

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.