

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 558, 559, 560, and 561.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of John Hennessey-Niland, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Palau; Donald Wright, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Republic of Tanzania; Dorothy Shea, of North Carolina, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Lebanese Republic; and Todd C. Chapman, of Texas, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hennessey-Niland, Wright, Shea, and Chapman nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

BIPARTISAN BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, every day, we are reminded of the dev-

astating toll of gun violence in our Nation. On average, around 100 Americans die each day from gunfire. It is an epidemic of violence. This week marks the anniversaries of three horrific mass shootings.

On February 15, 1 year ago, a gunman shot and killed five coworkers at a warehouse in Aurora, IL, and also shot and wounded five police officers who rushed to the scene. On that day, we lost Russell Beyer, Vicente Juarez, Clay Parks, Josh Pinkard, and Trevor Wehner.

February 14 was the date of the 2008 mass school shooting at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, in which a mentally disturbed gunman killed 5 students and wounded 17 more. On that day, we lost Gayle Dubowski, Catalina Garcia, Julianna Gehant, RYANNE Mace, and Daniel Parmenter.

And February 14 was also the date when 17 students and staff were murdered in 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

These anniversaries and statistics are grim, but they do not capture the true impact of this horrific gun violence—so many funerals, so many families and communities devastated.

And every day we lose still more lives to gun violence in communities large and small. Just this past weekend, at least 23 people were shot in the city of Chicago, nine of them fatally.

We pray for the families and loved ones of those we have lost, and we remember the wounded who bear physical and mental scars from their trauma. We also renew our thanks for the first responders who run toward the sound of gunfire and risk their lives to help others.

There are many people throughout America who are doing all they can to try to reduce our Nation's epidemic of gun violence. This includes parents, community leaders, teachers, faith leaders, law enforcement, public officials, the medical community, and more.

I particularly want to commend a coalition of hospitals that has been working with me in Chicago on the HEAL Initiative. This is an effort to coordinate these hospitals' resources, from economic investment to community programming, to help reduce violence and improve quality of life in their surrounding neighborhoods. There are promising efforts taking place in many States and local communities to address gun violence.

But is the U.S. Senate doing all it can to protect our communities from gun violence? No, not even close.

While there is no single reform that could prevent every shooting, we know there are obvious gaps in Federal gun laws that make it easy for felons, abusers, and mentally unstable people to get guns.

Nearly a year ago, on February 27, 2019, the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill to close gaps in our background check system that allow an estimated 22 percent of gun

sales to occur without a check. Around 90 percent of Americans support closing the gaps in the background check system. It is a step that would save lives. Yet the Republican Senate majority refuses to call the bill up for a vote. I can't explain why Senate Republicans won't take up bipartisan, House-passed gun safety legislation that Americans overwhelmingly support. It makes no sense.

There have been too many deaths, too many mass shootings, too many grim anniversaries, and too many excuses for inaction. It is time for Senator McCONNELL to call up H.R. 8, the bipartisan background checks bill, and hold a vote.

TRIBUTE TO DR. LARRY GOODMAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the Chicago area is blessed to have some of the top hospitals and academic centers in the country. Rush University Medical Center and College in Chicago, in particular, has advanced into a comprehensive and leading health care institution. Rush continues to deliver high-quality care to its patients, driving the field of innovative medical research and training the next generation of healthcare practitioners. I would like to celebrate the tenure and accomplishments of the hospital's president and CEO and the leader in the program at Rush, my friend, Dr. Larry Goodman.

In 1976, Larry earned his medical degree from the University of Michigan's Medical School. He completed his residency at the Rush University Medical Center, where he served as the chief medical resident before joining the faculty.

At Rush, Larry served as an infectious disease specialist, working to improve the lives of people affected by HIV and AIDS. He also served as the senior vice president of medical affairs and the dean of the Rush Medical College before the hospital appointed him as its president and CEO in 2002.

Under Larry's leadership, Rush has prospered. The hospital doubled its student enrollment in the last 20 years, training future physicians who will provide top-notch healthcare services in communities around the Nation. The hospital also collaborated to increase its employment of local community members. These efforts, in part through West Side United, have helped to reduce the health inequities that exist between the residents of low-income communities and those in affluent communities. In fact, it was Dr. Goodman who first told me about the alarming 16-year gap in life expectancy between people living in the Loop and in West Garfield Park—just two “L” stops, or 6 miles, apart from each other on the Blue.

More than a year ago, I joined several community leaders to announce the Chicago Hospital Engagement, Action, and Leadership, or HEAL, Initiative to help address many of the root