months and now is on the verge of introduction—we know that the task before us is to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, to prevent people who will kill or injure themselves or others from having those firearms.

The universal background check goal is to enforce a statute that was adopted many years ago that keeps guns out of the hands of specific people who are dangerous because they are convicted felons or drug addicts or fall into other categories, keeps guns out of the hands of dangerous people before they are hurt.

An extreme risk protection order statute keeps guns out of the hands of people who, like the shooter in Parkland, as my colleague Senator GRAHAM says, all but took out an ad in the

newspaper saying he was going to kill people—as this young man did in Coral Springs, when he went on the internet.

Under our statute, there is complete due process because not only must a statutory standard of proof be met for the warrant—the risk warrant, much like an arrest warrant or a search warrant—but then, in a subsequent hearing within a week or 2 or 3 weeks under other jurisdictions, there is a right to a hearing, and the burden of proof is even higher for that gun to be kept away. Then the order itself lasts for a specific period of time.

There are guarantees of due process here. Every one of these proposals—universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders—is within the Heller decision, consistent with the Second Amendment. We respect the Second Amendment. It is the law of the land, but they can help save lives.

That is why 90 percent of the American people support universal background checks, and they support extreme risk protection order laws. They know lives can be saved if guns are kept out of the hands of dangerous people.

These stories are so common and so tragic:

A young man exhibits disturbing behavior. He is clearly troubled. His friends, relatives, teachers, even law enforcement are aware of his hateful rants. He posts pro-Nazi photos online. We know the end of this story too. It is the story of Dakota Reed that started like so many others—Charleston, Pittsburgh, Orlando, Dayton, El Paso. He posted on November 11, 2018: "I'm shooting for 30 Jews." Except here is how that story ended: When this young man threatened an anti-Semitism-fueled massacre, law enforcement was granted an extreme risk protection order. Dakota Reed was online, threatening to kill people, and law enforcement seized his 12 firearms.

For so long, we have been told there is nothing that can be done, but this one example, like the young man in Coral Springs, shows there are effective solutions. These laws work.

As so many Americans know, there is no shortage of ideas to stop preventable gun violence. There is only a shortage of courage. There is only a dearth of will.

For too long, Congress has been complicit. Congress has blood on its hands if it continues to fail in meeting this basic responsibility to keep Americans safer than they are now.

Almost every community has been affected by this national epidemic of gun violence. Massacres in El Paso and Dayton within a 24-hour period left 31 dead. Before Congress returned from its recess, a shooter in Odessa, TX, killed another seven. Communities are forever changed by these events. The fear that is engendered and the trauma of these shootings affects a community and tears it apart in ways that take years to recover from it.

Like my colleagues from Connecticut in the House and in the Senate, I will

live forever with the sights and sounds of that day in Sandy Hook, the cries of grief in that afternoon and afterward, when 26 beautiful people—6 great educators and 20 young children—were killed. I was at the firehouse where parents went to find out if their children were dead or alive. They found out by waiting as the children arrived—but not all of the children. That is how the parents who lost their children found out.

Those anguished cries, the sobbing, the grief have been repeated 2,226 times since in mass shootings. They have left 2,000 communities grieving, but more than those mass shootings, there are the deaths—every day, 90 deaths; 36,000 Americans killed by gun violence every year. That is about 100 every day, and gun deaths are on the rise, not reducing. There were 39,773 gun deaths for 2017, the most recent year for which it is available. That is not even counting the physically wounded, those who escaped mass shootings physically unscathed but with lifelong mental scars, and the thousands of friends and family members of victims and near-victims whose lives are forever altered by these incidents of gun violence.

Despite this unconscionable loss of life, Congress has done nothing, complicit in the mass shootings but also in the suicides and domestic violence.

Lori Jackson's death in Connecticut was at the hand of her estranged husband. Her children were traumatized losing their mother, and her parents became active advocates—courageous and strong advocates for a change in the law.

We have an obligation to act regardless of whatever the President says or does. There is nothing in the Constitution that says the U.S. Senate can act only if the President commits to signing some law. There is nothing in the Constitution that says we can act only if the President endorses a specific measure. We have that duty, independent of the President. We have a constitutional duty. We have already ceded too much of our power in too many areas. We cannot, we need not, we must not cede that independent obligation we have to act and act now.

Medical research tells us that 80 percent of the perpetrators of mass violence exhibit clear signs that they are going to carry out an attack, often including explicit threats of violence. The Parkland shooter is one of the latest examples. In all of those jurisdictions that have extreme risk protection order statutes, the experience is that they work.

I have introduced Jamie's Law that would provide for background checks on ammunition purchases—there should be universal background checks on purchases—in honor of Fred Guttenberg's daughter, Jaime. I have supported a ghost gun statute that would take account of the need to act on weapons that are literally made in people's homes using kits like the one

used by the Rancho Tehama gunman. They are referred to as "ghost guns" because they possess no serial number or any kind of traceable identification or registration. One scholar estimates that at least hundreds of thousands of unmarked receivers already have been sold in the United States.

Of course, we need an assault weapons ban. There are some weapons that no one should ever be able to use as they were in El Paso, Dayton, Las Vegas, Parkland, Orlando, Newtown, Aurora, Columbine. These tragedies alone account for 211 people lost to gun violence.

Assault weapons are literally weapons of war. Assault-style weapons can fire hundreds of rounds in a minute, and until recently they could be converted to automatic weapons. A recent study found that when assault-style weapons are used with high-capacity magazines, 155,000 more people are shot and 47 percent more are killed than in other instances.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to join dozens of my colleagues in introducing the Assault Weapons Ban of 2019, making the sale, manufacture, transport, and importation of 205 specific military-style assault weapons, by name as well as by a number of features and modifications, illegal—banned under our law.

I was pleased, also with my colleague CHRIS MURPHY, to introduce a safe storage law named after Ethan Song of Guilford, CT, who was killed while playing with a weapon in his friend's home. This legislation would enact Federal requirements for safe storage, penalties for violators, and a grant program to help States establish their own safe storage law.

The SECURE Firearms Storage Act would require firearms importers, manufacturers, and dealers to safely store their inventory and, as well, individual gun owners to use standards that in fact have been endorsed by the NRA. Safely securing firearms prevents theft and unintended use of lawfully acquired and possessed owned guns.

In 2016, alone, 238,000 firearms were reported stolen in the United States. These kinds of laws are championed by Michael and Kristin Song because they know these laws work. Their child, their young son, was accidentally killed by a gun stored in a friend's closet, accessible to those two teens without any impediment. In many cases, including Sandy Hook, safe gun storage could have prevented mountains of grief and heartache and a river of tears. Gun owners who fail to safely store or secure their firearms must be held accountable, as this law would do in honor of Ethan Song.

Of course, high-capacity magazines—which is to say magazines that can fire more than 10 rounds—to help stop mass shootings should be banned as well.

There are other measures—and my colleagues have talked about them—to keep gun dealers honest, to prevent hate crimes, to stop domestic and gen-

der-based violence, to require development of smart gun technology. That is why also, on smart gun technology, with Senator MURPHY, I introduced the SAFETY Act, which would encourage manufactures to develop and consumers to purchase smart gun technology.

Smart gun technology is actually one that I championed as attorney general. A number of gun manufacturers—at least one agreed to implement it, and he was nearly drummed out of business by other gun manufacturers at the time.

The firearm industry and responsible gun owners should already be embracing innovations that have been developed, inventions that are feasible, smart gun technology that has already created locks that prevent accidental shootings and fingerprint scans that can disable firearms for anyone but their lawful owners. We need to harness the power of American innovation and create smarter, safer firearms.

There is no reason to wait another day before passing these laws. We know there is a political movement that is gaining strength from groups like Moms Demand Action, Everytown for Gun Safety, Students Demand Action, Brady, Giffords, the Coalition Against Gun Violence, the Connecticut Coalition, the New Town Action Alliance, and Sandy Hook Promise. So many of these organizations are coming together to create a seismic change, a tectonic groundswell of support. That is the reason we are here tonight and the reason the President is even talking about a measure or set of measures that will help prevent gun violence.

We can do this. We can pass this measure. The President can stand up to the gun lobby and the NRA. The Republican leadership has it within their power to seize this moment made possible by the American public expecting and demanding that we act and saying to us: Enough is enough. Truly, enough is enough.

On December 14, 2012, I pledged that I would do everything I could do to make sure no more parents have to bury their children, as did those courageous and strong families in Newtown who have come to us asking for action, as have survivors and loved ones from countless other families. No other parent should have to bury children as a result of preventable gun violence. I have fought as long and as hard as I know how, and I will continue because we are not going away. We are not giving up. Nothing could persuade me to break that pledge.

I have been proud to stand with my colleague CHRIS MURPHY in our partnership as a team that has brought together so many of our colleagues who are speaking tonight. The only question before us now is, How long will it take? How many more children and lives will be lost? How many more communities have to be added to that dreaded list of mass shootings? How many more suicides, including veteran

suicides—20 every day, not all from gun violence but many of them due to firearms. How many more grieving families? How many more lives lost needlessly and senselessly? I thank my colleagues for being here tonight. We all hope the answer is fewer. We all hope that lives will be saved, as many lives as possible, as quickly as possible. That is why I have been willing to engage in discussions with the White House, as well as with my colleagues, along with my colleague CHRIS MURPHY and others who are here—Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY. That is why we have spared no effort and left no stone unturned.

How many more days will go by before we fulfill our duty? The answer really should be “none.” We all have an obligation to fulfill our constitutional duty as a Congress to act—whether or not the President does. But to the President and to the Republican leadership, my message is this: Please, please work it out. Please lead. Lead or get out of the way. Please lead or at least give us a vote on H.R. 8, on universal background checks, on emergency risk protection, on commonsense steps that we know work. These measures work. They save lives.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, our country demands that we take action to confront the crisis of gun violence. One hundred people die from gun violence in our country every single day. If 100 people died every day because of any other single cause, even Republicans would call it an epidemic and demand that we do something about it.

Think about it. The lives of 100 men, women, and children are cut tragically short by someone using a firearm every single day in our country. Some of them are killed sitting in church, others while shopping for school supplies, and others while sitting in their classrooms. Some are targeted because they are Latino, Jewish, Muslim, Black, gay, or transgender. Some are killed for reasons we will never know.

Victims of gun violence come from all walks of life and different circumstances, but they were all struck down by someone with a firearm—firearms which in many cases were purchased legally because we have gaping loopholes in our gun safety laws; firearms which, even when purchased legally, too often end up in the hands of someone who has absolutely no business owning a gun.

There are a lot of steps Congress can take—and my colleague just articulated some of them—to combat the crisis of gun violence in our country. We can ban assault weapons. We can ban high-capacity magazines. We can look at requiring gun licensing at the national level.

Each of these steps would make a major difference in combating gun violence, but I acknowledge that they would be controversial and are un-

likely to pass, to become law, in the current Congress. But there is one step the Senate can take right now to confront the gun violence epidemic in our country. The Senate can take up and pass H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, which passed the House nearly 7 months ago.

This legislation passed with a strong bipartisan vote to close the loopholes in our background check system. It would require checks not just for firearms purchased from licensed dealers but also from unlicensed individuals at gun shows, between friends, and between most unrelated people. Some people say that will not do much and that it will just be a drop in the bucket, but when that bucket is overflowing, as it is now, with the blood of innocent people, anything we do will help curb this epidemic.

At a time when our country is deeply divided on so many issues, it is noteworthy that 90 percent of Americans support universal background checks—90 percent. The American public knows a sensible gun safety bill when they see one, even if too many Members of Congress remain blind.

Sensible gun safety laws work. I know that because Hawaii, which has some of the most restrictive gun laws on the books, is, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the State with the lowest rate of death by firearms in the Nation. Anyone in Hawaii wanting to buy a gun, whether from a licensed dealer or private seller, must apply for a permit in their county, and they cannot receive a permit unless they pass a background check. The permit applicant has to sign a waiver allowing the county to access their mental health records, and, of course, there is a check of the Federal National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. If they fail a background check, they can't purchase a gun. They are reported to law enforcement and prosecuting officials in the State in case they try again to purchase a gun.

Being this careful about who can own a gun has resulted in Hawaii being the most gun-safe State in the country. In Hawaii, the CDC reported 2.5 firearm deaths per 100,000 people for 2017, the most recently available data. Compare that to Texas, with 12.4 deaths per 100,000; or Kentucky, with 16.2 deaths; or, sadly, Alabama, with 22.9 deaths per 100,000 people. Of course, there are many factors at play in these statistics, but we can't deny that being more careful about who gets to own a gun is a contributing factor. It is common sense.

To be clear, Hawaii is not a State devoid of guns. We have nearly as many guns as we do people. Hunting is one of the most popular outdoor activities in Hawaii. Some hunting seasons in our State are year-round. We have a number of shooting ranges and gun clubs in our State, and both they and our hunting opportunities are important drivers of Hawaii's tourism economy.

Clearly, gun safety, gun ownership, and hunting are compatible. Hawaii is

showing the way. So knowing that we can balance commonsense gun safety laws with responsible gun ownership, as we do in Hawaii, we are left with a few simple questions. Why hasn't the Senate passed H.R. 8, a bill that would expand background checks for gun purchases? Why has the Senate let this House-passed bill languish for 200 days? Why is the Senate failing the American people?

In normal times, we would have a majority leader who would rush to pass a law favored by 90 percent of the people of our country. In normal times, we would be anxious to restrict firearms ownership to those who can pass a background check, just as we are anxious to ban flavored e-cigarettes that target children with addictive products. But these are not normal times. In these times, we have a majority leader who is sitting around waiting for Donald Trump to tell him what to do or doing the bidding of the NRA.

Instead of waiting around for the erratic, inconsistent, always-changing-his-mind Donald Trump to make up his mind—we should live so long—the majority leader should take action. It is time for the Senate to reassert its role as a separate branch of government, stand up to the NRA, and pass H.R. 8. It has been 200 days. One hundred people a day die in our country by firearms. Do the math. That is 2,000 firearm deaths since the House passed the bill.

It is way past time for the Senate to do something, but as we wait for the majority leader and the President to summon the fortitude to act, we are treated to a familiar refrain from the NRA and their allies in Congress. You have heard it before. “Guns don't kill people; people kill people.” Well, a person with a gun killed 58 people at a music festival in Las Vegas. A person with a gun killed 49 people at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. A person with a gun killed 32 people at Virginia Tech. A person with a gun killed 27 people, including little children, at Sandy Hook Elementary. A person with a gun killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. A person with a gun killed 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. A person with a gun killed 26 people at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX. A person with a gun killed nine people at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC.

Since the beginning of August, a total of 113 people have been killed in mass shootings across the country, including incidents where a person with a gun killed 22 people at a Walmart in El Paso, a person with a gun killed 9 people outside a bar in Dayton, OH, and a person with a gun killed 7 people in a shooting spree across Odessa-Midland, TX.

Obviously, people with guns kill people.

It is a sad day in our country when elementary school children have to

practice drills in how to escape a masked shooter. Our country's continuing tragedy of these deaths has resulted in an entire industry of companies that come to schools and tell the schools: We can build you a safe school. We could end up with citadels for schools instead of the places of learning they should be. That is what is happening in our country.

It is past time to retire the NRA's old canard that "guns don't kill; it is people that kill." It is people with guns who kill people. It is time for us to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today to once again call for this body to act on commonsense gun safety legislation. Time and again we have witnessed unfathomable carnage at the hands of assault-style rifles and high-capacity magazines. It is a horror movie we have seen over and over.

As parents bury children, as infants lose parents, as America grieves the senseless loss of life, the NRA just tightens its grip on the President and the majority leader.

I am heartened by the grassroots movement that has grown across our Nation in recent years, and, likewise, I am encouraged by the many polls indicating that Americans overwhelmingly want action.

Americans are tired of having their voices drowned out by the NRA. They are tired of a Congress that fears NRA attack ads more than the next mass shooting, and they are tired of being told time and again that this is a mental health problem or a violent video game problem when we know it is a gun problem. It is time for real action in the Senate.

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed universal background checks for every gun sale—the kind of measure that would have stopped the shooter in Midland, TX, from bypassing a criminal background check if it had been a law.

Just last week, the House Judiciary Committee passed the Keep Americans Safe Act, my legislation to limit the sale of ammunition to no more than 10 rounds. We know that a magazine that holds 30 or 60 or even 100 rounds of ammunition, like the Dayton shooter's did, is not for hunting or self-defense or protecting your home. High-capacity magazines are designed for one thing, and that is high-capacity killing.

It is true that no single law is going to prevent all gun deaths. It is also true that we can prevent some gun deaths, and reducing magazine size is a proven way to do so.

What will it take for the majority leader to take action? I am not the only one asking this question. Indeed, on September 3, the Washington Post published an editorial calling on the majority leader to act. They asked: "Would any volume of bloodshed convince the Kentucky Republican that Congress faces a moral imperative to act?"

Alongside their call for action, the Post also published a staggering list of names—names of fellow Americans who have lost their lives in mass shootings, many involving high-capacity ammunition. I will read as many of these names as I can in my allotted time today: Cassie Bernall, Steven Curnow, Corey DePooter, Kelly Fleming, Matthew Kechter, Daniel Mauser, Daniel Rohrbough, William "Dave" Sanders, Rachel Scott, Isaiah Shoels, John Tomlin, Lauren Townsend, Kyle Velasquez, Jennifer Bragg Capobianco, Janice Hagerty, Louis "Sandy" Javelle, Rose Manfredi, Paul Marceau, Cheryl Troy, Craig Wood, Derrick Brun, Dwayne Lewis, Chase Lussier, Daryl Lussier, Neva Rogers, Chanelle Rosebear, Michelle Sigana, Thurlene Stillday, Alicia White, Naomi Ebersol, Marian Stoltzfus Fisher, Lena Zook Miller, Mary Liz Miller, Anna Mae Stoltzfus, Ross Abdallah Alameddine, Christopher James Bishop, Brian Bluhm, Ryan Clark, Austin Cloyd, Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, Daniel Perez Cueva, Kevin Granata, Matthew G. Gwaltney, Caitlin Hammaren, Jeremy Herbstritt, Rachael Elizabeth Hill, Emily Hilscher, Jarrett Lane, Matthew J. La Porte, Henry Lee, Liviu Librescu, G.V. Loganathan, Partahi Lumbantoruan, Lauren McCain, Daniel O'Neil, Juan Ramon Ortiz, Minal Panchal, Erin Peterson, Michael Pohle, Julia Pryde, Mary Read, Reema Samaha, Waleed Shaalan, Leslie Sherman, Maxine Turner, Nicole R. White, Beverly Flynn, Janet Jorgensen, Gary Joy, John McDonald, Gary Scharf, Angie Schuster, Dianne Trent, Maggie Webb, Parveen Ali, Almir Alves, Marc Henry Bernard, Maria Sonia Bernard, Hong Xiu Mao, Jiang Ling, Layla Khalil, Roberta King, Lan Ho, Li Guo, Dolores Yigal, Maria Zobniw, Michael Grant Cahill, Libardo Eduardo Caraveo, Justin Michael DeCrow, John Gaffaney, Frederick Greene, Jason Dean Hunt, Amy S. Krueger, Aaron Thomas Nemelka, Michael S. Pearson, Russell Seager, Francheska Velez, Juanita L. Warman, Kham See Xiong, Christina Taylor Green, Dorothy Morris, John M. Roll, Phyllis Schneck, Dorwan Stoddard, Gabriel Zimmerman, Demetrius Hewlin, Russell King, Jr., Daniel Parmertor, Tshering Rinzing Bhutia, Doris Chibuko, Sonam Choedon, Grace Eunhea Kim, Katleen Ping, Judith O. Seymour, Lydia Sim, Jonathan Blunk, A.J. Boik, Jesse Childress, Gordon Cowden, Jessica Ghawi, John Thomas Larimer, Matthew McQuinn, Micayla Medek, Veronica Moser-Sullivan, Alex Matthew Sullivan, Alexander Teves, Rebecca Ann Wingo, Satwant Singh Kaleka, Suveg Singh Khattra, Paramjit Kaur, Prakash Singh, Ranjit Singh, Sita Singh, Charlotte Bacon, Daniel Barden, Rachel D'Avino, Olivia Engel, Josephine Gay, Dylan Hockley, Dawn Hochsprung, Madeleine F. Hsu, Catherine V. Hubbard, Chase Kowalski, Jesse Lewis, Ana G. Marquez-Greene, James Mattioli, Grace McDonnell,

Anne Marie Murphy, Emilie Parker, Jack Pinto, Noah Pozner, Caroline Previdi, Jessica Rekos, Avielle Richman, Lauren Russeau, Mary Sherlach, Victoria Soto, Benjamin Wheeler, Allison Wyatt.

My time is almost up, but I haven't even reached the names of those who died after Newtown nearly 7 years ago.

I will close with one last point. It is heartbreaking to know that some of the people on this list might be alive today if we only had the courage to pass the Keep Americans Safe Act or to establish universal background checks or a new assault weapons ban. It is just as heartbreaking to know that more names of more sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues will end up on this list in the days ahead should the Senate continue to fail to act. That is the truth. That is the truth.

Every day without action is another closer to America's next mass shooting. The time to save lives is now.

I ask unanimous consent that the Washington Post's entire list of mass shooting victims be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 3, 2019]

HOW MANY MORE NAMES WILL BE ADDED TO THE LIST BEFORE MITCH MCCONNELL ACTS ON GUNS?

(By the Editorial Board)

Rodolfo Julio Arco, 57; Kameron Karlless Brown, 30; Raul Garcia, 35; Mary Granados, 29; Joseph Griffith, 40; Lellah Hernandez, 15; Edwin Peregrino, 25.

Add those seven individuals, randomly slaughtered Saturday by a shooter in the West Texas cities of Midland and Odessa, to the toll of those lost to America's gun insanity. And then pose this question:

What if there was a mass shooting in the United States not once or twice or four or six times monthly, but every single day, a big one, the kind that electrifies social media and squats for days on Page 1—would that be enough to move Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell from his insistent inertia on gun safety? Would any volume of bloodshed convince the Kentucky Republican that Congress faces a moral imperative to act? Thirty-eight people were slain in three such shootings in August—in Dayton, Ohio, and El Paso, as well as West Texas—and still Senate Republicans and President Trump refuse to act.

The list below, far from comprehensive, is tragic, in part, because it is so far from inevitable. No, no single law would end gun violence. But there are reasonable, obvious measures that would help.

For example: Ban the sale of military-grade assault weapons. Unneeded by civilians, they are a blight on the nation, their ready availability a national disgrace. Eliminating them would slow the growth of this list. It would save lives.

April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.: Cassie Bernall, 17; Steven Curnow, 14; Corey DePooter, 17; Kelly Fleming, 16; Matthew Kechter, 16; Daniel Mauser, 15; Daniel Rohrbough, 15; William "Dave" Sanders, 47; Rachel Scott, 17; Isaiah Shoels, 18; John Tomlin, 16; Lauren Townsend, 18; Kyle Velasquez, 16.

Dec. 26, 2000, at Edgewater Technology in Wakefield, Mass.: Jennifer Bragg

Feb. 15, 2019, at the Henry Pratt Co. in Aurora, Ill.: Russell Beyer, 47; Vicente Juarez, 54; Clayton Parks, 32; Josh Pinkard, 37; Trevor Wehner, 21.

May 31, 2019, at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, in Virginia Beach: LaQuita C. Brown, 39; Ryan Keith Cox, 50; Tara Welch Gallagher, 39; Mary Louise Gayle, 65; Alexander Mikhail Gusev, 35; Joshua O. Hardy, 52; Michelle “Missy” Langer, 60; Richard H. Nettleton, 65; Katherine A. Nixon, 42; Christopher Kelly Rapp, 54; Herbert “Bert” Snelling, 57; Robert “Bobby” Williams, 72.

July 28, 2019, at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in California: Trevor Deon Irby, 25; Stephen Romero, 6; Keyla Salazar, 13.

Aug. 3, 2019, at a Walmart Supercenter in El Paso: Andre Anchondo, 24; Jordan Anchondo, 25; Arturo Benavides, 60; Leo Campos, 41; Angelina Englisbee, 86; Maria Flores, 77; Raul Flores, 83; Jorge Calvillo Garcia, 61; Adolfo Cerros Hernández, 68; Maribel Hernández, 56; Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, 66; David Johnson, 63; Luis Juarez, 90; Maria Eugenia Legarreta, 58; Ivan Filiberto Manzano, 45; Gloria Irma Márquez, 61; Elsa Mendoza, 57; Margie Reckard, 63; Sara Esther Regalado, 66; Javier Amir Rodriguez, 15; Teresa Sanchez, 82; Juan de Dios Velázquez, 77.

Aug. 4, 2019, at the Oregon Historic District in Dayton, Ohio: Megan K. Betts, 22; Monica E. Brickhouse, 39; Nicholas P. Cumer, 25; Derrick R. Fudge, 57; Thomas J. McNichols, 25; Lois L. Oglesby, 27; Saeed Saleh, 38; Logan M. Turner, 30; Beatrice N. Warren-Curtis, 36.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I am rising to speak tonight as a Senator that comes from a passionate Second Amendment State. The citizens of my home State of Oregon value their guns for collecting, for target practice, for personal defense, and, certainly, for hunting. But it is also a State where citizens have said they do not want individuals who are deeply disturbed or individuals who have felony backgrounds to get ahold of guns because we have a responsibility to make sure that guns don't end up in the wrong hands and that guns are not abused.

Our State then proceeded to do a series of things to strengthen a background check system. It was in the year 2000 that the citizens drew a ballot measure supported by almost 62 percent of the State that chose to close the gun show loophole that previously had allowed purchasers to buy guns at gun shows without completing a background check, making a background check in gun stores essentially irrelevant.

It was in 2015 that the citizens of Oregon closed the Craig's List loophole, and it was in the year 2018 when they closed through the legislature the “boyfriend” loophole, saying that if an individual had a restraining order against them or a stalking conviction,

they shouldn't have the ability to buy a gun in our State.

Now, I do a lot of townhalls. I do one in every county every year. At the end of this year, I am hitting about 400 townhalls since the time I have been in the Senate. Of the 36 counties I go to each year, 22 of them would be what you would describe politically as being very red counties, and gun violence comes up all the time. Yet even in those conservative red counties, people are incredibly supportive of having a background check system nationally like Oregon has created, because right now in Oregon it is kind of a big hole if somebody just ignores a background check and goes across the border to another State to buy guns.

Then we have the challenges of straw buyers, and we need to have rigorous enforcement of that. It is only with a national system that this works.

Every year, thousands of people go to more than 4,000 gun shows held across America, and they purchase between 4 to 9 percent of all the annual firearms that are sold in America at these events. Because gun shows in most States don't require background checks, people who couldn't pass a background check simply can go and acquire their weapon in that fashion.

For this reason, guns purchased at gun shows are disproportionately the ones that are used in criminal activities. The same is true for individuals purchasing guns in other States through websites like Craig's List. Just like gun show purchasers, individuals purchasing firearms online from private sellers are exempt from background checks in all but 12 States and the District of Columbia.

So, nationally, there is powerful support for a solid background check system that doesn't have loopholes that just make it irrelevant—closing of the loophole for gun shows, closing the loophole for Craig's List, and closing the loophole for stalkers and domestic abusers.

Speaking of domestic abusers, in just an average week, about 17 women—about 17 women—are fatally shot by former or current romantic partners.

As we talk about the challenge with guns and violent deaths in America, we have the names of various cities ringing in our ears—cities like Dayton, 9 dead and 27 wounded; El Paso, 22 dead and 24 wounded; Odessa and Midland, 7 dead and 21 wounded. But recognize this: While those extra traumatic events capture the headlines, there is a mass shooting in America more than once per day. As of September 1 of this year, which was the 244th day of the year, there have been 283 mass shootings.

What is a mass shooting? It is a situation in which more than four people are hit by gunfire.

So it is time to act. Right now, this is the moment that demands action because 92 percent of Americans favor a background check for all gun sales. We owe it to Americans to support back-

ground checks for all gun sales and to actually act. We owe it to our children, who are now scared of going to school and who are forced to practice hiding from a crazed murderer in active shooting drills. We owe it to our teachers, who are prepared to put their lives on the line for their students in case of an emergency. And we owe it to the families of the countless Americans who have lost their lives to gun violence—to the mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers, and the loved ones of those who are lost. They have an unhealable pain.

One of those individuals, Fred Guttenberg, is here tonight. On Valentine's Day 2018, Fred's 14-year-old daughter, Jamie Guttenberg was gunned down at her school in Parkland, FL. Jamie was, in her father's words, “tough as nails,” but also “silly, funny, energetic . . . wherever she went, she was the energy in the room.”

She wanted to be a pediatric physical therapist and work with children to make their lives better. She was a 14-year-old with her whole life ahead of her. She was a competitive dancer. She was a freshman in high school with so many life chapters to be written.

But she didn't get to write those chapters—chapters having fun with her friends, chapters getting stressed out by back-to-school homework or planning for the prom or making plans for the future or deciding what path to go in life and where to attend school. All of it was stolen from her and stolen from her family.

Her father Fred has said:

“Everybody thinks this gets easier as time goes on. It actually doesn't. It gets harder, because every day there's just going to be a new reminder of what you lost.”

She was the second to the last to be shot. She was shot in the spine running away from the shooter. Fred notes that it was his daughter, but it could have been your daughter. It could have been your son. It could have been the child of any one of us.

(Mr. BARRASSO assumes the Chair.)

Mr. President, we are here in the Chamber to help make life better. We are here to keep Americans safe, but we are doing nothing, and doing nothing with 90-plus percent of America crying out and saying: Have the guts to act.

Mr. President, let's have the guts to act. Let's have the guts to put the bill here on the floor. The House passed H.R. 8, the basic background check bill. We are not here to do the interests of big corporations. We are not here to do the interests of special interests. Ninety-plus percent of Americans say to act on the basics of doing a background check when people buy a gun, no matter where they buy it.

Let's act. Let's hold a debate. Let's actually talk to each other. Let's make the arguments pro and con. Let's hear why we shouldn't listen to the vast majority of Americans. It is the vast majority of Democrats, it is the vast majority of Independents, and it is the

vast majority of Republicans, with virtually no difference in the level of support between the Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. All of America is saying that background checks make sense.

The American people deserve safety in their homes, workplaces, schools, and their communities, but all I have heard is a majority leader who says that he will only allow a bill on the floor when the President says it is OK.

Well, the last time I checked the Constitution, it is our responsibility here in the Senate and House to act, not to hide behind the skirts of the President. This President, we know, has been spineless—absolutely spineless. One call from a special interest group, one meeting with the NRA, and suddenly his conviction dissipates like light rain on hot asphalt.

Are we going to abdicate our responsibility to legislate to a spineless President? It is not his role to decide what bills are passed in this country. It is our responsibility here in the Senate. I believe that if Democrats and Republicans come together and honor their responsibility to act and pass the bill, the President will be in the Oval Office signing it because all of America is crying out for him to do so.

It has been a long time since the bill was passed in the House. It has been 202 days. That is 202 opportunities that we have had to debate the House bill and take a vote on it. It has been 202 opportunities in which the leadership of this Chamber has failed the American people by refusing to have a debate on this floor.

When I came here, not long ago, virtually any Senator could get any issue before the Senate. Suddenly, we have a dictator in the Senate. The majority leader says only the bills that he wants will be considered and only the amendments that he wants will be considered on the floor of the Senate.

What happened to my Republican colleagues who believed in the right to amend and the right to legislate, who now yield to one individual in the Senate dictating what is considered in this august Chamber? We are not much of a legislative chamber if only one person can determine what is considered here on the floor of the Senate.

The American people are asking for better. Let's deliver much better. Let's consider H.R. 8. Let's get it on the floor. Let's debate and let's vote.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their indulgence this evening and those of you who help us keep this floor open.

I will make some longer remarks later this evening, but while we have a short break on the floor and await Senator BROWN, I want to say a word of appreciation to all of my colleagues who have decided to join us this evening on the floor.

This is my first appearance here to talk about the imperative of changing

the Nation's gun laws, recognizing that this number—100 Americans killed by guns every single day—is not inevitable. Almost every single one of these murders and suicides and accidental shootings is preventable if we make different choices here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Our purpose tonight is to try to bring some consistency of effort to a case that we have been making for a very long time. So I will be back here later this evening to walk through the case, as far as I see it, for universal background checks in particular but also for a host of other measures that are broadly popular amongst the American public.

One point I will make right now is that this issue is really unique in American politics today. It is not a controversial issue out in America. It is only controversial here inside the political process. In fact, there are very few matters in public life today that are, frankly, more controversial than this issue. When you go out and ask people if they support universal background checks, which is the measure that passed the House of Representatives by a 9-to-1 margin, they support universal background checks. There is almost nothing else in American politics today—I would endeavor to say there is nothing else in American politics today that is as popular as this measure; yet it has this reputation of being a third rail of political discourse here in Washington.

I would simply encourage my colleagues to get out there and have conversations with their constituents, to have conversations with members of their own parties, to have conversations with gun owners. You will find that there is a consistency of opinion at least on a large number of pieces of legislation that are before this body. At the top of that list are universal background checks. I have this conversation over and over and over again—and then I will leave the floor to Senator BROWN and return later—with the President's supporters, with supporters of the Second Amendment, and with members of the NRA in my State.

Of course, I have acquired a reputation of being a forceful and vocal advocate for stronger gun laws in this Nation, and the NRA often targets me in its advertisements and its emails. I will often be confronted by my constituents who will see me at a public event. They will come on a beeline over to me and start confronting me about my agenda to confiscate their weapons or to take away their guns. Of course, I try to disabuse them of that notion, and as soon as I can, I take the conversation to background checks.

I say: Listen, let me ask you a question. Do you think that everybody who is buying a gun in this country should have to go through a background check?

Almost invariably, the individual, who just moments ago was so

confrontational with me about the issue of guns—his defenses drop, and he says: Well, yes. Of course, I support that. Of course, everybody should get a background check before buying a gun.

I said: You got one, right?

He said: I got one. It was 3- or 4-minutes long. That is not what I am talking about. I object to all of the other things, but, of course, I want background checks.

Gun owners support background checks by an 80- to 90-percent margin. NRA members support it. Polls suggest that 75 to 80 percent of NRA members support background checks. This is just one of the least controversial issues that exists out there in the American public today.

We are going to have a conversation today about the efficacy of these measures, but we should remember that there are many times when we get deluded into believing something is much more of a vexing political conversation than it truly is, and background checks are on that agenda.

At this point, I yield the floor, and I will come back down later for longer remarks. I am glad to be joined this evening by Senator BROWN from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I am also joined by Senator CASEY, of Pennsylvania, who has been a leader as Senator MURPHY has been. We look to Senator MURPHY every day in this body because he has seen this tragedy up close in the most vivid, awful ways. We appreciate how he has represented victims and people who might end up being victims. If we do this right, they won't end up being victims. His leadership has really mattered.

On a Sunday morning 6 weeks ago, Connie and I woke up, checked our iPhones, and immediately called out to each other and said: Oh, my gosh. Look what has happened in Dayton.

It was the first Saturday night in August. At 1 o'clock that Sunday morning, a local man with an assault weapon walked into the Oregon District in Dayton, as people were out having fun that night, and just opened fired. He killed his sister, and he killed eight others. He wounded more than 20. In the space of 32 seconds, he had fired 41 bullets. It tells you the kind of gun he had. Heroically, six police officers descended on him. They shot him and killed him before he could walk into this nightclub where he would have probably killed 20 other people.

I called Mayor Nan Whaley that morning, probably at 8:30. It was pretty incredible. This happened at 1 o'clock in the morning. I called her at 8:30—7½ hours later. The first thing she said to me was that she had gotten emails and texts and calls—in her words—from several dozen mayors around the country who had either had to deal with this, as many had, or had had situations in which they had had gun violence and had just offered to help her in any way they could.

We know what happens. We know that every time there is gun violence—every time there is a mass shooting—the first thing the Republicans say is: My thoughts and prayers are with the victims.

How can you not agree with that? We all think that.

Then they say “Now is not the time to talk about it” as if they ever want to talk about it.

Then they say: You know, we have to do something about mental health in this country.

Ask Senator CASEY about his efforts on Medicaid and my efforts on Medicaid. The people who sit on this side of the aisle—where the Republicans sit here—are the ones who stood a year ago at every one of these desks, all of the Senators having their health insurance paid for by the government, paid for by taxpayers, and tried to take away health insurance for millions and millions of Americans.

Senator CASEY told me today that 1.1 million people in Pennsylvania now have health insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. In my State, where my daughter Elizabeth Brown is a councilperson in Columbus, 900,000 people have insurance because of that. On this side of the aisle, every single Senator except for three—one of whom has passed away—voted to take away the insurance, to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Then they have the gall to say we have to do more on mental health. If that had passed—if they had repealed the Affordable Care Act—hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians and Ohioans wouldn't have had the mental health services they are getting now. So spare me that whining. Spare me that “oh, we want to take care of mental health issues.” No, they don't. They just want to do the NRA's bidding.

Look down this aisle. Look down this hall. Right down this hall is Senator MCCONNELL's office. I am not going to say that gun lobbyists walk down that hall and walk into his office and hand him money. I don't think they do that. Yet I do know that until we break the addiction that Donald Trump and MITCH MCCONNELL and most of the Republicans—most of the people in this body—have to gun lobby money, campaign contributions, we will never solve this problem.

We heard that. That is what we heard the first day in Dayton. My wife and I drove to Dayton that afternoon. The President came to Dayton 2 days later. I joined President Trump at the bottom of Air Force One. As he got off the plane, I stood with Mayor Whaley.

We both looked President Trump in the eye and said: Mr. President, I hope you will call Senator MCCONNELL and ask him to bring the Senate back.

This was in early August. The Senate was out of session for 5 weeks.

I hope you will ask Senator MCCONNELL to bring the Senate back into session and pass the House bill that sets up something very simple—universal background checks.

As Senator MURPHY said, 90 percent of the American public supports background checks. You know, the only people who don't support background checks are professional lobbyists for the NRA and the people who sit over here. Other than that, it is over 90 percent. A majority of gun owners in Ohio support universal background checks. A majority of Republicans support universal background checks. A majority of NRA members in Ohio support universal background checks. The only people who don't are Members of this body and that tiny group of NRA professional lobbyists. It is not NRA members who are stopping background checks from passing. It is that narrow group of millionaire, NRA, highly paid, professional lobbyists. That is why we can't pass it here. That is what we have had happen.

Mayor Nan Whaley and I asked President Trump to pass it, and he said: I am going to do big things. We are going to do big things and fix this.

Then we saw him later at the hospital. President Trump went around the hospital with the First Lady. They were kind and generous and empathetic, I believe, with the patients who were there who had been injured and with their family members. Then we met the police officers—the six heroic police officers. We thanked them profusely—all of us—for their courage in saving lives.

Then we walked out of the room, the Governor and the other Senator from Ohio and the local Congressman and the mayor, and he said: We are going to have the biggest awards ever. We are going to give them the biggest Presidential medals ever made for these heroes.

I said: That is really good, Mr. President, but do you know what they would really like? What they would really like is for us to pass background checks and make their jobs a little easier, so when they walk in, they are not ambushed by people with illegal guns.

The President said he was going to do something, then he talked to the NRA, and then he talked to the gun lobby. It is the same story.

Again, when I open this door and look down the hall, I don't expect to see—well, it is late in the day, but I don't expect to see gun lobbyists lining up handing MITCH MCCONNELL money. It is illegal. I don't think he does stuff like that, take money in this body.

I do know, again, that until we break the addiction, until the voters or the Congress or somehow we break the addiction to gun lobby money that MITCH MCCONNELL and Donald Trump and the majority party have, we can't solve this.

This is just too important. For every mass shooting that makes a headline, there are so many other Americans whose lives are taken by gun violence but don't get the same attention. This has to end.

No more stigmatizing people with mental illness. We should stop stigma-

tizing people with mental illness. Congress should stop taking orders from the NRA and start acting to keep people safe.

I will close with this before Senator CASEY speaks: The shooting was at 1 in the morning on a Sunday. Sunday night, people gathered in the Oregon District—heartbroken people, relatives, friends, community people, just people who were just shellshocked and felt awful about what happened to their city and to those victims—gathered in the Oregon District in Dayton. The Governor was there, and the mayor was up front, and one or two people started yelling: Do something. Do something. Then more and more people joined in, and they started chanting: Do something. Do something.

They were chanting it to local officials. They were chanting it so the Governor heard it and maybe even some State legislators in Ohio heard it. They were shouting loud enough that in this body we should hear that shout to do something.

It starts by taking the bill that passed the House down the hall, bringing it to the Senate floor, debating it, voting on it, passing strong, reasonable background checks. That is the step we need to take. There is simply no excuse for not doing it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight to speak about the issue that has been consuming a lot of our time, and appropriately so, not only tonight but for many weeks, since some of the tragedies of this summer, starting in early August and continuing but also an issue that has occupied the time of the American people over the course of not just weeks or months but years and even decades now.

I thank our colleague from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, for organizing this time to bring Members of the Senate together.

I thank my colleague from Ohio, Senator BROWN, the senior Senator, for his words tonight, his passion about this issue, and his commitment to change. That should be a commitment that is shared by everyone here, but we will be talking about what has not happened here tonight as much as what has happened.

When I think about this issue, the issue of gun violence, which is an epidemic, it is also uniquely an American problem. No other country has this problem. In fact, America didn't have this problem for all of its history. Depending on where you start the clock, it is years old, if not a lot longer than that.

When I think about the issue and think about the debates we are having, sometimes we start with the names of communities, and we, unfortunately, have them memorized. So many communities are known for so much—so much that is positive about their culture, about their history, and about

their future, and the dynamism of some of our great communities.

There are some communities that have all that but also now have attached to their history—I hope not forever but certainly for a period of time—that that city, that community, was a place where an act of gun violence occurred that was of such a scale that the American people focused on that one community for a sustained period of time because of a mass shooting.

Of course, we should be remembering all of the examples on a night like tonight, where it doesn't reach the level of a mass shooting by way of victims or carnage but also as a place we should remember when one person dies on a dark street in the middle of the night or a child is injured or in fact killed, but it may not be counted as a mass shooting.

You know all the names now. Just this summer we have added several more, as everyone knows. I will not go through all the events—these horrific, tragic events—but it is important to remember the names of the communities, and then, of course, I want to talk about some of the people.

Whether it is El Paso or Dayton or Odessa-Midland—many years ago, it was Columbine, it was Newtown, CT, Virginia Tech, Las Vegas, Parkland, Aurora, CO, Orlando, and, more recently, Gilroy, CA, and Virginia Beach. I have left a lot off. That is just a handful in the last number of years.

So we think about this issue in terms of those who were lost or those whose lives have been irreparably damaged, sometimes irreparably damaged, permanently damaged because of the injury—an injury they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Of course, you don't have to be physically injured to sustain an injury by way of the impact on your psyche. I can't even imagine, can't even begin to imagine, nor can most people imagine the horror of being anywhere near a mass shooting.

Tonight we remember those victims and their families and those communities. We also remember the individual people who were lost, the individual families who were affected—mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters, children. In so many of these instances, children are directly affected or indirectly, but that indirect affect means they lost a parent or they lost a sibling or they lost something in that moment that they will be permanently scarred by for the rest of their lives.

I want to focus on two groups of people tonight. We could spend hours talking about so many Americans. One will be parochial in the sense that it is about my home State of Pennsylvania, and the other will be at the other end of the age scale about children who were lost in December of 2012.

I will start with the most recent for Pennsylvania. We have had, obviously, example after example—too many to

count, hundreds and hundreds—over the last couple of years where someone was killed or injured.

We, thankfully, have not had multiple mass shootings, but just a couple of weeks ago in the city of Philadelphia, on about the same day that a guy was gunned down in Philadelphia, there was a standoff in a Philadelphia neighborhood, where one gunman—because of the power of his weapon and because of the advantage he had of being behind closed doors—was able to hold off part of a police force because he was shooting indiscriminately with a high-powered weapon.

Thankfully, those six police officers who were injured—the injuries turned out to not be serious, and the police officers were released virtually on the same day. So we were blessed on that day.

Right across the street, a very narrow street, there was a childcare center that could have been the scene of horrific carnage if it had gone another way. Thankfully, those children were safe in that childcare center that wasn't a block away. It wasn't a half a block away. It was barely yards and feet away. That childcare center was less than the width of this Chamber away from where that shooter was stationed.

I will start with folks who were worshipping in the Tree of Life synagogue on a Saturday in October of 2018. I will not go through all of the details, but I think everyone by now knows what happened there. It was the worst act of violence against the Jewish community in American history that we know of.

In this case, these were the victims. My wife Terese was kind enough to suggest to me that when you have a list or something you want to remember an event by, you should probably frame it or preserve it in some fashion. She was kind enough to help me get this framed.

What I am holding here—you can't see it from any distance—is just a framed card with names of the victims. I will just read what it says so you know what I am talking about.

This card came from a newspaper, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and the date is October 29, 2018. They put this on the front page of the paper. All it says is “Victims of the Synagogue Shooting,” and then it lists each individual and their ages: Joyce Fienberg, 75; Richard Gottfried, 65; Rose Mallinger, 97; Jerry Rabinowitz, 66; Cecil Rosenthal, 59; David Rosenthal, 54; Bernice Simon, 84; Sylvan Simon, 86; Daniel Stein, 71; Melvin Wax, 87; and Irving Younger, 69.

So this was a group of Pittsburghers worshipping on the Sabbath in a synagogue. They were lost on that day because a hate-filled person came into that synagogue, intent by way of things he said and intent by way of the weapons he had and the ammunition he had, intent on killing as many members of that congregation as possible—

so, basically, a congregation where the victims were ages 54 to 97.

That was one incident in my home State, and it seems like every State has a day like that where a community is torn apart.

Those folks were obviously at the other end of the age scale. How about folks a lot younger? This just happens to be a matted copy of a page in the Wall Street Journal from December of 2012 after the Newtown, CT, shooting that we all know, unfortunately, so much about—Sandy Hook Elementary School.

This is dated December 17, 2012. What the Wall Street Journal did was put a picture of each child with their name and their age and a little vignette about their young life.

I will not go through all of them tonight. I have referred to them in the past, and not every child had a picture ready at the time of this publication. These 20 children and 7 adults listed here are part of what we are talking about—the carnage that has enveloped our country over these last number of years.

I want to read their names tonight, and then I want to get to the legislation: Charlotte Bacon, 6; Daniel Barden, 7; Olivia Engel, 6; Josephine Gay, 7; Ana Marquez-Greene, 6; Catherine V. Hubbard, 6; Jesse Lewis, 6; Grace McDonnell, 7; Emilie Parker, 6; Noah Pozner, 6; Caroline Previdi, 6; Jessica Rekos, 6; Madeline F. Hsu, 6; Chase Kowalski 7; and James Mattioli, 6.

Then, there were several children who didn't have pictures at the time of this publication for the Wall Street Journal: Dylan Hockley, 6; Jack Pinto, 6; Avielle Richman, 6; Benjamin Wheeler, 6; and, Allison N. Wyatt, age 6.

When we talk about what we should do here and what we must do, we have to remember more than just a list of communities, which in a sense is about place, and it is about geography. We also have to remember those who were lost. I think we have to begin to ask ourselves some really fundamental questions, maybe in ways we don't often do even in this Chamber, even in this body, which is supposed to be the greatest deliberative body in the world.

This is a place where we should ask some of the questions that many of us have been asking. When we remember what those children suffered and what their families suffered, is it too much to ask if we can pass a background check bill that, as Senator BROWN and so many others have noted, is supported by more than 90 percent of the American people? Is it too much of a lift for the Senate to pass just one bill?

It is not a bill that is going to solve all the problems. We know that. Nobody is arguing that. But we know a recent example of where a background check bill might have been the difference between the gunman having a weapon and killing a number of Americans or not. That was Odessa and Midland. We have to do a lot more than

background checks, but let's start with what is in front of us.

You have a piece of legislation that has been sitting here for over 200 days—over 200 days. It came over from the House, H.R. 8. H.R. 8, in my judgment, is the best background check bill we have. There are other proposals, and we should debate them. But is it too much of a lift to say that we are going to debate and vote on H.R. 8, which closes the loopholes on these background checks and I think would do the best job of any proposal? Then, if someone has another proposal—I know that Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY have a proposal—let's debate that and vote on that too. If there is a third proposal, let's debate and vote on that. Let's get it right, or at least let's give the American people a chance to see whether or not this legislative body, this Senate, reflects the will of the American people—the overwhelming percentage of American people who support background checks.

We should also make sure there is an opportunity to debate and vote on the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act or another version of that. Let's make sure that happens.

I don't think we are asking the majority leader to take on a challenge that he hasn't already committed to. What I heard Majority Leader McCONNELL say in August was that when we come back, we will debate and vote on at least those two measures. I think that was a pretty clear promise. If we did that, would every problem be solved? No. Would gun violence be substantially reduced in a matter of weeks or months? No. No one is making that claim. But at least we could say that we made some progress in reducing the likelihood of greater gun violence.

I think the bigger question here that we have to ask over and over, until we act or at least begin to act, is this: Is there nothing that we can do? Because that is part of the argument by those who say no on background checks, those who say no on extreme risk protection orders, no on a limitation on the magazines and the number of bullets you can shoot at any one time, which Senator BROWN referred to. In Dayton, in 32 seconds, 9 people were killed and about 25 injured. In 32 seconds, the police officers got there faster than superman could get there, and that wasn't fast enough because of the power of the weapon and because of the amount of ammunition.

There is nothing we can do about that, we are told. We are told over and over, here and around the country, where disciples of this point of view have their time to debate, that there is nothing that the most powerful country in the history of the human race can do to make sure that doesn't happen in another American city, or at least take action to reduce the likelihood that that would happen in another American city.

So there is apparently nothing, according to this argument, that this

great Nation of ours can do to prevent someone from, in 32 seconds, killing 9 people and injuring, I guess, about 25.

What haunted me, among many things—and I am sure it haunted many Americans at the time of the December 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, shooting—was that the evidence indicated, according to an NBC News report at the time, which I was watching on my television at home in Scranton, PA, that there was evidence that the killer, after killing 20 children and several adults, was moving to the next classroom. We know that hundreds of children were in that school. I don't know the exact number, but it wasn't just a school of 20 children. A lot more than 20 were in that school.

Again, as for taking this argument that there is nothing we can do except to enforce existing law, we hear over and over that we can't do anything and that we have to enforce existing law. That is the argument. They have been making this argument for decades. Based upon that argument, there is nothing we could have done in that instance, either, to prevent someone from killing 20 children or hundreds of children in 1 school, and then maybe several months later going to another school and killing hundreds of children.

Does anyone really believe that there is no law, no action you can take to at least reduce the likelihood that that will not happen in the United States of America? We don't believe that because we call ourselves Americans. We have never had that attitude. Think of our history. Think of what happened in the last century, if we had that point of view: nothing we can do about this threat in Europe; nothing we can do to advance medical research, because we just have to accept the fact and try to nibble around the edges.

No one really believes that. So that argument is getting pretty tired—that enforcement of existing law is the answer here.

This is a uniquely American problem. No country has this problem. It has been building and building for years and decades. By inaction we allow the problem to get a lot worse, and it is about as bad as it gets right now. Huge numbers of Americans now—not like 5 percent or 8 percent, but like 40 percent of Americans now—believe that they can be a victim of gun violence. Forty percent of a country of over 300 million people believes that because of what they have seen. But again, the answer here from one side over and over is that there is nothing we can do, as more and more people believe they could be a victim next.

You saw the footage for the news coverage of children going off to school at the start of this school year with their backpacks with a protective shield, like a Kevlar shield—I am not sure exactly what it is, but I saw the reports—in their backpack. An American child has to go to school and have armor-plated backpacks in America—

that is not happening anywhere else—because their parents are worried about them going to school. Now we have to worry about where you go to school, where you worship, where you go for entertainment, and what public event do you not want to go to, because the U.S. Senate, for years now, hasn't voted on a series of gun bills in years. I guess people should get used to being afraid and wondering if they will be next or their children will be next.

In essence, what they are telling us on the other side, when they say no to background checks, absolutely not—that is what they are saying—and no to any kind of action, is that the most powerful country in the world should surrender to this problem. That is what it is. It is surrendering to this problem—that there is nothing that this country can do to make sure that you never have a full page of a newspaper with 20 children listed there ages 6 and 7 years old. That is not America. That is not who we are or, at least, it is not who we claim to be.

I would say in conclusion—and I know I am well over my time—that the least we can do—this isn't hard, guys—is to debate and vote. Debate and vote—is that hard? It is not that strenuous—to debate and vote on background checks, to debate and vote on extreme risk protection orders. I would go further than that, but we don't have time for that tonight. Let's debate and vote. We are not going to wait. Why would we wait for the President to give us the high sign about what he will sign into law?

This Chamber should not wait for any other official. We should debate and vote and see where things are. The American people will sort it out after we vote, and they will know who is on the record voting which way. But at least let's give them something to indicate that we are Americans. We don't surrender to problems. We don't surrender to big problems. We don't surrender to problems from an enemy, from a disease, and from an epidemic called gun violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague from Pennsylvania for his leadership on this issue and his very clear remarks and call to action. I am also very pleased to be here on the floor with my friend the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. MURPHY, who has been at the forefront of this battle for many years. We will not let up until we see meaningful action here in the Senate, because we have an epidemic of gun violence in this country.

The only question is, What are we going to do about it? We have seen 293 mass shootings in the last 9 months. We see people being killed by gun violence in our streets and in our neighborhoods every day. All told, 100 of our fellow Americans die from gun violence every day. It can happen anytime, anywhere, to anybody. It can happen in

our schools, our movie theaters, our homes, our concerts, our bars, our shopping centers, our streets. No one is immune or free from this violence.

If this were an epidemic caused by a preventable disease, this Congress would convene on an emergency basis. We would be having a bipartisan gathering to immediately pass legislation to help discover new cures and vaccines for whatever disease was killing 100 of our fellow Americans every day. When it comes to gun violence, here in the U.S. Senate, there is nothing, no action.

Inaction is complicity. It is complicity in the carnage when we know there are commonsense measures we can take together to reduce the gun violence. Are we going to stop every single gun death? No. But we know that these commonsense measures can save thousands of American lives. Yet we do nothing here in the Senate. That is despite the fact that we have at the desk a bill that was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives 202 days ago. I have a copy of that bill in my hand. It is H.R. 8. If you look at it, it says: "Read the second time" and "Placed on . . . Calendar." For people who may be listening in, what it means to be placed on the calendar is that it is here at the desk in the U.S. Senate. It means we could take it up anytime. We could take it up right now.

In fact, now I am holding what is called the Calendar of Business for Tuesday, September 17, 2019. If you look at it—No. 29, H.R. 8—how does it describe H.R. 8? Very simply, "An act to require a background check for every firearm sale." It is very simple. It is something supported by over 90 percent of the American people, regardless of party.

I have in my hand a copy of the U.S. Constitution. I want to read article I, section 1, because it is very straightforward. It says: "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives."

The House of Representatives has acted. As I said, H.R. 8, a bill for universal background checks, is at the Senate desk. It is the Senate that hasn't acted. Yet I heard the Republican leader said as recently as today at a press event, when asked when the Senate was going to take up gun safety legislation, when we are going to take up universal background checks, "Ask them," meaning ask the President, ask the executive branch. I don't know when we, the U.S. Senate, contracted out our constitutional responsibilities to the executive branch and to the gun lobby and others when we have it in our power right here tonight to take up a lifesaving measure.

The majority leader also said that we are in a holding pattern. What are we holding for as more and more Americans die—100 per day—from gun violence?

In my State of Maryland, we have been the victims, like every other

State, of people dying by guns. We had a mass shooting. It was at the Capital Gazette newspaper. Five souls were taken. We had a school shooting in Maryland, at Great Mills High School in Southern Maryland. Every day, we see people in Maryland being harmed by gun violence in our streets and neighborhoods.

Maryland has actually done something about it. As a State, we passed some important gun measures. We closed the gun show loophole. We require universal background checks in Maryland. We have actually banned semiautomatic assault weapons—a law that was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States. We require a permit to purchase a gun.

Someone might ask: OK, well, Maryland has passed these laws, the State. Why do you have a gun violence problem?

If you look at the figures from the ATF, if you look at their gun-tracing statistics, you find that 54 percent of crimes committed in Maryland with a gun come from guns from outside the State of Maryland, from our surrounding States. Maryland is not an island; we are part of the United States of America. Our State can pass sensible gun laws. We can help reduce the carnage in Maryland, and we have. Until we act as a country, until we pass universal background checks, Maryland will continue to be vulnerable to the negligence of other States and most of all, the negligence of the U.S. Senate, which has refused to act.

The President knows where the American people are on this issue. After we have a mass shooting, the President always makes public comments about how he is going to do something about it, including addressing background checks. After the slaughters in El Paso and Dayton, on his way to visit those grieving communities, the President said: "I'm looking to do background checks. I think background checks are important." He went on to say: "I think we can bring up background checks like we never had before."

After the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, he called some Members of Congress to the White House, including Senator MURPHY. Senator MURPHY talked about the importance of background checks. The President told him: You know, we have a new President now, and we are going to work together to get this done. We have a different attitude.

That is what the President always says after a terrible shooting, but then the President gets a call from the NRA, gets a call from the gun lobby, and you get a headline like this one, which we saw on August 20, 2019: "NRA Gets Results . . . in One Phone Call With Trump." The President knows how the country feels. The President knows the country wants action. The President knows the country wants the Senate to act, so he says those things publicly, but then he gets a phone call from the

gun lobby, and then he backpedals. That is where we are now, with the Senate stalling, pretending, going through these sorts of fake actions, pretending we are going to get there.

I hope we do get there, but what the President has said and done in the past gives me no confidence, which is why I come back to the very place I started, which is that this body, the U.S. Senate, has its own responsibilities under the Constitution. The Constitution—article I—gives the House and the Senate the lawmaking power, not the President of the United States. We shouldn't be looking down Pennsylvania Avenue and saying "What is the President thinking?" before we take action to help save lives.

We are the U.S. Senate. We now have right in front of us at the desk, right here, a bill that will save lives, passed by the House of Representatives 202 days ago. It is for universal background checks.

Senator MCCONNELL and other Senators—if they don't want to support the position taken by 90 percent of the American people, then they can vote no on H.R. 8. If the majority leader doesn't think the people of Kentucky support H.R. 8, it is his prerogative to vote no. That is the right of every Senator. What is outrageous is blocking every other Senator in this body from exercising their right to represent their constituents and help save lives around the country.

We support the voices of 90 percent of the American people, who want us to take action to reduce gun violence in the United States of America, to address this like the epidemic it is and to address it like we would address a disease epidemic that was killing 100 of our fellow Americans every day.

Let's stop ignoring our responsibilities. Let's stop pointing to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. There is really no time to wait. "Thoughts and prayers" will not end the gun violence. Senate action and a vote on H.R. 8 can help save lives in the United States of America. Every single day that goes by that we don't take that vote is a day that this body is complicit in more deaths by gun violence.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I want to recognize my friend and colleague Senator MURPHY for his moral leadership on this issue and for continuously demanding that all of us do better and that all of us do more to address what is an epidemic of gun violence.

We are here tonight and through the night to call on Leader MCCONNELL to do a very simple thing, which is to bring background check legislation and other gun safety legislation to the Senate floor for a vote.

Forty thousand Americans had their lives cut short by guns last year. Forty

thousand Americans died. It is unthinkable that we would allow mass violence to occur in our country with this type of frequency. What is shocking is that not only do we accept this as part of the American way of life—as though it were enshrined in the Constitution that we must have this amount of violence in order to have our Second Amendment rights—but that we allowed the question of what to do to keep our people safe to turn into a partisan question. The Democrats are out here on the floor saying: Why don't we figure out what we can do to make people safer? And on the other side of the Chamber, there is no one.

This isn't the first time this has happened or the second time or the third time or the fifth time. When we come down to the floor to demand action on gun safety, we have no dance partner.

It shouldn't be this way, especially given where the public is.

I don't just mean Democrats or Independents. Americans of all stripes, Democratic and Republican gun owners, agree that commonsense gun safety reforms are the way forward. This means background checks. It means no guns for violent criminals or domestic abusers and no guns for anyone who could endanger themselves or endanger others.

About 90 percent of all Americans support these very sensible reforms. Here is the thing. They support them not for purely ideological reasons or partisan reasons; the reason these things pull 85, 90 percent of all Americans, even among NRA members, is because, A, it doesn't infringe on your Second Amendment rights, and, B, it works.

It is no coincidence that the two steepest drops in murder rates in our country came right after the passage of two sets of significant gun laws: The first were the national firearms control acts of 1934 and 1938, and the second were the background checks and assault weapons ban bills in 1993 and 1994. Those legislative efforts, and the decrease in violence that followed their passage, prove that progress is possible.

Here is the thing. Whenever we get into this conversation, we get into kind of trying to figure out whether whatever law we are trying to pass would retroactively be able to fix whichever moment of silence we are now focused on and sad about and despairing about. That is not the way to look at this.

Sure, there are individual situations, where, if we pass background checks, it would absolutely help, but it is also a matter of the Federal Government putting some parameters on the kinds of guns that you can get and the requirements in order to own a gun.

What is happening? Why are we still stuck? Why are we still stuck? Republicans in the Senate are just waiting on the White House. It is as simple as that.

This isn't some partisan attack from me, a partisan Democrat. This is lit-

erally what Leader McCONNELL said. He said he will not schedule a vote or schedule a debate on the House-passed bill to expand background checks for gun purchases because President Trump has indicated he will not sign it. According to Leader McCONNELL: “[I]f the President took a position on a bill so that we knew we would actually be making a law and not having serial votes, [he would] be happy to put it on the floor.”

Let me just say, that is not actually how the Senate is supposed to operate. We are supposed to originate the legislation. We are supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body. We are supposed to determine what kind of law to make. We are not supposed to play “Mother, may I” with the President of the United States and wait for clearance before we even initiate a debate.

The idea that, in this body, where today we voted on the UAE Ambassador, the Ambassador to Sweden, I think—not that those are unimportant matters—but we had full postcloture debate time when, basically, we were in a quorum call—we were in a quorum call; no one was talking—we cannot afford to set aside 30 hours or 50 hours or 2 weeks of Senate time to figure out what to do about the gun violence epidemic? Shame on us.

Congress should be taking up bills, debating them, passing them, and the President can make his decision about whether to sign or veto them. We cannot wait for President Trump on this because he is deeply, deeply inconsistent, not just generally speaking but specifically on the question of gun safety.

In the immediate aftermath of every horrific shooting, the President talked about doing something meaningful to address gun violence, but then he backtracked.

In February of 2018, in the wake of the horrific shooting at Parkland, President Trump said: “[W]e're going to be very strong on background checks.” A year later and 2 days before the House passed legislation that would require universal background checks for most gun purchases and transfers, Trump threatened to veto the bill if it passed.

In February of 2018, during a televised meeting with lawmakers, the President proposed raising the age for buying assault rifles from 18 to 21, and then he backtracked.

More recently, following the shootings in Texas and Ohio that left 29 dead and dozens wounded, Trump tweeted on August 5 that Washington “must come together” to “get strong background checks.” That sounds pretty good.

On August 19, just 14 days later, he reversed course. When talking with reporters, he used an NRA-approved talking point: “[J]ust remember, we already have a lot of background checks,” and he warned of gun control's “slippery slope.”

The President has a long history of changing his position on guns. In 2011,

he was against gun control. In 2013, he supported background checks. A year after that, he protested against background checks for gun purchases in New York State. This is just how he rolls, specifically, on this issue but frankly on a lot of stuff. You could say the same thing about having an honest broker as it relates to immigration. He is just not reliable. That is how he rolls.

We don't have to be downstream from all of that. We are the article I branch. We can do what we decide to do as the so-called world's greatest deliberative body.

To make it worse, in the weeks since the attacks in Ohio and Texas, we keep hearing from Republicans that gun violence is not caused by guns. To quote the President directly: “[M]ental illness and hatred pulls the trigger, not the gun.”

“[M]ental illness and hatred pulls the trigger, not the gun.” I want to spend a little time on this one because this one is really offensive and really deeply hurtful. Setting aside the lack of progress on guns, we are also losing 10, 20, 30 years of progress we have made destigmatizing mental health services.

Mass shooters and regular people experience mental illness at the same rate. There is no indication that mass shooters or individual people who are homicidal experience mental illness at any higher rate than your general population. Blaming the mentally ill is just factually untrue, but it is more insidious than that.

About 20 percent of all Americans at some point need some mental health services. The great difficulty in terms of getting mental health services is not just the availability of care; it is also that people still feel embarrassed to say: I need some help.

Shame on the President of the United States to equate someone who may need care for postpartum depression or post-traumatic stress coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan, or who may experience bipolar disorder, or whatever it may be—a kid with autism—to imply that people who need mental health services are somehow dangerous and that they are the ones who should be cracked down on. That is a deeply, deeply dangerous thing to say about 20 percent of all Americans who simply need to get better and who simply need to not be characterized as crazy or dangerous or that they should be ashamed of what they are experiencing. Shame on the President of the United States for equating mental illness with being dangerous to society.

Consider for a minute the progress we have made as a society to destigmatize mental health. We have fundamentally changed the way we talk about it, and because of that, we have helped to reduce the shame around living with mental health challenges, and more people are willing to prioritize their mental well-being. People should not be embarrassed or scared to seek the help they need, and

they certainly shouldn't be blamed for the gun violence epidemic in our country.

I want to read a letter from a Hawaii resident, Elizabeth Sader from Lahaina, Maui. She writes:

Two mass shootings in 24 hours. This cannot be our new norm. We need change. . . . We can no longer assume heading to the store, an event, or school is safe anymore.

There are places in the United States that make it easier to get a gun than it is to adopt a pet at a local animal shelter. This is not right.

We need sensible gun laws in this country. We need better systems in place to prevent this from happening again. I cannot imagine what the world is going to look like for children growing up today.

The Senate has the power to save lives and protect more of our kids by enacting sensible reforms. What we need is for Republicans to do the right thing and to rise to the moment. Thousands of people are dying every month. We cannot wait for the President.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, let me thank, once again, my colleagues for being on the floor with us this evening, for the compelling testimony of Senator SCHATZ, Senator CASEY, Senator BROWN, Senator VAN HOLLEN, and so many others who have joined us this evening. We have a few more who will come down later in the evening.

I want to take a moment to put a face on this issue. There are 100 Americans who are killed every day by guns. The majority of these are suicides, but many are homicides, and many are accidental shootings and domestic homicides.

Shootings in this country happen at a rate 10 times that of any other high-income nation. This is a uniquely American epidemic. Senator SCHATZ very aptly pointed out that it can't be because of mental health because we have no more mental illness in this country than any other nation does. It can't be because of lack of law enforcement resources; we spend just as much money, if not more, on law enforcement than any other country in the world. It is not because we put less money into treatment for mental illness; we put more money, on a per capita basis, than other nations do.

To explain our abnormally high rate of gun violence—10 times that of other high-income nations—you have to tell a story of the proliferation of dangerous weapons, of the ability of almost anyone, regardless of their criminal history or their history of mental illness, to get their hands on a weapon. Nowhere else in the high-income world is it so easy to get your hands on a weapon and often a weapon of mass destruction.

Leo Spencer was born an only child. He grew up in Bridgeport, CT, but he was far from an only child in his mind. His cousins were like his siblings. He spent summer after summer after summer with them in Boston, in Con-

necticut, in Cape Verde, and in St. Thomas. He was known as "Lil Bill." His friends described him affectionately as an amazing person, a phenomenal soul, the greatest friend they ever had, and the best family member they knew.

A family member said Leo was "a simple man who loved to keep to himself, but deep down inside he was a free spirit that wanted nothing more than to make people laugh. Always joking around, he kept us on our toes, and his smile lit up the room."

Another friend said:

Never one to follow trends, Leo was intent on making his own path through hard work and unparalleled ambition. He was a creative soul with a deep love for expressing himself through music and loved fiercely without bounds.

Leo placed a priority on making sure his family and friends were happy. He made each person feel like they were the most important person in the world. He loved his parents. He did everything he could for them. He wanted to take care of his mom the way she took care of him.

On September 8 of 2019, just a few days ago, Leo was shot in the head and the neck while sitting in the passenger seat of a friend's car. His friend hit the accelerator and drove him as fast as he could to Bridgeport Hospital, but he was pronounced dead shortly thereafter.

Leo Spencer is 1 of the 100 Americans who die every day from gun violence. It is so much bigger than Leo. I mentioned Leo's cousins, his family members, and his friends. Their lives will never be the same either, forever altered.

Studies show that when 1 person dies from a gunshot wound, there are 20 other people who experience life-altering trauma. It becomes a cycle that becomes hard to get out of.

I will talk a little bit later about Sandy Hook, CT, but Sandy Hook will never ever be the same—never—after what that community has been through.

Leo, whether he knew it or not, may already have been affected by gun violence because when you grow up in places like Bridgeport, where kids literally fear for their lives when they are walking to and from school, the trauma associated with the fear of losing your life from gun violence ruins your brain. We call this a public health epidemic, not to be cute with our words but because that is exactly what it is.

When you don't know whether you are going to make it through the rest of the week as a child—and studies show that, criminally, a high number of young people of color in this country living in urban environments that are violent don't believe they are going to live past 25 years old—when that is your belief, something happens to your brain.

Most of us in this Chamber have probably confronted only once or twice in our lives a fight-or-flight moment.

That is a moment in your life where you face a risk that is so great, a danger that is so acute, that you have to make a decision in a split second: Do you fight or do you run? Our bodies are designed to rush into our brains a hormone called cortisol that helps us make that quick decision.

Many of us may never have actually faced that moment, and, frankly, I don't hope that anyone ever has. But when you grow up in a place like the east end of Bridgeport, you face that decision: Fight or flee on a weekly basis.

What doctors will tell you is that the brains of these kids who grow up in these neighborhoods are literally bathed in cortisol. Cortisol, when it comes in and out in an instant once or twice in your life, can be helpful. But when it is flowing through your circuitry on a regular basis, it literally corrupts your brain. It corrupts your brain. So it is no coincidence that all of the "underperforming" schools in this country are in the violent neighborhoods because these kids show up with brains that cannot learn, brains that cannot cope and cannot create lasting relationships, brains that have been atrophied by the daily fear for their lives and their daily experience. This Congress has done nothing—nothing—to address their reality.

We are here on the floor today to tell you about people like Leo so that maybe our colleagues who aren't responding to the numbers may respond to the stories of those lives that have been lost.

Let me tell you another one. Over the winter, we shut down the government for an unacceptable period of time. We were all figuring out what to do with our days when we weren't legislating. I decided one day to take a trip to Baltimore.

Baltimore, in some years, has been the most violent city in the country with the most kids who are going through this life-altering cycle of trauma. But I had heard about a program in an elementary school that was teaching kids how to be entrepreneurs and was giving them a vision for their lives after growing up in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Baltimore. They are trying to give them a pathway or a ray of sunshine in their lives.

I went up to talk to the person who ran that program. Her name is Joni Holifield. She and I sat down in a classroom on the second floor of Matthew Henson Elementary School, and she started to explain to me her path out of the corporate world into programming for kids at schools like Matthew Henson and what she thought that program could bring to those kids.

In the middle of this conversation, the intercom starts blaring a recorded message: code green, code green, code green. I didn't know what a code green was. Joni didn't know what a code green was. Shortly thereafter, a teacher opened the door to our classroom and yelled: Shut the blinds. Turn off the lights.

We did as instructed, and we sat there a little nervous, not knowing what a code green was. Shortly thereafter, someone from the main office, knowing that there was a U.S. Senator in a second floor classroom, called up. Joni answered the phone and was told that a code green means there has been a shooting in the proximity of the school and that the school is on lockdown.

The day that I was there at this elementary school in Baltimore, there was a shooting within a block or two of the school. Here is what I found out. That morning there had been a delay in school starting. It had snowed that morning, so I walked in with all the rest of the kids at around 9:30, 10 o'clock. About the same time that I was showing up at the school that morning, a young man by the name of Corey Dodd brought his two little twin girls to school. He was doing the drop-off for his wife, who was home tending to their relatively newborn child.

Corey decided to bring the kids to school that morning himself. He drove home a couple of blocks away after dropping the twins off, probably right about the time that I was walking upstairs to the second floor. When he got out of his car, he was shot to death.

One of his other little daughters always sits at the door waiting for her dad to come home, and she was there waiting for Corey. Her mom had to tell her that her dad was never coming home. He had been shot outside of their house that morning.

As that code green was happening inside that elementary school—and the kids were probably having a little bit of fun, wondering when the lights were going to come back on—there were two little girls who were never going to see their father again and who were going to be told in a matter of hours that this shooting had taken the life of their dad. And every single kid in that school was going to be wondering: Is it going to be my dad next? Is it going to be my mom next? That cycle of trauma and that cortisol that bathes kids' brains were going to be reality once again for all of these kids in this neighborhood. That is just one day that I happened to be in Baltimore.

Imagine that it isn't just coincidence. Imagine that is the reality day after day after day for kids all across this country. Why are we doing nothing? Why are we sitting on our hands? Why are my Republican colleagues waiting for the President to give them direction?

It would be one thing if we didn't know what to do—if we were overflowing with compassion for those two little twin girls in Baltimore, MD, and for the family of Leo Spencer in Bridgeport and we just couldn't figure out what would make the situation better. That is not the case.

We know what will make the situation better. There is no mystery about it. In my State of Connecticut, we passed a law requiring all handgun

buyers to pass a background check as part of the permit process. Studies show that there was a 40 percent reduction in the gun homicide rate after Connecticut passed that law.

You might say: OK, well, that is just one State. And 40 percent—that is pretty serious. That is a pretty big return on one change in the law. Give me another State, you say.

OK, let's take a look at Missouri, which did the opposite. A few years ago, it repealed its purchase permit law that requires you to get a background check with every sale of a weapon in Missouri. Guess what happened. A year later, gun homicides went up by 23 percent, controlling for every other factor that could have explained it. In fact, during that period of time, gun homicide rates were going down in all the States around Missouri, and they went up in Missouri.

Then they found out that, in fact, in other States, what did go up in those other States was the number of weapons used in crimes that came from Missouri because all of a sudden you didn't need a background check in Missouri. So if you wanted to traffic guns from another State, Missouri was the place to get them.

Across the board, when you look at all of the States' experiences, you don't get 40 percent and 23 percent everywhere, but, on average, States that have background checks have 15 percent lower homicide rates than States that don't have them.

If we did this on a national basis, even States that have universal background checks would benefit. Why? Because the guns that are being used in Connecticut aren't coming from Connecticut. They are coming from States with—you guessed it—no universal background checks.

The guns being used in Chicago don't come from Chicago. The guns being used for crimes in New York City don't come from New York City. One percent of guns used in crimes in New York City come from New Jersey. Do you know why? New Jersey has universal background checks. Those guns are coming up from South Carolina and Georgia and places where you can go to a gun show and get a whole truckload of guns without having to ever go through a background check.

Background checks work. They are the most impactful public policy measure. Since the background check law was passed in the midnineties, over 3.5 million sales have been blocked to violent criminals and other prohibited individuals, and that is just the tip of the iceberg because those are the people who actually have the gall to set foot in a gun store, knowing that they have an offense in their history that would prohibit them from buying a gun—maybe not, knowing that. But these are the people who went into the gun store and tried to buy a gun and got denied. There are millions and millions more people who wanted guns but couldn't get them and didn't go into the gun store in the first place.

The problem is, today, getting that denial from the gun store is not really a barrier to buying a gun because 20, 30 percent of gun sales now happen without a background check. They happen in a private sale between one person and another. They happen at gun shows, which are forums that don't require, under Federal law, background checks.

A man in Odessa, TX, failed a background check because he had been diagnosed by a clinician as seriously mentally ill. That didn't stop him from getting a gun. He just found a private seller; he found another way. The private seller gave him a gun and didn't require him to go through a background check. He took that gun, and he used it to kill 7 people and injure 20 more.

I don't think you have to pass a law to fit the last mass shooting. I think that is a ridiculous trap that people try to put us in. This isn't the only mass shooting in which universal background checks could have changed the outcome. One of the first mass shootings that sits in my consciousness is that in Columbine as another example of a shooter who got a gun outside the background check system who couldn't have gotten one through it.

So whether you want anecdotal evidence or statistical data, I have it all. Background checks work. Here is what is so maddening. People love background checks. Apple pie, baseball, and grandma—none of them are as popular as background checks are. Ninety percent of Americans like background checks. Show me any other public policy today in the United States of America that gets 90 percent support in this country; 80 percent of gun owners and 70 percent of NRA members, everybody wants background checks—universal background checks. They don't want Manchin-Toomey, which just expands background checks to commercial sales. They want H.R. 8. They want H.R. 8, which has passed the House of Representatives and has been sitting on the floor of the U.S. Senate for 202 days. That is what Americans want. Ninety percent of Americans support H.R. 8.

Don't tell me that this issue is controversial. It is just controversial in this bubble. It is not controversial out in the American public, and it is not a blue State or a red State issue. Background checks are just as popular in Georgia as they are in Connecticut.

As Senator SCHATZ said, we don't have to wait for the President to tell us what to do. Senator MCCONNELL has a different copy of the Constitution than I have. My copy of the Constitution says that none of us are required to get permission slips from the President before we act or before we do something that we think is good for the country.

It is wild to me how the Republican leadership is so eager to advertise that the Senate will do nothing unless President Trump gives it permission. He is not the most popular guy. I don't

know why my friends on the Republican side would just openly admit that they don't act unless the President tells them it is OK. That is not how it has to be. We can make the decision ourselves, and on this one, every single person here should do it because it is the right thing, and it is also going to win you a lot of support back home.

I have a few more colleagues who want to say a few words, and then I may wrap up at the end. I want to finish, in my last 5 minutes or so, by reading something to you. I apologize to my friend Neil Heslin because I made a commitment to read this every Father's Day after the shooting in Sandy Hook. I forgot to do it this year. This is a makeup effort.

I don't want to talk too much about what happened at Sandy Hook this evening. I have spent plenty of time talking to my colleagues about it.

Unfortunately, there is a macabre club of Senators and Congressmen who have now had to walk with their communities through these horrific mass shootings. Maybe there is not another one like Sandy Hook where 26 7-year-olds lost their lives in a matter of 5 minutes, but they are all terrible. They are all awful.

One of the things that happens in the wake of these mass atrocities is that you get to know the victims' families. You get to know the parents, the brothers, and the sisters. They become friends of yours. I feel like I have a personal obligation to the families of Sandy Hook separate and aside from the global obligation I believe I have to human beings in this country to do something about the issue of gun violence.

Amongst the parents, one of those whom I have become closest to is a gentleman by the name of Neil Heslin. Jesse Lewis was one of the children who lost their lives that day. Neil has had an up-and-down life—an up-and-down life. He would admit that to you. It hasn't been an easy life for Neil. Jesse was Neil's best friend, not just his son.

I tell his story every Father's Day because it is a reminder to all of us who are fathers how none of us are protected from this. Neil thought he was. Neil never ever thought this would happen to him, but it did. It is a reminder that but for the good grace of God, any of us could be a victim, any of us could know a victim. So why sit on our hands and do nothing when we could do something?

Let me finish by reading an excerpt from Neil Heslin's testimony that he gave to the U.S. Senate in February 2013, 2 months after his son was shot, and I will wrap up after I finish this page and a half of his testimony.

My name is Neil Heslin. Jesse Lewis was my son. He was a boy that loved life and lived it to the fullest. He was my best friend. On December 14, he lost his life at Sandy Hook Elementary because of a gun that nobody needs and nobody should have a right to have. I'm here to tell his story. I know what I am doing here today won't bring my

son back, but I hope that maybe if you listen to what I say today and you do something about it—maybe nobody else will have to experience what I have experienced.

On December 14, Jesse got up and got ready for school. He was always excited to go to school. I remember on that day that we stopped at the Misty Vale Deli. It's funny the things you remember. I remember Jesse got the sausage, egg and cheese he always gets, with some hot chocolate. And I remember the hug he gave me when I dropped him off. He just held me, and he rubbed my back. I can still feel that hug.

And Jesse said "It's going to be alright. Everything's going to be okay, Dad." Looking back, it makes me wonder. What did he know? Did he have some idea about what was about to happen? But at the time I didn't think much of it. I just thought he was being sweet.

He was always being sweet like that. He was the kind of kid who used to leave me voice messages where he'd sing me happy birthday even when it wasn't my birthday. I'd ask him about it, and he'd say "I just wanted to make you feel happy." Half the time I felt like he was the parent and I was his son.

He had so much wisdom. He would know things, and I would have no idea how he knew. But whatever he said, it was always right. And he would remember things we'd done and places we'd been that I had completely forgotten about. I used to think of him as my tiny adult. He had this inner calm and maturity that just made me feel so much better when I was around him.

Other people felt it, too. Teachers would tell me about his laugh, how he made things at school more fun just by being there. If somebody was ever unhappy, Jesse would find a way to make him feel better. If he heard a baby crying he wouldn't stop until he got the kid to smile.

Jesse had this idea that you never leave people hurt. If you can help somebody, you do it. If you can make somebody feel better, you do it. If you can leave somebody a little better off, you do it.

They tell me that's how he died. I guess we still don't know exactly what happened at that school. Maybe we'll never know. But what people tell me is that Jesse did something different. When he heard the shooting, he didn't run and hide. He started yelling. People disagree on the last thing he said. One person who was there says he yelled "run." Another person said he told everybody to "run now." Ten kids from my son's class made it to safety. I hope to God something Jesse did helped them survive that day.

What I know is that Jesse wasn't shot in the back. He took two bullets. The first one grazed the side of his head, but that didn't stop him from yelling. The other hit him in the forehead. Both bullets were fired from the front. That means the last thing my son did was look Adam Lanza straight in the face and scream to his classmates to run. The last thing he saw was that coward's eyes.

Jesse grew up with guns, just like I did. I started shooting skeet when I was eight years old. My dad was vice president for years at a local gun club. . . . Jesse actually had an interest in guns. He had a bb gun. . . . I taught him gun safety. He knew it. He could recite it to you. He got it. And I think he would have got what we are talking about today. He liked looking at pictures of army guns, but he knew those [guns] weren't for him. Those were for killing people.

Before he died, Jesse and I used to talk about maybe coming to Washington someday. He wanted to go up the Washington monument. When we talked about it last

year, Jesse asked if we could come and meet the President.

[I'm a] little cynical about politicians. But Jesse believed in you. He learned about you in school and he believed in you. I want to believe in you, too. I know you can't give me Jesse back. Believe me, if I thought you could, I would be asking you for that. But I want to believe that you will think about what I told you here today. I want to believe that you will think about it and then you will do something about it, whatever you can do to make sure that no other father has to see what I've seen. You can start by passing [legislation to take] these senseless weapons out of the hands of people like Adam Lanza.

Do something, he said. Do something. Seven years later, we haven't done anything.

So we are down here on the floor tonight begging our colleagues to put a bill on the floor. Amend it, debate it, do whatever you want, but let's not stay silent any longer.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. We are here tonight when we should not be, because the epidemic, the pageant of gun violence in this country should have been addressed by us by now. We have not acted. We have not acted in large part because we are engaged in a bizarre, self-inflicted political experiment in this country in which we allow big special interests to use secret money in elections to manipulate our politics.

This ought to be easy. There have been 293 mass shootings since January 1, 2019—this year alone. These tragedies have galvanized the American public in support of sensible restrictions on guns, and the amount of agreement among the American public is astounding. Eighty-six percent of Americans support implementing what we call red flag laws that allow a judge to remove guns from someone who is determined to be a danger to himself or others. You could barely get 86 percent of the Senate to agree on the day of the week. Additionally, 89 percent support expanding Federal background checks to cover private sales and to close the gun show loophole, 86 percent support an assault weapons ban, and 70 percent support a ban on large-capacity magazines. These are large, popular majorities, and in a functional democracy, we would listen to them, we would hear them, we would honor them, and we would respond to this bloodshed. Why we have not done that takes us on a sordid crawl through the sewers of modern politics inhabited by the National Rifle Association.

The National Rifle Association spent \$30 million supporting President Trump. No wonder they can undo all of our work with a simple phone call to the Oval Office. But it is much worse than that. Reports emerged last year that the NRA accepted money from foreign sources, including Russian banker and Putin ally Aleksandr Torshin, and spent that money in politics in America.

Senator WYDEN sent letters to the NRA and to the Treasury Department

about these reports. The NRA responded maintaining that it properly segregates any foreign donations so that they are not used for political purposes. Fat chance of that, with money being fungible. I joined Senator WYDEN on a followup letter renewing the request following the arrest of Maria Butina, an evident NRA go-between.

The IRS, under President Trump, took no action against the NRA in response to these allegations. In August, the Federal Election Commission deadlocked 2 to 2 on whether to investigate this matter at all. The FEC is so locked up on this now that they wouldn't even investigate.

FEC Commissioner Weintraub in desperation wrote:

Some allegations are too serious to ignore. Too serious to simply take [the NRA's] denials at face value. Too serious to play games with. Yet in this matter, my colleagues ran their usual evidence-blocking play and the Commission's attorneys placed too much faith in the few facts [the NRA] put before us.

So we can't even look into the extent of Russian interference in our politics through the NRA.

It goes on. Last fall, the Campaign Legal Center and Giffords Center filed complaints with the Federal Election Commission alleging that the NRA was evading the anti-coordination rules of our election between the Trump campaign and with various Republican Senate campaigns. The complaints allege that the NRA and the campaigns coordinated spending through a GOP media consulting firm. What had the media consulting firm done? It had set up a series of shell corporations through which the campaigns paid.

We have all used media consulting firms in getting to the Senate. Which of those media consulting firms set up shell corporations?

In fact, these shell corporations—these supposedly separate companies—shared staff, office space, and other resources, so that the firm coordinated the ad buys between the NRA and the campaigns. Once again, the FEC did nothing, so the Campaign Legal Center had to sue the Federal Election Commission in district court.

The NRA's political spending has more than quintupled since the Supreme Court—I should say more specifically, since five Republican appointees on the Supreme Court—allowed unlimited, anonymous money into our political system—from \$10 million in 2010, the year of the Citizens United decision, to about \$55 million in the 2016 election. The NRA now spends unlimited amounts of dark money on political ads. They can come after people. They can threaten people. They can make promises to people. That is why 86 percent, 89 percent of the U.S. public gets ignored around here.

When Representative RASKIN and I wrote the NRA and the consultants about this coordination scheme, guess what the supposedly independent groups did? They wrote back to us in

the same letter from the same lawyer—some independence. Of course, we are still waiting on the FEC to take any action at all.

By way of a visitor's guide to the sewer of modern politics inhabited by the NRA, I ask unanimous consent that a September 17 article from *The Trace* titled "Guide to Every Known Investigation of the NRA" be appended to my remarks as an exhibit.

I will close where I began. There have been 293 mass shootings since January 1 of this year, and the American public has an extraordinarily common voice for red flag laws, for expanding Federal background checks, closing the gun show loophole, banning assault weapons, and banning large-capacity magazines, and we don't listen to the popular will here because of the menace that the NRA has become in our politics—the anti-Democratic menace that the NRA has become.

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

[From the Trace, Sept. 17, 2019]

BANG FOR THE BUCK—A GUIDE TO EVERY KNOWN INVESTIGATION OF THE NRA

HERE ARE THE FACTS ABOUT ALL TEN ACTIVE INQUIRIES INTO THE GUN RIGHTS GROUP

(By Daniel Nass)

The National Rifle Association is caught up in a rapidly expanding tangle of investigations—eight launched this year alone. Investigators in the House, Senate, New York State, and D.C. are scrutinizing the gun group's nonprofit status following alleged financial misconduct exposed by *The Trace*, while other probes have their sights on the NRA's ties to Kremlin-linked Russians and to Donald Trump's presidential campaign, as well as several potential campaign finance violations.

Because it's challenging to keep track of these probes, we've rounded them up below. We included only investigations that directly involve the NRA or its staff. We'll keep this post updated to reflect the latest developments, and will add new investigations to the list, should they arise.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

A fourth investigation of the NRA's nonprofit status is underway, one initiated by D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine. Racine's office is seeking documents from the gun group and its affiliated foundation regarding "financial records, payments to vendors, and payments to officers and directors." The NRA Foundation is chartered in Washington, D.C. NRA attorney William Brewer said in a statement that "the NRA has full confidence in its accounting practices and commitment to good governance."

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

Amid the ongoing strife between the NRA and its former communications firm Ackerman McQueen, another congressional committee is attempting to determine whether the NRA has violated its tax-exempt status. In a letter to Wayne LaPierre, House Ways and Means Committee member Representative Brad Schneider demanded documents related to internal audits, financial misconduct, and conflicts of interest. It's the third probe of the NRA's finances launched since *The Trace* and *The New Yorker* first reported on alleged financial improprieties in April. In August, Schneider expanded the inquiry, sending a letter to Ackerman CEO Revan McQueen requesting documents re-

lated to the firm's past relationship with the NRA.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

Three Democratic members of the Senate Finance Committee, which oversees tax-exempt organizations, are probing alleged financial impropriety within the NRA. Letters addressed to NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre and ex-President Oliver North request documentation of alleged financial misconduct raised by North during a public power struggle for control of the gun group, which culminated with North's ouster from his leadership role. A third letter requests documentation from Revan McQueen, the CEO of top NRA vendor Ackerman McQueen, due to LaPierre's claim that Ackerman had prepared a damaging memo in order to blackmail him. The feud erupted after reporting by *The Trace* and other news organizations revealed a culture of self-dealing and financial mismanagement within the NRA, particularly around its relationship with Ackerman. The NRA has refused to cooperate with the investigation, and a letter from Ackerman McQueen to the senators indicates that the NRA has not given the vendor permission to share relevant materials.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

New York Attorney General Letitia James has opened an investigation into the NRA's nonprofit status, asking the organization, its charitable foundation, and other affiliated groups to preserve financial records. The probe, first reported by *The New York Times*, also touches the gun group's "related businesses," although information about the parties involved is not yet public. James has jurisdiction because the NRA was chartered in New York in 1871. In August, the attorney general's office expanded the inquiry, issuing subpoenas to more than 90 current and former NRA board members, including former president Oliver North.

The probe follows a series of media reports about financial misconduct within the NRA, including a *Trace* investigation detailing allegations that former IRS official Marc Owens said "could lead to the revocation of the NRA's tax-exempt status."

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

The NRA is among more than 80 organizations and individuals that received requests for documents as part of a wide-ranging House Judiciary Committee probe which aims to establish whether President Trump and those in his orbit have engaged in "obstruction of justice, public corruption, and other abuses of power." A letter from committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler to NRA boss LaPierre demands information on the gun group's contacts with and about Russia and the Trump campaign during the run-up to the 2016 election. The NRA has reportedly submitted nearly 1,500 pages of documents in response to the request.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

Representatives Ted Lieu and Kathleen Rice, concerned by a "lack of transparency" around the NRA's 2015 visit to Moscow and its other ties to Russia, have launched a new investigation intended to illuminate those connections. Another probe of the gun group's Kremlin connections is underway in the Senate, but House Democrats, unlike their counterparts in the Senate, hold the majority required to issue subpoenas.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

A joint House-Senate probe is investigating possible "illegal, excessive, and unreported in-kind donations" made by the NRA to Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and to several Republican Senate candidates. Sparked by *The Trace's* reporting, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressman Jamie Raskin have contacted NRA

Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre and five campaign advertising vendors to request information about the groups' relationships. "The evidence shows the NRA is moving money through a complex web of shell organizations to avoid campaign finance rules and boost candidates willing to carry their water," Whitehouse told The Trace.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

As part of a probe into security clearances issued by the Trump administration, House Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings has requested documents from the NRA regarding Trump national security adviser John Bolton's contacts with Russia. In 2013, Bolton appeared in a video for The Right to Bear Arms, the Russian gun-rights group linked to Maria Butina and Alexander Torshin. He also headed the NRA's subcommittee on international affairs, which Cummings has also requested information about. The Oversight Committee investigation came months after Cummings and Representative Stephen Lynch first sought information from the White House about Bolton's ties to Russia.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

An NRA delegation's trip to Moscow in 2015 is under the scrutiny of the Senate Intelligence Committee, headed by Senators Richard Burr and Mark Warner, which in November requested documents about contacts with high-profile Russians during the excursion. In January, investigators grilled former Trump aide Sam Nunberg about the links between the Trump campaign, the NRA, and Russian nationals including Maria Butina. Burr, the committee's chair, has received ample campaign support from the NRA.

WHAT'S UNDER INVESTIGATION

Senator Ron Wyden, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, has sent a series of requests to the NRA and the Treasury Department seeking information about the gun group's financial ties to Russian official Alexander Torshin and other Putin-linked politicians. After the arrest of self-confessed Russian agent Maria Butina in July, Wyden and committee members Sheldon Whitehouse and Bob Menendez followed up with the Treasury requesting further information about Butina's financial links to the NRA. Butina later pleaded guilty to conspiring in the United States. Earlier this month, the Finance Committee launched a separate probe into a conservative think tank linked to Butina and Torshin. Senator Charles Grassley, who chairs the Finance Committee, has ties to the NRA.

A few other investigations bear mentioning. An inquiry by the House Intelligence Committee and the FBI's reported investigation of Alexander Torshin both probed the gun group's ties to Russia, although there is no hard evidence that the NRA or its employees have been pulled into either of those probes. Watchdog organizations have filed a series of complaints with the Federal Election Commission regarding the NRA's campaign finance activities, and two groups are now suing the regulator for its failure to act on those complaints.

We'll update this post as new information comes to light.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise tonight to join the chorus of Democratic Senators in this Chamber demanding action to address the American gun violence epidemic. We stand here tonight on behalf of the tens of

millions of Americans, from one end of the country to the other, who are crying out for change.

Every few months, it seems that our Nation is rocked by another horrifying mass shooting. El Paso and Dayton are only the latest entries in our national register of tragedy, a list that stretches from Parkland to Pittsburgh, Charleston to Columbine, Aurora to Orlando, Blacksburg to Binghamton, San Bernardino to Sandy Hook, and to Las Vegas. Because that ever-growing list can sometimes seem abstract, let's not forget about the specific places where these awful shootings occurred: movie theaters and night clubs, shopping malls and office parks, music festivals and traffic stops, churches, synagogues, mosques, colleges, high schools, and an elementary school.

Our hearts remain with the families of the victims and the survivors of these mass shootings whose lives were turned upside down in an instance by mad men who never should have had access to a gun. The touching letter that Senator MURPHY read from one of his constituents whose child died in Sandy Hook is just one of many testaments to that turning upside down—instantly ruining your life forever by one of these horrible, awful incidents.

At the same time, our hearts are with tens of thousands more whose lives were ended or forever altered by everyday gun violence. It doesn't make the headlines, but we remember them, too. They are no less tragic and no less painful for the parents who lost children, and brothers and sisters, sons and daughters who lost mothers and fathers.

Whether it is a mass shooting or an individual shooting, people who shouldn't have guns are killing our fellow American citizens, and Congress just sits on its hands—the Senate does, anyway—and does nothing.

Let me mention a few stories of New Yorkers whose lives were cut short by gun violence just this year. The list goes on and on, I assure you.

Norzell Aldridge, of Cheektowaga in western New York, was a youth football coach. He was shot in the chest and killed a few weeks ago while trying to break up a fight at a park in Buffalo's East Side. Coach Aldridge's team had just finished playing the first game of their season.

Rhyan Williams-Cannon, a 21-year-old from Syracuse, was shot and killed in March as he was leaving the corner store. He was the youngest of seven siblings. He had just earned his GED in October. Rhyan's family said he was like a father to his nephew, sneaking candies to him behind his mother's back.

Shakeel Khan, of Johnson City, was murdered by a mass gunman in April while closing up his restaurant. Shakeel was the sole provider for his wife and his three children, aged 14, 12, and 8.

May God rest their souls.

I can stand here for hours and tell 100 more stories, each one as heart-

breaking as the next. Each one is about senseless violence that might not have occurred if we had adequate laws on the books, all the people around them—their families, their friends, their communities—devastated by the recklessness, senselessness of this gun violence.

It is our solemn duty to the victims of those terrible tragedies who can't speak for themselves, but their memories call down to us for justice, to cure this terrible plague of gun violence that claims tens of thousands of lives every single day of every single year.

I have been fighting this fight for such a long time. Back in 1993, I was in my sixth term representing Brooklyn and Queens in the House of Representatives. I knew the terrible toll of gun violence firsthand because the streets of my community were testimony to it. East New York and Cypress Hills were known as the Killing Grounds back then because someone was murdered an average of once every 63 hours, so I was more than eager to help write, introduce, and pass the legislation establishing our background check system that later became known as the Brady Bill.

As we take stock of the legacy of that bill 25 years later, there is no question that it saved countless lives. There are literally thousands and thousands of people walking the streets of their communities who are alive today and would have been dead had the Brady Law not passed. We don't know who they are. They don't know who they are. But we know they are alive, and we are thankful for it.

Ever since the National Instant Criminal Background Check System went online in 1998, there have been more than 1.5 million denials to disqualified buyers. The ability to keep guns out of the hands of convicted felons has helped lead to a steep drop in murder rates experienced by communities across the country.

Take my hometown of New York City. In the early 1990s, before the Brady Bill was enacted, an average of 2,500 people were murdered every year in the five boroughs. Last year, that number was just 289.

But that doesn't mean our work is done—far from it. What seemed like a minor compromise in 1993—allowing the sale of firearms without background checks at gun shows—has become a massive loophole. At the time when I wrote the Brady Bill, gun shows were a place for collectors to sell antiques, but gun shows have grown exponentially in popularity because people who don't want background checks know they can get guns there and people who want to sell guns to people who don't go through background checks sell their guns there. And even of greater dimension, the internet exploded to facilitate private sales between strangers, no questions asked.

While some cities like New York have thankfully seen an overall decrease in gun deaths, there are still too

many pockets in cities across the country where this epidemic persists. At the same time, the frequency and lethality of mass shootings have rapidly increased.

The internet allows for copycats. People up to no good see someone else has killed many people and think that maybe they should do the same. We have seen the frequency of these awful mass shootings continue on and on.

We finally have an opportunity to close that loophole and keep guns from falling into the wrong hands in the first place. We have the opportunity to simply update the Brady Law—not change it, not expand it, just plug the holes that were punctured in it as time moved forward. No gun will be taken away from someone who is a law-abiding citizen by this law. No, only people who shouldn't have guns will not get them. And who could disagree with that? Certainly not the American people who are overwhelmingly on our side.

We Senate Democrats are here tonight because the House of Representatives has finally passed legislation closing the private sale loophole, marking the first time that either Chamber of Congress has passed an overhaul of a background check system since the Brady law more than 25 years ago.

What we are asking for is very simple and shouldn't cause us to come here at night. It should be an obvious thing to do: a simple up-or-down vote on legislation—an up-or-down vote on H.R. 8.

Let me say it again. Leader MCCONNELL, put H.R. 8 up for a vote on the floor of the Senate as soon as possible. Let us do what we were sent here to do by our constituents—what our constituents demand we do, which is fix the most pressing problems facing our Nation. If we fail to do so, it is plain and simple and terrible: More innocent people will die.

Before I yield the floor, I want to thank the survivors and families of victims who have done so much to remind the American people of just what is at stake when it comes to gun violence. I keep on a desk in my office pictures of the children who were murdered in Sandy Hook given to me by their ailing and grieving parents. And those parents and the thousands and thousands of others like them—survivors who amazingly choose to light a candle to prevent greater darkness despite the darkness that had overcome their lives and that has surrounded their lives, these are beautiful people, saint-like people—and we thank them.

A year and a half ago, we watched in horror as tragedy struck the Parkland community in Florida. Once again, the safety and sanctuary of a school was torn apart by the unthinkable, but this time felt different. Almost immediately, the students started speaking out, turning their immeasurable pain into courageous advocacy. Just 2 weeks later, I welcomed these Parkland teens into my office. My God, what courage,

what fortitude, what inner strength. Even in the darkest of nights, some choose not to curse the darkness but to light a candle.

A few weeks later, I joined millions of New Yorkers who were inspired to march for change by these Parkland teens. Millions more Americans across the country did the same. And now, a little more than a year later, this Senate has the opportunity to vote on H.R. 8, universal background checks, among several other pieces of legislation passed by the House that would save lives from gun violence.

Times have changed. People forget that the Brady Bill was first introduced in 1987, 6 years after Jim Brady and President Reagan were wounded and more than 6 years before it was enacted into law. Now, we are moving from tragedy to action in a year. The movement that Jim and Sarah Brady started in the 1980s has reached a new era. The American people are no longer willing to wait months or years for change. Long gone are the days that Senate Republicans can just bury their heads in the sand and ignore that more than 30,000 Americans are killed by a gun every year. Politicians offering their thoughts and prayers just doesn't cut it anymore. It is put up or shut up.

Leader MCCONNELL, Senate Republicans, what will you do?

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT L. STEWART

• Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, today I wish to honor the career of Robert L. Stewart, a retired U.S. Army brigadier general and former NASA astronaut, from Huntsville, AL. Robert Stewart is an acknowledged leader in the aerospace industry, with over 40 years of hard work and dedication throughout his career, including selfless service in the military. He has worked for decades to improve the quality of life in his community and across the State of Alabama.

Mr. Robert Stewart entered Active Duty with the U.S. Army in 1964. He spent time at Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, AL, as well as Fort Rucker in Dale County, AL. Mr. Stewart has military and civilian experience, flying over 40 types of airplanes and helicopters, including over 1,200 hours of jet time, 1,015 combat flight hours, and over 6,000 logged hours total flight time.

Mr. Stewart became an astronaut in August of 1979. He has logged 289 hours in space, including approximately 12 hours of extravehicular activities operations. While training for his scheduled third flight at NASA, Stewart was selected by the Army for promotion to brigadier general. He retired from the Army in 1992. Stewart has received

multiple recognitions for his distinguished service and work.

At home in north Alabama, Robert is married to Mary Jane. They have two daughters and four grandchildren. He received a bachelor of science degree in mathematics from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1964 and a master of science in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington in 1972.

I am proud to take this time to recognize Robert for his significant career. His achievements and dedication to advancing the industry have not gone unnoticed. I join Robert Stewart's friends, family, and colleagues in celebrating his career, and I thank him for his commitment to Alabama.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 8:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 1200. An act to increase, effective as of December 1, 2019, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED ON JULY 24, 2019

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 3196. An Act to designate the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope as the "Vera C. Rubin Observatory"; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-2594. A communication from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Milk Donation Reimbursement Program" ((RIN0581-AD87) (Docket No. AMS-DA-19-0001)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 16, 2019; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2595. A communication from the Assistant Director for Regulatory Affairs, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Cuban Assets Control Regulations" (31 CFR Part 515) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 16, 2019; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2596. A communication from the Chairman, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for the Board's fiscal year 2017 Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act submission of its commercial and inherently governmental activities; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.