The bill (S. 4261), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

JOSEPH WOODROW HATCHETT UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE AND FEDERAL BUILDING—Continued

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Colorado.

S. 2938

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, next month marks an anniversary that nobody wants to celebrate: 10 years since 70 people were shot and 12 killed while sitting in a movie theater in Aurora, CO.

At the time, it was the largest mass shooting in American history. Since then, several shootings, like the Pulse Nightclub and the Las Vegas shooting, have surpassed that grim milestone.

Most Senators have a similar story of some sort of a mass shooting in their State that killed people who were trying to enjoy a movie or worship God or shop for groceries like the 10 people murdered last year in a supermarket in Boulder or sitting in a fourth grade classroom. Mass shootings have become uniquely American, a problem that has grown consistently in the 23 years since the Columbine school attack shook us all. There were seven school shootings that year. Last year, there were 42.

The Aurora shooting happened when I was Governor, and it has stayed with me, as those things do. Friday, July 20, 2012, almost 10 years ago—it was a local premiere of ''The Dark Knight,'' and it was a packed house. Every seat had a person in it, a person with loved ones and ones who loved them who expected them to come home that night.

I arrived the next morning at the scene and walked into the command center that the FBI and the police were using. Aurora Police Chief Dan Oates showed us a video of the crime scene that had been taken by police shortly before, using a hand-held camera. The images haunt me still: popcorn everywhere mixed with bullet casings, random clothing, and blood. There was blood all over the seats and the floor.

Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan and I spent the afternoon visiting hospitals all over town. We visited almost every surviving wounded victim. In the days and weeks and months after that day, we had the gun debate in Colorado. Of course, we had the debate. What kind of a State would we be if we were too scared to go to a movie? The debate was difficult and hard to find agreement.

Guns are a tradition in the West, and Colorado is no exception. We became the first purple State to successfully pass gun safety laws. Coloradans, including the vast majority of gun owners, wanted to get something done. That led to universal background checks and a ban on high-capacity magazines; not everything—not everything—that we wanted but steps that made a real difference. We didn't want dangerous people to have guns.

One night while I was Governor, I came home tired and cranky in the midst of working on these gun laws. I made the mistake of complaining to my 11-year-old son Teddy. Teddy couldn't find it in him to understand why it was so hard. He asked me: Dad, why don't you just make the decision? It is easy. Get the facts, make a decision, check, next.

I started to explain, and he repeated: Get the facts, make a decision, check, next.

He said: Every day I go into school, and I have to learn something completely new that I didn't know existed the day before. If I don't get it completely right, the next day is misery because everything is based on the day before.

Teddy was right about one thing: The facts do matter. Part of our problem has been not having good data. Many assume passing new laws like background checks or magazine limits wouldn't work because crooks don't buy guns from legal dealers. The facts proved that they very much do. In 2013, 2,782 convicted felons tried to buy a gun in Colorado and were stopped. Even last year, nearly a decade later, 3,539 convicted felons were blocked from buying a gun. Laws can work to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

The solutions are often straightforward. Nonpartisan facts and basic data help us cut through the noise of division. Guns can be a divisive issue, to say the least, but we don't accept that there is no room to get things done.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act proves that. For the first time in three decades, Congress is poised to pass gun legislation that will make Americans safer, and it is based on the very simple principle: We all agree we should keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

The bill will give States the resources to implement red flag laws to prevent people who are a danger to themselves or others from buying or having guns. It will finally close the boyfriend loophole that allows convicted domestic abusers to get firearms. It will strengthen background checks for 18- to 21-year-olds and take mental health into account and will crack down on strawman purchases that allow criminals to dodge background checks altogether.

Now, these are commonsense proposals, and I am heartened to see that they are going to pass with bipartisan support, but we all know there is more that needs to be done to reduce gun violence in America.

The question is, What is next?

For that, we can turn to Teddy's wisdom as an 11-year-old. What we need is a common set of facts that both sides can accept and can act on.

In 1970, Congress created the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to respond to the public outcry over fatal vehicle crashes. By 2019, there were 60 percent fewer vehicle fatalities than in 1970. So in that period from 1970 to 2019, fatalities were reduced 60 percent, even though there are now 2½ times as many cars on the roads.

The Agency's strength is in its strictly nonpartisan research. It conducts a survey and a detailed analysis of vehicle fatalities across the country and forms an objective basis to evaluate vehicle safety standards and procedures—things like whether airbags and seatbelts can make a difference or what size and shape child restraints should take, essentially every safety feature in our cars today.

Why can't we have something similar for guns? We now have more gun deaths in America than we have deaths from car crashes, and yet for years, we could barely discuss possible solutions.

So while this Chamber is working together, let's make sure we measure the success of these bills that we are about to pass. Let's think about establishing a research body that will create an objective baseline of hard facts, not conventional wisdom. The path forward is as simple as my 11-year-old son knew it to be a decade ago: Get the facts, make a decision, check, next.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as Senators are preparing to return home to their home States over the Fourth of July, it is frustrating to me that we once again kick the can down the road on providing needed funding to address the ongoing COVID pandemic.

For months, the administration, scientists, and healthcare experts have raised the alarm that we don't have the resources we need to stay ahead of this virus. And actually with COVID, if you are not staying ahead of it, you are slipping behind, to the detriment of all Americans.

To keep our recovery afloat, we have robbed Peter to pay Paul. Earlier this month, the administration announced that it is repurposing $10 billion that we appropriated in Congress—$10 billion—to purchase additional vaccines and additional therapeutics because our stocks are running low.

The action by the administration, unfortunately, was necessary. Projections indicate that as many as 100 million Americans—100 million Americans—nearly 1 in 3, will be infected or reinfected with COVID this fall and winter as our immunity from this disease wanes.

The President requested COVID funding. President Biden requested that 3 months ago. Republicans have blocked this funding. Without new funding appropriated by Congress, the administration is left with no choice but to repurpose that $10 billion. Even that, experts across the board agree, is totally insufficient to prepare for the coming surge.

But even this necessary choice has consequences. To pay for these vaccines and therapeutics, the administration had to take funding from research for the next generation of vaccines and to sustain our testing capacity. It was not, as some Republican Members have indicated, excess cash that was simply there for the taking. This means that as the next surge crashes over the country, we will not have the resources necessary to assure that people can get tested.

Have we already forgotten the mad scramble driving from pharmacy to pharmacy to get a rapid test so we could safely spend the holidays with our friends and families just 6 months ago? It means that as new variants will emerge, we are not going to have the necessary resources to adequately continue the groundbreaking research we have supported for next-generation vaccines.

And fueled by our waning immunity and insufficient vaccination efforts abroad, new variants could emerge, and those will impose new threats to us here at home.

The desperate measures taken by the administration, which they had to do in the absence of congressional action, do nothing to support a global vaccination effort that is running on fumes. The U.S. Agency for International Development, which manages our global response to the COVID pandemic, has already obligated more than 95 percent of the funds they have available—95. Soon, they will have no choice but to start shutting down their vaccine delivery operations. That will mean more mutations, more variants, more infections, and more deaths abroad and at home.

Keep in mind what we are doing with USAID. We are trying to stop this pandemic outside our borders because we realize that every single one of these variants is one airplane trip away from crossing our borders even as we have to do things to stop it within our borders.

Finally, I want to make clear that we don't have time to say, ''Well, we can act later on,'' as this is not a problem that can be solved by flipping a switch, or to produce the tens of millions of doses of vaccines and therapeutics necessary to prepare for a fall surge. The government and biotech companies need to begin purchasing supplies now.

They can't say: Oh, we have an epidemic. Golly, go out and buy some supplies.

Well, we have to make them first. Come back to us in a few months.

That doesn't do anything for the people who are getting hit with COVID.

The longer we wait, the further we will fall behind as other countries will place their orders ahead of ours.

I tell my friends on the other side of the aisle who are blocking this money: We can't wait and see what happens. That is why we were wholly unprepared for the pandemic in the first place. You will recall the last administration said: We will wait and see what happens.

We refused to invest and prepare for the worst. Let's prepare for the worst. We can hope for the best, but hope is not a vaccine. Preparation can create vaccines. I am frustrated, once again, that we are leaving town without addressing this looming crisis. Since March, I have called on us to act.

As chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to make these calls, and I will fight for these urgently needed resources, but we have to wake up to the fact that we have to do it now. You don't do it after the epidemic hits. You don't do the research after. You try to do the research before and hope you can stop the pandemic from happening.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). The Senator from Colorado.

S. 2938

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, this morning, the Supreme Court weakened gun safety laws in America for the first time in over a decade. It gutted a century's-old law to make sure that people carrying concealed weapons actually needed them. The Court is taking us backward at a time when the American people are demanding that we do more, not less, to protect our communities.

The shooting at Columbine High School happened the year before my oldest daughter was born. She is now 22 years old. We have raised three daughters, and their entire generation has grown up in the shadow of gun violence. Since Columbine, my State has endured one tragedy after another.

In 2012, a gunman killed 12 people at a movie theater in Aurora.

In 2019, a shooter injured eight students at a STEM high school in Highlands Ranch.

Last March, a shooter killed 10 people at the King Soopers grocery store in Boulder. That was almost a year to the day, really, of the shootings in Buffalo, which took another 10 lives of people who had just gone to shop for their families.

Two months after that grocery store shooting in Colorado, a gunman killed six people at a birthday party in Colorado Springs.

Now, I remember back—it is hard because, over time, you lose track of things—in 2017, after a gunman in Las Vegas killed 58 Americans after shooting across the street from a hotel room. I came to work the following Monday, and I realized at about three-quarters of the way through the day that nobody had talked to me about the shooting. I don't know whether it was the shooting before that or the two or three or four before that when we became so desensitized that 58 people could be killed in Las Vegas, and it wasn't even mentioned the following Monday.

We cannot allow this to become normal in this country, and the people of Colorado have refused for this to become normal in this country. It is not just mass shootings; it is the daily shootings that stalk our communities like the West Side of Chicago, where I have spent time with my friend Arne Duncan who, after being the Secretary of Education, has gone back to his hometown to try to keep young men from killing. They can't afford for us to continue to just move on and forget that it ever happened. Communities, once they have been savaged by something like the Aurora movie theater shooting or the Columbine shooting, never move on.

The pages here are a little bit younger than my daughters are, but I can tell you that there is a whole generation of Americans that has grown up in this country savaged by gun violence and the prospect that it could happen to them when they go to school the next day or the next week. You can see it. You can see kids sitting on the couch, cringing, when they are watching the television reports, wondering whether that is going to be them or their classmates.

They have carried a burden that no generation of Americans has ever had to carry. No generation of humans living in the industrialized world has had to carry this particular burden. Today, our kids are growing up with a reasonable fear that they could get shot in their schools or in their temples or in their churches.

I didn't grow up in a country with more gun-related deaths than in virtually any country in the industrialized world. That was not the country I grew up in. I grew up in a country with a Second Amendment but not a country with more shootings than anyplace else in the industrialized world. Our attitude about this has changed. It is different from what our parents and grandparents believed, no matter what party they were in.

After a shooting, I heard somebody on the radio—some well-known talk show host—say that this was just the price of freedom, that being victimized in a mass shooting or being worried that your family members could be killed in a mass shooting was just the price of freedom. That is not what freedom meant to America when I was growing up. Partly what freedom means is being free from the fear that you are going to get gunned down. That is a freedom, and we have denied that freedom to the next generation of Americans. What a shame that somebody would say something like that after a mass shooting. What a limited view of what freedom is. What a surrender that represents to our children and the victims of these crimes.

In 2020, the leading cause of death for kids in America was guns—guns—not

car accidents, not drugs but guns. There was a study that looked at how many kids, ages 4 or younger, had been killed by guns across 29 industrialized countries. This was of kids 4 or younger in 29 industrialized countries. The United States accounted for 97 percent of the deaths. This country accounted for 97 percent of the deaths of kids who were 4 years old and under. What a disgrace. What an indictment. The entire rest of the industrialized world accounted for 3 percent. We accounted for 97 percent. We have nearly 200 times the rate of violent gun deaths as Japan or South Korea and nearly 100 times what they experience in the United Kingdom.

I can tell you, speaking as a father, it is not because we love our children any less or because we are uniquely violent or that somehow we have got a mental health problem that other countries don't have or that we are mentally more unwell, which I hear some people say. It is because we have a U.S. Senate, year after year after year, that has been paralyzed by the National Rifle Association, by the NRA. We have a Senate that has allowed our kids to get shot in schools, in movie theaters, in grocery stores, and at concerts but has offered nothing but thoughts and prayers. We have a Senate that, until now, has failed to respond to the overwhelming demand of the American people to protect our communities.

That is what I hear when I go home. I live in a Western State. As you will hear, we have been able to enact meaningful gun reforms in my State. If we can make progress in a Western State like Colorado, where people are demanding it—Democrats, Independents, Republicans, and most importantly, all of our children are demanding it—we can do it here. I have said it over and over and over again on this floor after we have had mass shooting after mass shooting across our country. Finally, for the first time in a decade, we have the chance to make progress.

I want to thank my colleagues. I really do. I don't mean that in the usual way that people do when they come out here and say, you know, ''I thank my colleagues.'' I want to thank my colleagues CHRIS MURPHY and JOHN CORNYN for leading this really important bipartisan effort.

I strongly support what they have put forward, which would strengthen background checks for young people buying firearms, so we are checking their mental health and juvenile records.

It would help States strengthen their red flag laws, which would help keep guns out of the hands of people who are a threat to themselves or others. We passed a bill like that already in Colorado.

It would make a historic investment in mental health and school security. I said a minute ago that sometimes you just hear people talking about how we have mental health, and I pointed out that we probably have got the same mental health that other countries in the world have, but that doesn't mean that it is not an issue. It is an issue. We are having an epidemic of mental health and behavioral health on the back end of this pandemic, especially among adolescents in this country and in the State of Colorado. There is $15 billion in this bill for mental health, and I am proud that that is in there. That is a historic investment, and it is both sides that are making it.

We are going to close the boyfriend loophole, which allows abusive partners to buy a gun. We are going to crack down on straw purchases, where people illegally buy guns on behalf of someone else. That is a big problem we are going to address in this bill.

Frankly, I don't know how anybody on this floor could object to any of those ideas. I don't know how anyone could go home and say they opposed investing in mental health or making sure they are not letting a troubled 18-year-old have access to an AR–15 or some other weapon.

On that point, this can't be the end of our work. There is more for us to do. We should raise the age for buying a semiautomatic weapon from 18 to 21. We should pass universal background checks. In Colorado, after Columbine, we passed universal background checks. I have said it over and over again on this floor. Every year, somewhere around 3 percent of the people who try to buy a gun can't buy a gun in Colorado. Do you know why they can't buy a gun? Because they are convicted felons, because they are murderers, because they are domestic abusers.

In the 10, 12 years that I have been coming down here talking about this, I have challenged people. I have said: Come tell me why Colorado is not safer with that law in place. There is nobody who has ever come here and said, ''Here is why you are not safer,'' because obviously we are safe. The country would be safer and Colorado would be safer if we pass background checks at the national level.

We should close the gun show loophole. We should limit the size of magazines, which we also have done in my Western State of Colorado. We should ban bump stocks. People in Colorado and across the country overwhelmingly support these steps. But in the meantime, let's pass this bipartisan proposal.

A few weekends ago—it was actually over the Memorial Day weekend—I had high school kids—not in the same place and not just one—literally coming up to me in tears out of desperation that we were not responding to what had happened in Texas and we hadn't done anything in this country about guns. I think we need to show them and the young people who are here today, the young people who are living all over America, that we aren't so broken that we can't respond to one more massacre of kids at a school. We need to show them when we have this opportunity to demonstrate that we are not going to fail again and that we can succeed in passing this bipartisan bill and that, after all these years, we can meet the American people's reasonable expectation to begin to protect our communities against gun violence that happens in the United States of America and only in the United States of America.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, our country is still mourning the tragic shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde in which a total of 31 innocent people were gunned down by teenagers using weapons of war.

While these terrible events get our attention and have in this case galvanized the Senate to act, they are only 2 of the 279 shootings that have taken place this year. So it is good that the Senate is now considering legislation to address the epidemic of gun violence.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which we are now considering, is a good, albeit modest, bill. I am particularly pleased to see that two issues I have prioritized are addressed in this bill. The first is grants to State red flag laws, like the law in my home State of California, which has proven effective at removing guns by people who have been found by a court to possess a threat, and a provision closing the boyfriend loophole, which has let too many domestic abusers continue to possess firearms.

However, while this bill is a step in the right direction, it is far from the bold action that we need to address mass shootings that occur on a daily basis. It remains too easy for private citizens to obtain weapons of war in this country. Sadly, this bill does very little to address that tragic reality.

Almost 30 years ago, in 1993, I stood on this floor and offered the amendment to ban the sale and possession of assault weapons. That goal was simple: Limit access to weapons of war that have no place on our streets. And guess what? It worked. In the 10 years the assault weapons ban was law, gun massacres dropped 37 percent. After the ban lapsed in 2004, gun massacres rose by 183 percent. That is a big difference.

Back then, a different shooting was on the minds of Americans: the 101 California Street shooting in my hometown of San Francisco, where a disturbed man entered a law firm and killed eight people. For many, this tragedy was a wake-up call that required action. And we did act.

Now, 30 years later, teenagers are able to purchase AR–15s, multiple high-capacity magazines, and shoot up a grocery store or elementary school, and we are left mourning the deaths of innocent people and asking, what is the solution?

I applaud the sponsors of the legislation now before the Senate, but I have to ask, what will it take for us to hear

the wake-up call and pass stronger gun legislation? Our Nation, our children, are under constant attack. Nowhere is safe. There are mass shootings at schools, at churches, in synagogues, newspaper offices, stores, movie theaters, on and on. It is simply too easy to get a weapon designed to kill as many people as possible. Today's legislation will help, but there is so much more we could and should be doing.

Our gun laws are lax, and they make it too simple for anyone—even those we know are prone to violence—to obtain a weapon. This is especially true of teenagers. Even though they can't buy a beer or a pack of cigarettes, they can buy an AR–15 assault rifle and thousands of rounds of ammunition once they turn 18 years old. The results are heartbreaking. In Uvalde, 19 children and 2 teachers were massacred last month because an 18-year-old was able to buy an assault weapon. Just 10 days earlier in Buffalo, 10 people were shot to death in a grocery store because an 18-year-old was able to buy an assault weapon. The common denominator in so many mass shootings today is assault weapons.

I understand the Senators who negotiated the bill couldn't reach agreement on this issue. Consequently, the bill fails to prevent teenagers—teenagers—from buying assault weapons.

Under current law, a Federal firearms licensee may not sell or deliver a handgun to a buyer younger than 21; however, this commonsense protection does not apply to purchases of assault weapons. This disparity actually costs lives.

It is simple logic: If you can't buy a beer, you shouldn't be able to buy an assault weapon. If you can't buy a handgun, you shouldn't be able to buy an AR–15. That is why I introduced, along with 13 of my colleagues, the Age 21 Act. I have also filed it as an amendment on the bill before us.

The bill would raise the minimum age to purchase assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition from 18 to 21. So before you have a powerful weapon, before you buy big bullets, you have to at least be 21 years old. I don't think that is too much to ask.

This commonsense reform has public support among both Democrats and Republicans. A recent POLITICO poll showed that 88 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of Republicans support requiring people to be 21 or older to purchase a firearm.

I believe that failing now to act and address the ease with which teenagers can buy assault weapons is really a grave mistake. And make no mistake about it, it will cost lives. So now is the time to act.

I urge my colleagues to support the Age 21 Act and pass it before the next massacre. I hope these words are heard. I hope people understand. I hope there is no more killing of young people this way.

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

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

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the years of bipartisan hard work on one of the most challenging subjects we have here, which is gun violence, mental illness, and all the things that basically contribute to these horrible, horrible tragedies. Something has to be done, and something has been done.

There are going to be people who look at the piece of legislation we are about to pass in a bipartisan way and say that it is not enough. I can understand that. There are going to be other people saying that it is too much, that it is the camel's nose under the tent and they want to take my guns away. I can understand their concern because people have scared them. It is a constitutional amendment. That is not going to happen.

So what I want to reaffirm is, myself coming from a little town—Farmington, WV—being raised in a gun culture, growing up in a gun culture—my father was not a sportsman. He was not a gun person. But he wanted to make sure I had access to people who knew how and lived in this culture and who knew how to teach me properly.

So, growing up, they had what they called the Farmington Sportsman's Club. These were a lot of the men who worked in the mines who kind of took us under their wing, all us young kids. They taught us gun safety. They called it ''gun sense.'' We are going to teach you some gun sense, JOE. I said OK. And I understood it. Gun sense—it is the sensible thing you do with a gun. It is the law-abiding thing law-abiding gun owners do. The first thing they teach you is the safety of how to handle the gun. It is never loaded. It is always broken down before you go into the woods, before you prepare to hunt or if you are going to shoot, whatever you are going to do. They would teach us about that. They would teach us everything they possibly could, and then they explained to us why they were teaching us.

They said: First of all, the most important thing to know when you acquire a weapon—and it is a weapon—it is basically to feed your family, to defend your family, and basically the sporting of skeet shooting or target shooting.

I said: I got it. I understand.

They said: Do you understand this?

I said: What?

You never sell your gun to a stranger—never, ever, ever. If you don't know the person, that is not someone you want to sell to until you know exactly who they are and what their intent may be.

Fine. So that is part of my gun culture: You never sell your gun to a stranger.

He said: You never loan your gun—even to a family member who is not responsible. If you deem them to be not a responsible person and you have not trusted them by giving them your car or doing anything with them with any valuables you had, why would you loan them your gun? It is a dangerous—you know, they don't know how to do it. They won't, basically, take care of it and honor it and understand the gun culture that you do.

These are things I learned very young.

I am going to fast-forward to Sandy Hook. Never in my mind, never in my imagination, never in the United States of America could I believe that 20 babies would get slaughtered, that we had become so mentally disturbed that someone could feel that was something they needed to do or something drove them to it. I couldn't comprehend that. But what was even harder than that was, once I got to know all the families, knowing that most of the children were hard to identify or that they had to use DNA to identify them, that told me everything.

So I was on the floor of the Senate one time in 2013, and people were talking about, we have got to do something. Every time there is a horrific tragedy, we are all willing to start talking about, we have got to do something.

Mr. President, during that time I was here and we were talking, a person said we have got to ban this and ban that and take this off the streets and take this. I heard all those things.

I confronted one of our Senators at that time about the types of guns. They never—they didn't come from a gun culture. We were all raised a little differently. They never had the opportunity to learn as I did.

I said: I think what you are doing is taking a position right now that by me being a law-abiding gun owner—and I own guns—that I am going to do something criminally with them or abuse them. I am not. You have got to give me that certain amount of concern that I am a law-abiding gun owner the same as you buy—whether you buy a car or whatever you buy that may do danger to yourself or others in public, you have that right as a law-abiding citizen, and that is a product that is being sold. I understand all that.

They said: Well, JOE, if you know so much, why don't you write a bill?

I said: Well, the thing I see, where the loopholes are—I just told you. As a law-abiding gun owner, you can't infringe on me by saying I can't give it to my child or my grandson or I can't give it to my brother or my cousin—my family, immediate family. You have to give me that ability to make those decisions as a law-abiding gun owner with common gun sense.

But I said: What you do is—you have a problem at a gun show. You can go to a gun show anywhere—they are all over the country—and there will be somebody in that gun show selling

guns who doesn't do a background check because they are not a licensed dealer. That is the way the system is set up.

I said: That is not right. That person is either not a law-abiding gun owner or doesn't understand guns well enough of how we were trained. So that should be a loophole to be stopped.

Then we talked about, well, how about on the internet now? We have all these transactions on the internet anymore. So with the transactions that are happening on the internet, the way the law is set up today, if I buy from you in Maryland or you buy from me, then I have got to send my gun to a dealer, a licensed firearm dealer in Maryland, before, Mr. President, you can go pick it up, and they will do a background check on you. But if I sell my gun to somebody in my State of West Virginia—whether you are down in Bluefield, WV, or in Wheeling, WV—I can do that without going through any gun dealer, a licensed dealer, to do a background check. That should be stopped.

So basically we did a bill, and I got Senator PAT TOOMEY from Pennsylvania. That was the Manchin-Toomey bill we did back in 2013. It has probably been vetted longer than anyone else—any piece of legislation as far as on guns.

I would dearly love to have a commonsense background check bill that did not infringe on law-abiding gun owners' rights and protected the Second Amendment. We weren't able to get that in. But, you know what, I understand. I am OK. I would have loved to. But we got some other things in.

So what I am trying to point out, those of you who didn't think you got what you wanted, trust me, we need to start somewhere. This is a start.

The only thing I had—advice to the committee—we worked on a bipartisan group—was this: Whatever we do, we have got to make sure that we are able to say what we are doing today would have prevented this horrible Uvalde tragedy.

Again, we had young, young kids—babies, if you will, innocent—whose lives were taken away from them and their families.

Something has to be done. It is not open season on children. So if we do anything, it has to be towards the safety of children and the school system. If you can't, as a parent or a grandparent, see your child off to school, knowing full well they are going to return home safe or if you have that doubt in your mind or if that child has that doubt and they are scared to go to school, something is wrong with our system in America.

We are asking just basically for good, decent people to step up. This is a piece of legislation that will do an awful lot of good, and it is something we can build off of, and I think that is our purpose.

Support State crisis intervention orders. We are putting $750 million that will be available for States to create and administer laws that help keep weapons out of the hands of those determined by a court, with strong due process—now, they have been talking about what kind of a flag it is, what kind of a law. Forget about that.

What we are saying is, when we identify them—let me tell you something. The people who can do more good and help us more are the students who are going to school and have befriended their group of friends, and all of a sudden, this student goes dark. Something happens. They take you off of their social media page. They don't want to interact with you anymore. They have another group of friends. Something is wrong. But if you had a mental hygiene professional in that school system that you could go to as a student and say, ''I have a friend I am concerned about,'' then it is in the proper hands. We haven't had that. This gives us that chance. This gives us that chance to do it.

Protection of victims of domestic violence. We know, far too many times—and to tell you how rampant this is and the culture that we have, there are domestic violence shelters almost in every corner of the country. Wherever you live in America, you can find a domestic violence shelter. We are that committed to protecting people going through abuse.

This basically closes the boyfriend loophole, which is something that has been needed to be done for quite a while. I think that it is going to save lives. I really do.

Enhanced background checks for people under 21. Myself, I was very open. I think it should have gone to 21. Makes all the sense in the world.

I use this rationale: If you are less than 21 years of age and over the age of 18, you cannot go to a gun store legally and buy a handgun. It is the law. Not once have we ever had a strong position to where people are saying: Oh, you have got to have 18-year-olds go buy handguns—trying to retract that. We haven't. It doesn't make sense. But for some reason, we never have on the long guns. And I am going to tell you why. Rite of passage: my first long gun, single shot .22—it is considered long. It is one single shot, bolt-action .22. My next gun was a .410 shotgun to go squirrel hunting. Then I jumped over 16-gauge to a 12-gauge because I wanted to be big time. I wanted to show them I can shoot a 12-gauge and take the kick. But that is the reason.

So at 18, you know, you are out there—and they told me this: Well, wait a minute, 18-year-olds can go into the military, and they are going to be taught all these weapons.

I said: Let me make sure you understand. They are going to be properly trained, and they are not going to leave base with them. They are properly trained. And those weapons that you are talking about are used only for the military and defense of our country and does not leave base unless they are on duty. That is the difference in what you want to do.

So we opened it up, and this new product comes onto the market. And this product comes onto the market with a vengeance. The only thing I have said—and I have been very public about it—I don't own one, but I have friends and family members who do, and I trust they will do the right thing. They enjoy them, for whatever reason. So I haven't gone down that path.

But the bottom line is we have got to take a position that we are going to protect our children. And this is what it is about. It is a child protection bill, as far as I am concerned. And if you can't protect the children in America, if you can't protect the children in your neighborhood, in your school system, that go to school, the same school as your children and grandchildren, then God help us all. And if that is not at the front of every discussion on a PTO meeting today going on around the country, in every school board going on around the country, then something is wrong. How hardened is your school? How well are our children protected? If I am a parent or grandparent, that is what I am asking.

I have three young grandchildren in that age exactly in the school system, very close to where this happened. And you can imagine where my heart was when I heard about this horrible tragedy. So I can only imagine. My heart and prayers go out to these family members who will never bring back their children. I am still very close to the Sandy Hook parents and the movement that made people more aware. It has taken a long time, but we are going in the right direction.

I see my good friend Senator CORNYN, who has worked so hard on this.

This is something that is long overdue—long overdue. So what we are going to do, if you are 18 to 21, we want to make sure that we know what your juvenile record is. If there is a juvenile record, we are going to find it, and we are going to see if you are worthy or not to have this type of gun. And that is going to be a 3- to 10-day process for us to get the records back through the different systems to make sure that we have evaluated them properly and to review the juvenile and mental records, which are so important. I can assure you, a young person who maybe didn't have the family support they needed or the nurturing that was needed and they have been in the juvenile system for violence or behavior problems, it is going to be someone that more than likely is going to have a problem as they grow older, unless they can get help. Maybe now we can identify and get that person help so they don't harm themselves or anyone else in society. That is the purpose of what we are doing.

And then you have the investment in mental health funding: $11 billion we are investing in mental health. That is serious. For the first time, for us to put this type of money—of public money—towards something that is a public

tragedy that we are dealing with, I think the money is going in the right place. So when we said we want to be able to prevent—this bill should be able to prevent someone who shouldn't have a gun in that age group, and it gives us a little extra eyes and time to look into it, we have done it. To say that we basically are going to be able to identify this person and maybe help that person save themselves and a whole lot of other innocent people, we have done it.

We have started in the right direction. There is a lot more we can do. So for all of you that are out there saying, You didn't do enough, it is just not good enough—don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. This is a good piece of legislation, and it has bipartisan support. And I am so proud of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

It is time to move forward. We will be voting very shortly on that sometime today. It will be a historic vote, a very historic vote. And I am proud that the colleagues are standing tall on this. We have 50 Democrats and 15 Republicans, and that is a major accomplishment in today's atmosphere.

So I am proud to be a Senator that is going to take part in a historic piece of legislation to maybe correct a lot of the fears that people have right now of sending their children or grandchildren to school, of maybe relieving the fears of children who are saying, I am afraid to go to school today. That is something I have never heard growing up. It is something I couldn't imagine in the United States of America. I don't want my children or grandchildren and their children having to live through this. It is time for us to stop it.

This is a right start. It is a right piece of legislation. It is a good piece of legislation. And this is one time we have put our money where our mouth is and the mental health illness that goes on around in this country to make sure we are taking care of a problem that has been festering for a long time.

With that, I want to thank my colleague, Senator CORNYN, from Texas. I want to thank all of the group, if you will. We have 20-plus strong, equally divided—Democrats and Republicans—working for the right cause and the purpose for us being here, making sure we do something good for America and protect our children. We have done that in this bill.

With that, I say thank you to all of my friends, all of my colleagues, for a job well done.

With that, I see my friend is here, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I came to the floor to talk about the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. But first, let me just express my gratitude to the Senator from West Virginia for his longtime commitment to come up with a bipartisan solution. This is not easy.

And there are a lot of examples of good-faith attempts to try to come up with an answer that can get the requisite number of votes. And I know the Senator from West Virginia knows how hard that is. But it hasn't deterred him from contributing to our efforts, and I think our product that we are voting on is better for that. I want to say thank you.

Mr. MANCHIN. If I could say one thing, Senator CORNYN, if you give me a minute here.

The leadership you have shown is admirable. It really is. You come from a gun culture. I come from a gun culture. We know the challenges in a gun culture. I said: To a group of people, it is not enough; to other people, it is too much. Anything is too much because it is the camel's nose under the tent they are afraid of. We protected the Second Amendment. And we attacked the problem we have been identifying, which is mental illness. And you brought that to the forefront, took it. We put our money where our mouth is.

I think this is a great piece of legislation for us to start protecting the children of America. And I thank you again for that.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I thank my friend, our friend, from West Virginia for those generous remarks.

As we all know, a lot of people have been working on this issue, for the last few weeks especially, intensely. And this included, obviously, a lot of people beyond those that I have the time to name here. But we finally introduced our proposed legislation last Tuesday, exactly 4 weeks after the last terrible shooting in Uvalde, TX. I am not a patient person by temperament or personality. So I was hoping we would get here faster. But the truth is, since it requires consensus and persuasion, sometimes it takes a little longer than you hoped for. And I appreciate the space that both the majority leader and the Republican leader have given us to come up with something that will achieve a result.

So often around here, people do things and say things not with the intention of actually passing legislation but with the intention of making a political statement, or messaging, as it is sometimes called. That is not what we are doing here. We are not looking to posture or to try to embarrass anybody. We are trying to find a solution to a very real problem. And I think what we have come up with will, in the end, pass the test, which I know so many of us believe is the standard. And that standard is: Will it save lives? Will it save lives? And I believe the answer to that is yes. And that makes this worth doing.

Well, from the beginning, I was optimistic that we could reach a bipartisan agreement, but I know that on both sides of the aisle, there were some places that we could not go. As the Senator from West Virginia said—a proud defender of the Second Amendment, as am I—I was not going to go anywhere in this negotiation that jeopardized the rights of law-abiding Americans under the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Some people act as if the Second Amendment is somehow different than the rest of the Bill of Rights—the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, the freedom of association, the freedom of religion. Well, it is right there all in the same 10 first amendments to the U.S. Constitution, called the Bill of Rights. So it is entitled to no less respect than those other constitutional rights contained in the Bill of Rights.

But I think we have come up with a way to make good public policy and also to maintain that commitment to the Constitution. Some people want to create a false choice. I don't think we need to go there because there is not a false choice, as I said, between the Constitution and the Second Amendment and making good public policy. They don't have to overlap or interfere with each other. Both can stand on their own merits. Well, as I said, law-abiding gun owners are not the problem. And that was a redline for me.

During the course of our negotiations, our Democratic colleagues did push for a range of provisions that I believe stood no chance of becoming law, particularly in a 50–50 Senate. We know that if Democrats want to do everything their way or Republicans want to do everything our way, almost by definition in a 50–50 Senate, nothing will happen.

And to me, that was one of the most important things we are doing here. One is demonstrating that our institutions—in this case, the U.S. Senate—can actually work at a time when a lot of people are questioning whether our institutions can work and also questioning whether it is possible to come up with some bipartisan piece of legislation rather than fail as we have so many times before and each side sort of returning to their corner of a boxing ring and trying to message it to their base and not actually get a result.

So there were a lot of things that the President has asked for in this bill. For example, a ban on so-called assault weapons, which are a semiautomatic long gun, named, I guess, because of focus groups or polling assault weapons, but it is really a semiautomatic rifle. And there was also some discussion about high-capacity magazines. Neither of those are part of this legislation.

Now, I know there are Members who would perhaps love to have that, but they understand that to press that point to its logical extreme would mean we would not have anything at all. There is also no mandatory waiting period. There is no potentially unconstitutional requirement that gun owners store their weapons in a particular way.

Unless a person is adjudicated mentally ill or is a violent criminal, no one's Second Amendment rights will be impacted by this legislation, period. We know already that the National Instant Criminal Background Check System—which is the gold standard, in my

view, to make sure we draw the line in the right place between law-abiding gun owners and those who cannot, under existing law, purchase a firearm. For example, if you have been adjudicated in a mental institution, you can't buy a firearm. If you have been convicted of a felony, if you have been dishonorably discharged from the military, if you are addicted to drugs—all of those are current questions in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which if you answer yes to, then you cannot legally purchase or possess a firearm.

Some wanted to include more categories, but we did not. We essentially are, by doing what we have done here, saying we are going to make sure that existing law is enforced but not add additional requirements.

Well, some of our colleagues like to say that to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals, we need to limit the rights of law-abiding citizens. But as we know, the bad guys—the criminals—aren't going to respect the law; they are going to get the guns by any means they can, including illegally.

Frequently, they obtain firearms on the street or through straw purchasers. Background checks don't deter them because they don't buy them from a Federal firearms licensee, which does a background check. They buy it from a member of a street gang or someone else.

So we have rejected those attempts to add restrictions, as I say, on law-abiding gun owners, but we have added stiffer penalties for straw purchasers and gun traffickers. That, I believe, is the most effective way to deal with the problem of street sales of illegal guns through trafficking and straw purchasing. That is a way to improve public safety.

Following the shooting in Uvalde 4 weeks ago, I said I wanted to look at reforms that might have prevented this terrible tragedy from occurring.

To me, that is the best way to approach these cases because it is hard, sort of in the abstract, to say what it is we could do that might save lives. Frequently, we can look at the fact pattern of what happened and say: Here is where there was a failure, and here is another place there was a failure. Unfortunately, in Uvalde, there were multiple points of failure.

One is a lack of our access to juvenile records. This young man showed up after he had his 18th birthday. Right now, the criminal background check system doesn't look back before you were 18 to see whether you had a mental health adjudication or some disqualifying criminal conviction.

That is a problem because if somebody who we know, in retrospect, is sort of a ticking timebomb as a result of his troubled past, there is no way under the current system to get access to that information.

So one of the things we have done here is to say: Let's see if we can work with the States to make sure that they supply to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System information that had it occurred as an adult post-18 would clearly disqualify someone from purchasing a firearm. This is a little bit of a challenge because every State kind of does things differently, and there is no way we can compel the State to provide the information, but I would think that Governors and State legislatures would want to work with us to try to keep guns out of the hands of people who we know are a threat to themselves and a threat to public safety.

Our bill incentivizes the States to upload whatever juvenile records they have to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System to ensure that any disqualifying criminal convictions or mental health adjudications are available.

This is, to be clear, not an expansion but a clarification of the types of conduct and records that would disqualify somebody if you were an adult that are not currently available because we don't look past the 18th birthday—behind the 18th birthday to juvenile records.

So what we are doing is simply ensuring that those records, which would already disqualify somebody had it occurred if they were an adult, are available and could be considered as part of that background check.

If the background check for a buyer under 21 returns a potentially disqualifying record, what we have provided in this enhanced background check is an opportunity for the FBI to ask more questions.

And under our legislation, we don't change this part of it. The NICS system—the National Instant Criminal Background Check System—has 3 days to do a background check. But because it is computerized, 90 percent of them are done just in a matter of seconds, but on occasion the FBI has other information they need to investigate.

This was a real problem, for example, in Charleston, where Dylann Roof, somebody we know had a misdemeanor drug conviction—and on further inquiry, the FBI would have found out he was addicted to narcotics, which is also a disqualification. But because there was no opportunity to expand the background check beyond just the 3 days under current law, it wasn't part of the NICS system. And, unfortunately, he bought a gun and killed a lot of innocent people at Mother Emanuel Church there in Charleston.

So giving the FBI, for this cohort of 18- to 21-year-olds, an opportunity, if they come across something that needs further investigation, to give them up to an additional 7 business days to look into it.

I will give you another example. Let's say they come up with a record that demonstrates there was an assault. Well, there are different types of assaults against someone. It may be a bar fight or punching someone in the nose or it could be domestic violence. Well, the first is not a disqualifier under the law, but if the assault conviction actually turns out to be domestic violence, it would be. And so that is the kind of information that we are giving the FBI an opportunity to explore in this extension of the background check.

But this is not a mandatory waiting period, and it doesn't apply to gun buyers of all ages. For example, if somebody is 19 years old and they do the background check and they do what we require here, which is inquire of the juvenile record repository and the repository for mental health adjudications and local law enforcement, and they find nothing, then the transaction can occur in a matter of hours or a matter of days.

There is no mandatory waiting period. And this really addresses only that cohort of 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds, which has become a common profile for young shooters who have shot innocent people everywhere from Uvalde to Sandy Hook in Connecticut and other places.

The profile, unfortunately, is very sad and very tragic, people who are a danger to themselves and others, and that is the reason why we thought this enhanced process was important.

We also included comprehensive due process requirements relating to firearms. I have talked about the fact that this is a constitutional right, and of course the Constitution guarantees due process of law. And a lot of folks are, frankly, concerned about these red flag laws, these crisis intervention orders when somebody is demonstrated to be a danger to themselves and others.

And the concern is that not all of these red flag laws contain robust due process requirements. What are we talking about? Well, due process generally is understood to include notice, the opportunity to be heard, the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, and to present evidence in front of an impartial judicial officer.

So, in order to make sure that none of the grant funds would be available to States that did not have robust due process requirements and had red flag laws, as 19 States and the District of Columbia do, we have very strong due process conditions on the grants that are available.

But many States don't have red flag laws. For example, Texas does not, but we sure have a lot of crisis intervention programs that are sort of focused on the same sort of problem.

We have mental health courts, veterans courts, drug courts. We have something called assisted outpatient treatment for people who, under court order, can be an outpatient and be required to show up for their counseling or treatment but also to take the medications that their healthcare provider requires them to take if they are going to manage their mental health challenges. That is done under a court order but as an outpatient. So it is another way of sort of addressing this

problem of people having unmanaged mental health challenges and, in some cases, becoming a danger to themselves and others.

We firmly rejected the idea that the Federal Government would impose a national red flag law. And we did not view it as appropriate for the Federal Government to make the grant funds that are available through the Department of Justice be seen as an incentive to sort of nudge States or encourage States to pass their own extreme risk protection orders.

Those are decisions that are made at the State level, not here. But like I said, we provided robust due process requirements of any grants that go to those States. And it may be, as one of my colleagues said this morning, in his State, they have red flag laws, and he thinks that money could be used to ensure that the rights of law-abiding gun owners are protected by a robust due process.

And for States that don't have red flag laws, as I mentioned, there are other ways this money can go to help and address a similar problem. So all States will have access to these funds through the Department of Justice Byrne JAG law enforcement grant program.

So while some have said that taxpayer dollars are being used to violate someone's Second Amendment rights without due process, that is, clearly, a false accusation. Unfortunately, we know that when there is so much money to be made and so many people to be recruited to one cause or another when it deals with this general subject matter, that a lot of reckless and irresponsible and false statements get made, which is the reason I am here explaining what is in the bill and what is not in the bill.

One of the things that was very important to our Democratic colleagues is the definition of the ''boyfriend loophole.'' Just by way of explanation, under current law, before we passed this bill, if you are married to someone, if you are cohabitating with someone, if you have a child with someone and are not married or cohabitating or if you are in a relationship which is, for all practical purposes, similar to a marriage but not official, if you commit a domestic violence offense in your State and are convicted of that misdemeanor domestic violence, you are forever barred from purchasing or possessing a firearm.

One of the things we negotiated, frankly, because I think it just makes a lot of sense, is that for this category of boyfriends, so-called, roughly defined as recent or current serious relationship of a romantic or intimate nature, if you find yourself in one of those relationships and you commit an act of domestic violence, one of the things we negotiated is 5 years later, with a clean record, then you can have your Second Amendment rights restored.

And I think that is an important protection, again, of Second Amendment rights. Well, we would not agree that someone who was convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence against a girlfriend 30 years ago would be forever barred from their Second Amendment rights or someone who just had a casual dating relationship.

But as I said, we did include a provision to restore the Second Amendment rights to certain individuals who have a clean record of not committing any additional criminal acts, including domestic violence, for a period of 5 years.

We all know that there are plenty of people who make mistakes but then turn their lives around, and this legislation opens up the anatomy for individuals to have their Second Amendment rights restored if they do that.

We have worked throughout this process with a lot of different people, from the school safety portion to the mental health portion, and we have worked with law enforcement, and we have worked with a variety of groups, including some of the groups that represent gun owners as well as those who have advocated reform of our gun laws. I thought it was important for us to hear from everybody.

And now it may be that in the end, some of these outside groups do not love 100 percent of what we are doing here. We know that no piece of legislation is perfect. By definition, it is a compromise and a consensus to try to find that common ground. And so some outside groups may say: Well, we can't support that because it doesn't give us 100 percent of what we want, but frankly there is never a bill that passes that gives one side or the other 100 percent of what they want.

So just to conclude, just to repeat myself for emphasis, this bill does not infringe on law-abiding citizens rights under the Second Amendment. It doesn't actually expand the background checks system. It doesn't impose mandatory waiting periods or any other restrictions.

There is a lot of misinformation and, believe me, I think that is what social media was created for, for spreading misinformation or disinformation.

So there is a lot of misunderstanding about what is in this legislation, which is the reason I wanted to come to the floor and set the record straight.

This bill does, however, include important targeted reforms, complete with robust due process protections, that I believe in the end will keep our children and our communities safe while respecting Second Amendment rights.

Over the last couple of days, we have had a chance to have even further and more robust discussions among not only Republicans, but Democrats, and I appreciate those who perhaps may have been skeptical to what we were trying to do here—their willingness to keep an open mind, to ask us hard questions, and to force us to come up with good answers that will address their concerns. That is how we pass legislation here in the Senate; and my hope is that through those good-faith negotiations and debates and discussions, we can continue to build additional support for this legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. 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. REED. Madam President, we are on the brink of passing meaningful gun safety legislation, and it is regrettable that it took the deaths of 31 people, including 19 children, in the recent Buffalo and Uvalde mass shootings to provide the needed momentum to break the hold that the National Rifle Association and the gun lobby has had over Congress.

I commend my colleagues on both sides who have stepped forward to reach a compromise. This bill is a big accomplishment that can save lives, but I feel an inescapable dread that we will face the horror of another mass shooting if we do not take further steps.

As a veteran, I have shot many of the weapons we have heard debated on the floor this week. I know their power, and I know they were designed for killing people.

Now, I know that some of my colleagues hold the view that more firearms in the hands of more people is the antidote to gun violence, but I have to ask: Will more and more guns and more and more people carrying guns in public make our schools, our churches, or our streets safer? Is that really a vision for this country? I don't think so.

According to an academic study by the Council on Foreign Relations, the United States, with less than 5 percent of the world's population, has 46 percent of the world's civilian-owned guns, and it has the highest homicide-by-firearm rate of the world's most developed countries.

Indeed, Americans kill each other with guns at a rate 25 times higher than other high-income countries. In addition, Americans use firearms to harm themselves in alarming numbers. According to the CDC, in 2020, there were more than 45,000 firearm-related deaths in the United States, and roughly half of those deaths were suicides.

That is the academic data. But what grips me and so many other Rhode Islanders are the mass killings of Americans, particularly children, over the last quarter century: Columbine, Sandy Hook, Parkland, and now Uvalde. Hospitals, concert venues, houses of worship, and military installations have also been targeted. People have been targeted based on race, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. Innocent lives have been taken again and again, and many more lives have been shattered. The common element

is a firearm; and while correlation isn't necessarily causation, these mass killings have become more and more common as more and more guns have been marketed and sold.

Roughly two-thirds of Americans do not own a gun, and the majority of Americans agree on a commonsense solution like expanding background checks. But groups like the NRA have lined up to block these efforts even in the face of devastating loss.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act before us today represents progress. It represents a momentary break in the NRA's stranglehold on reform. This bill will establish a 10-day waiting period for firearms purchases for individuals under 21 years of age. It will close the ''boyfriend'' loophole that allows abusers to access guns. It will strengthen requirements for gun sellers to obtain a Federal firearms license. It will establish clear penalties for straw purchases and gun trafficking, and it will invest in violence intervention programs and mental health solutions in communities across the country. Those are real changes that are worthy of support on their own.

I am also encouraged that the bill includes incentives for States to adopt extreme risk protection orders, or a red flag system, similar to the legislation I have introduced. State red flag laws have proven effective in keeping guns away from individuals who have demonstrated clear warning signs of danger to themselves and others, and we should be encouraging every State to adopt a red flag system.

I would also like to talk about the mental health aspects of the bill. First, it needs to be repeated that a person with a mental health condition is more likely to be a victim of violent crime, not the perpetrator. The most reliable predictor of future violence is actually a history of violent behavior, not a diagnosis of mental illness.

That being said, we do have a mental health crisis in this country that demands attention. In Rhode Island, families and providers have been asking for more resources for treatment and more training for mental health workers, particularly resources dedicated to children with mental health needs. I am pleased that the negotiations over the gun control package so far include new resources for mental health care, including a national expansion of the certified community behavioral health clinic model, which would provide sustainable funding to expand mental health and substance abuse treatment and services at the community level. I have worked with my colleagues Senator STABENOW and Senator BLUNT for over a decade to move this provision forward.

I am also pleased that this agreement invests new funding in a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Next month, the Lifeline will be making the switch to an easy to remember three-digit number: 988. We need to make sure that call centers have the staff and capacity to handle call volume and make sure people who reach out for help get appropriate follow-up care. As I mentioned earlier, half of all gun deaths each year are suicides, and firearms are the most lethal method of suicide. In addition to keeping guns out of the hands of people in crisis, we need to make sure we have well-funded and organized systems in place for people who reach out for help in these times of crisis, like the Lifeline. Again, I would hope every American, and particularly those who face these mental health challenges, remember 988. It could be a lifesaver.

I hope we are able to consider bipartisan efforts to strengthen our mental health care system over the coming weeks and months. For example, we should pass the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act, which I introduced with Senator MORAN last year. The HELP Committee reported the bill out of the committee unanimously nearly a year ago, but this bipartisan bill still has not yet come before the Senate.

The bill also includes critical resources for schools, not only to implement measures to address physical safety, but also to ensure that schools have the resources to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and staff. Our educators have not just been on the frontlines of the pandemic. Too often—much too often—they are on the frontlines of the gun violence epidemic. And they are also on the frontlines of our mental health crisis. Finally, because of this legislation, some help is on the way.

The gun violence bill we are debating will hopefully prevent some tragedies going forward. Though we cannot help but celebrate any progress on gun violence, we should not lose sight of the fact that we need more comprehensive action than this bill if we are really committed to preventing gun violence in our Nation.

There is no single law or regulation that we can pass that would have stopped every single one of these tragedies we have seen over the past few decades. But in my view, Congress should do more, including reinstating the assault weapons ban, cracking down on illicit ghost guns, and, most importantly, eliminating the near total immunity of the gun industry, which has an unparalleled level of liability protection.

The gunman in Buffalo bought a semiautomatic weapon, but he was able to ''illegally'' transform it into a fully automatic weapon. If you go to your cell phone and get YouTube, put in something like ''transform AR–15 to fully automatic,'' you will have a host of videos. One of them lasts 1 minute and 38 seconds. Why is this happening? Well, when you have no liability for the consequences of building a weapon that can be easily transformed from semi to fully automatic and you can wink-wink to your potential market and say, ''Yes, this is semiautomatic,'' we need legislation to get that immunity removed.

Now, I am proud that in the days following the tragedy, my home State of Rhode Island took the decisive action of banning magazines that hold more than 10 rounds, raising the minimum age for buying shotguns and rifles from 18 to 21, and prohibiting loaded rifles and shotguns from being carried in public. Congress should do the same by passing the bill before us and then pressing on with additional reforms.

I will vote for this bipartisan bill. It is a significant step, but it cannot be the last step.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

Madam President, I rise to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Pell grant, which was named in honor of its author and my predecessor, Senator Claiborne Pell—I might add, a mentor, a friend, and a remarkable example to me.

Senator Pell believed in the power of education to transform individuals, communities, and our Nation. He worked to put the power of education in the hands of the people.

When Senator Pell introduced the legislation to create what would become the Pell grant, he said:

> There is no greater investment this country can make than in the education of its youth. Our young people, who are simultaneously our responsibility, our legacy, and our key to problem-solving in the future, must be enabled to pass easily into the realm of postsecondary education, and our institutions of higher education must be equipped to accommodate and train them.

His words were prophetic and profound. The Pell grant became the cornerstone for broadening access to postsecondary education. Because of the Pell grant, over 80 million students and counting have been able to attend college. In 1972, before the Pell grant, less than half of high school graduates immediately enrolled in college. Today, two-thirds make that transition. Since the establishment of the Pell grant, the percentage of people ages 25 to 30 with a bachelor's degree has doubled.

Today, the Pell grant supports nearly 7 million students across the Nation, including nearly 24,000 in Rhode Island. It remains one of the most effective Federal programs in assisting low-income families, with most recipients coming from families with annual incomes of $40,000 or less. It is one of our greatest tools to promote equity and opportunity in the United States. Yet, despite this success, today we find ourselves at a crossroads when it comes to fulfilling the promise of the Pell grant.

We have seen declining enrollment over the past 5 years. Even more alarming is that the institutions that enroll the lion's share of low-income and first generation college students—our community colleges and public 4-year colleges—have seen some of the most significant declines.

We have seen an explosion of student loan debt, now standing at more than $1.7 trillion—debt that threatens to foreclose on educational opportunity for this generation of Americans. We need to correct course.

We have made a start with the bipartisan, $400 increase to the maximum Pell grant in the fiscal year 2022 appropriations act, but we need to do much more. The Pell grant used to cover over three-quarters of the cost of a public 4-year college. Today, it covers less than a third.

When I was growing up and later with the passage of the Pell grant, it was relatively—I wouldn't say easy—but less challenging to go ahead and work your way through college with a summer job and a Pell grant, graduating with very little debt and moving on in the community and this society and this economy. Today, it is much, much more difficult. So it is time to double the grant.

We also need States and institutions to step up. Affordability is a shared responsibility. Fifty years ago, Senator Pell led the effort to ensure costs did not keep talented and committed students from pursuing a college education. In his farewell speech in the Senate, he called on us to continue his commitment to educational opportunity. He said:

> In education, I want us to be known as the nation that continually expanded educational opportunities, [the nation] that brought every child into the education mainstream, and [the nation] that brought the dream of a college education within the reach of every student who has the drive, talent, and desire. We should always remember that public support for education is the best possible investment we can make in our Nation's future. It should be accorded the highest priority.

So, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Pell grant, it is time to renew our commitment to college access and affordability. Let's work together to double the Pell grant, rein in college costs, and reduce the burden of student loan debt. Let's do our part to realize Senator Pell's vision for a country that continually expands opportunity.

One final point: Getting to know Senator Pell, it always impressed me that, I think, one of the formative periods in his life was the beginning of World War II. Senator Pell came from an old family. Pelham, NY, was named after his family. I was once with him when he informed me that his family once owned Fort Ticonderoga, but then they donated it to the State of New York.

He could have very easily, in 1941, gotten a promotion, gotten a rank, and served comfortably in some office. He chose not to.

He enlisted in the Coast Guard as a cook and sailed across the Atlantic in multiple convoys in dangerous waters. I think there, he learned the potential of the American people—those other cooks who would never be able to go to college because they didn't have the money, but they had talent and, in some cases, more talent perhaps than the Senator himself. I think that image, that impression, drove him in many respects to make the Pell grant a reality.

Now, of course, it is quite a tribute to a gentleman who could have avoided the difficulties and dangers of war and chose, just like other Americans, to go into the fight. And we have to have that same spirit as we address the Pell grant.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JEFF STREIT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, it is Thursday, and normally, when I am giving this speech, our ''Alaskan of the Week'' speech—you notice we have a new, pro-energy ''Alaskan of the Week'' diagram here—normally, when I give this speech, everybody has gone home. The pages love it because it is the most interesting speech of the week. Some of our reporters who like this speech, they are kind of viewing this as the end of the week.

Unfortunately, we are not at the end of the week. There is a lot more business to do for the next day or two or three—who knows?—important business, no doubt about it. But I still want to come down to the floor and talk about a really impressive man who has done incredible stuff for our State. His name is Jeff Streit.

Jeff has been a builder of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline—what we call TAPS—and then has helped run it for 48 years, almost half a century. We are going to talk about Jeff here in a minute. He has done an incredible job.

I always like to talk a little bit about what is going on in Alaska. All the people who watch this speech—we know there are millions who tune in every Thursday—come on up to Alaska. Come visit.

What is happening right now is really, really exciting. It is just a few days past summer solstice. Boy, did we celebrate in Alaska: parties, baseball games. The famous Midnight Sun Baseball Game took place in Fairbanks. I talked about that last week. It took place in Fairbanks on Tuesday. The Goldpanners, whom I talked about, the famous Alaskan baseball team, pulled out a 10-to-9 victory in the bottom of the 10th. The crowd of thousands went wild—Midnight Sun baseball.

So if you are visiting Fairbanks, as many tourists do right now, you might want to check out a baseball game. We have great baseball in Alaska, as I described last week.

You also might want to travel a couple of miles outside of Fairbanks to get a firsthand view of one of the engineering marvels of the world, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, what we call TAPS. That is it right there, a big, beautiful, incredible engineering feat: 800 miles of steel pipeline crossing 3 mountain ranges—one about 5,000 feet high—crossing more than 600 streams and rivers, and has transported over 17 billion barrels of oil to a thirsty America. That is energy security right there.

TAPS has provided countless benefits in terms of tens of thousands of jobs—good union jobs, I might add—not just to Alaskans but to Americans all over the country. I think even one of our Senate colleagues worked on this. It was the largest privately funded infrastructure project ever undertaken in America at the time it was built in the early seventies.

Here is the thing: It took 3 years to build—3 years; that is it—this mammoth, huge, important energy project.

By the way, we need to get back to that in this country. I and many other Senators are working on that. You can't do an EIS in 6 years. We have to get back to this can-do American spirit, building things that benefit our great Nation in a timely manner. I am going to talk a little bit about that.

Our Alaskan of the Week, Jeff Streit, was one who did this. He helped construct this incredible engineering feat, and then he stayed on, and he worked for a company in Alaska, a very famous company called Alyeska, which is a consortium of companies that own and run and built the pipeline.

This week, Alyeska celebrated its 45-year anniversary—45 years of supplying a thirsty America with billions and billions and billions of barrels of oil. Everybody should applaud that.

I know we have some, unfortunately, who think that if you work in the energy sector, somehow you are a bad guy. Actually, you are a hero.

America needs energy. Alaska has a lot of it. Alyeska has produced it and sent it 800 miles down this incredible pipeline to the whole country. So I want to first congratulate Alyeska for their incredible work.

Jeff, our Alaskan of the Week, is the longest serving employee there. He has been working for Alyeska all of those 45 years and, as I mentioned, started work on TAPS even longer, 48 years in total, because he is one of the Americans—by the way, there were over 30,000 who came up to build this incredible work of energy infrastructure. Forty-eight years, Jeff Streit, Alyeska, building TAPS—what an amazing career. He is our Alaskan of the Week.

So let me tell you a little bit about Jeff. Jeff's father came to Alaska after World War II, where he flew for the Army Air Corps.

That is another theme you may have seen on our Alaskan of the Week: a lot of vets, a lot of veteran families. Alaska has more veterans than any State per capita in the country.

Jeff's father worked on projects across the State, married Jeff's mother in 1952 when they were both working on

the Alaska-Canada Highway—the ALCAN Highway, as we call it in Alaska.

By the way, you want to talk about building something efficiently in terms of infrastructure that we need in America? The ALCAN Highway—1,600 miles through Canada, all the way to the lower 48—built in 8 months. We can do that, America. We can build great things—ALCAN Highway, TAPS—efficiently. We have just got to get back to it. More on that later.

Jeff's parents then moved back to Illinois, where Jeff was born, but he might have been raised in Alaska because his parents talked about the great State of Alaska so much—their adventures there, what they did there. So he wanted to go back.

He went to pre-vet school at Iowa State for 2 years, and the first chance he got, in 1973, he moved to Alaska to work on a farm and go to college at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Now, Madam President, I am sure a lot of our Senate colleagues know this, but for the interns—the pages, I mean—you might remember in the early seventies, studying history, that we had this big energy crisis where energy prices were going up—a little bit familiar, unfortunately, today—going way up, primarily because there was an Arab oil embargo led by the Gulf Arab States, Saudi Arabia, against the United States and other countries. It was devastating. You couldn't get gas. There were lines at gas stations that stretched for blocks. States issued rationing based on odd and even license plates. Prices surged, a little bit like today. Motorists turned on each other. It was bedlam. By the way, it really hurt the economy, like today, in terms of inflation.

Enter the great State of Alaska and our vast, vast energy reserves for America. Congress said: We need to get Alaska moving. We need to get that Alaskan energy to the rest of the country.

So this body and the House debated the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act—what we call, as I mentioned, TAPS—to build this for the country, and we did it.

It was drama, Madam President. You are sitting right there in the President of the Senate's seat. The TAPS act in the U.S. Senate was deadlocked. It was a tie vote here in the Senate, and the Vice President of the United States had to come and break the tie so America could build this for a country that needed energy—American energy, by the way, not energy from the Middle East.

Another incredible story as it relates to legislation and TAPS was the late, great Congressman DON YOUNG, a freshman at the time. We just lost our dear Congressman a couple of months ago. He was a brandnew freshman in 1973. He got an amendment—and, boy, do we need amendments like this today—that said: On this big infrastructure project, we are going to stop any litigation. We are going to stop more studies. We are just going to build it.

We can do that here, by the way, the Congress. We can say: No more litigation; let's build. And that is what we did. That is what America did.

As the debate was happening here in the Congress, Jeff moved back up to Alaska, visited a local union hall, got on with the Teamsters, and his life's work in Alaska began.

As I said, Madam President, this was the largest private construction project in our country's history. At its height, we had over 30,000 Americans—great Americans, by the way—building this incredible piece of American energy infrastructure that transformed our State in Alaska, and it transformed America. At one point, this pipeline was producing 2.2 million barrels a day for our Nation. Over 17 billion barrels of oil have flown down that pipeline for America.

By the way, Madam President, Alaska has billions and billions of barrels of oil left, if our Federal Government would just help us produce it.

Eventually, Jeff got a job, after building TAPS, with Alyeska running TAPS, working at Pump Station 8. In the 48 years since, he has worked nearly every inch of that line as a technician at three pump stations, as a task force supervisor, as a project supervisor, as a pump station operations supervisor, and as a pipeline technician trainer. You get where I am going here, Madam President: He has done it all for Alyeska.

He has great stories and great memories. He remembers the mess halls filled with smoke and laughter and the hard work it took to build this pipeline. He remembers watching ''Jaws'' at a packed theater camp in the middle of the Alaska wilderness. He remembers the time a Russian delegation came to visit TAPS. The TAPS pump station was so clean.

By the way, Alaska has the highest environmental standards of energy production anywhere in the world.

He said: The Russians came, saw how we produced, saw pump stations, and thought that we were lying about how we produce and transport oil because it was so clean. They thought it was staged.

Jeff said: We were setting standards on the environment—cleanliness, environmental standards—that people across the world didn't think were possible. ''It made us proud.''

Well, guess what, we are still doing that in Alaska. Jeff still marvels at the engineers who designed one of the most complicated engineering projects ever built—before computers; using paper, pencils, slide rules. ''Every square inch of the system has to be intact to move even one drop of oil,'' Jeff said. ''If there is a leak anywhere, we shut the whole thing down.''

It is a testament to so many that this incredible system has kept oil flowing for America for 45 years. That is what Jeff just said about TAPS and Alyeska.

To keep it running, there are always upgrades, adjustments, installing enhanced monitoring, detection, surveillance, but, as Jeff said, ''The pipeline itself is still the same pipeline that was built in the '70s, still doing battle with the geological and meteorological forces,'' and still standing strong for our country.

Jeff has no plans to retire soon. He is still highly engaged. He is still highly curious. He is now taking on a greater mentorship role, including developing and teaching a hydraulics class, emulating those who taught him.

Jeff said: ''When I think about the last 48 years, I think about the thousands of people who have made a difference, who helped me and taught me. And I really think that that's what America is all about—passing on values and work ethic[s]'' to each other.

That is what America is all about. That is the best of our country: people who work hard, who are loyal to their jobs, to their communities, to their State, to their country, and importantly, who produce important things like American energy, which we need to this day. Jeff is exactly one of those kind of people. He built this, ran it, still runs it, and our Nation still needs it.

So, Jeff, thank you for all that you have done.

Thanks to the workers at Alyeska who are currently working right now, 24/7, to keep hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil a day, which we need, coming down the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

A big congratulations to Alyeska for 45 years and 17 billion barrels of oil for America.

That company, Alyeska, has produced many great leaders—Jeff being one and Tom Barrett, my good friend, being another. And I just want to say to him—to everybody at Alyeska but particularly to Jeff—congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week. You people who are producing American energy are American heroes. We need more of you, and we really appreciate all you have done for our great State and our great Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, before I get to my topic today, I would like to say that when Senator SULLIVAN first came to the Senate, I hadn't been here very long, either, and this was my presiding time every week. I loved the Alaskan of the Week. I don't think they are ever going to run out of Alaskans of the Week as long as Senator SULLIVAN is here. So I was right back in that chair, where you are, thinking of the many times I heard Senator SULLIVAN do the presentation on the Alaskan of the Week and how much I enjoyed it.

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Madam President, I would say the topic today is tragic in so many ways but, I think, moving forward in others.

Last month, 19 kids were killed in their own school rooms and 2 teachers were killed in Uvalde, TX. It was a horrific act, an agonizing thing for family, an agonizing thing for community, and I think, along with the Buffalo, NY, event, an agonizing thing for our country.

One thing that almost all these mass shootings have in common is a perpetrator who had a mental health issue that wasn't dealt with properly.

Let me say before Senator STABENOW and I talk any more about mental health—and I believe I will repeat this again—be sure we know what we are talking about here. People with mental health conditions are not dangerous. Mental health is a health issue, and we ought to treat it as a health issue, but in rare and tragic occasions, people with a mental health issue not dealt with can become dangerous, and that is what we have seen in this and other similar circumstances.

So one of the responses is always, Well, we need to have a better mental health delivery system. That is true, but we should realize that, according to the National Institutes of Health, for at least a decade now, they have estimated that at least one in five Americans has a diagnosable and almost always treatable mental health or behavioral health issue. Frankly, the pandemic made that even greater.

A June 2020 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 41 percent of adults in the United States said they had had at least one symptom of a mental health condition in a recent time, and 11 percent said they had seriously considered suicide in the previous month. Now, those are extraordinary numbers, but even if half of those numbers were correct, you see the size of the problem we have and the importance of dealing with that problem.

Of course, we had even more alarming numbers with children and young adults during that. The lockdowns, months of virtual learning, time away from their friends, I would argue too much time on screens—the effect of the pandemic on close family members had a staggering toll on the country.

Children's hospitals saw mental health emergencies among 5- to 17-year-olds increase by 14 percent in the first half of 2021 compared to 2019 and a 45-percent increase in self-injury and suicide for children in that age group. Pediatric hospital needs and pediatric mental health care needs are greater than they have ever been.

We need to be sure that everyone who has a mental health crisis or has an ongoing mental health problem has the help they need when they need it. The bipartisan legislation we are debating today expands access to high-quality mental health and behavioral health through what Senator STABENOW and I will point out we believe to be a truly proven model of community-based care: the Excellence in Mental Health Program, a program that we brought to the floor in 2013 and then got passed and signed into law in 2014.

At the time, Senator STABENOW mentioned that bill marked the most significant expansion of community mental health and addiction services in decades.

When we pass this bill, it will be even more dramatic in its long-term impact. And we have worked on these issues together with pilot States. We worked on these issues together that brought projects in individual States that weren't part of that eight-State original and, eventually, nine-State pilot.

And so today we are able to come with 5 years of history in this program, a reimbursement model that matters, and results that we think make a big difference. And I am glad to be here with my good friend from Michigan. And we are going to kind of do this together for the next few minutes, talk about what can happen because of a critical piece of this community safety bill that is in so many ways a mental health and mental health delivery bill that we are going to see expanded in the country in unique ways.

Senator STABENOW, I would like to turn to her for a few minutes to talk about this, and then I have got some things to say, too.

Ms. STABENOW. All right. Thank you, Senator BLUNT.

Mr. President, I have to say this has been a wonderful partnership and a wonderful journey now for, gosh, almost 10 years, I think, since we originally started talking about the idea that we should be funding healthcare above the neck the same as healthcare below the neck as part of the healthcare system. And that is your ''stop and start'' grants, when we have community health centers that are so wonderful for physical health. And so we have done that.

I do want to, before going into the substance, give a shout-out, though—because we are not the only ones who have been working for almost 10 years—to our wonderful staff: Alex Graf, on my staff, who has been working on this legislation for 8 of those years, and Caitlin Wilson, on your staff, who was amazing, and I understand recently stolen by Senator CORNYN. And so she has continued her work. But so many people have worked with us that we are very grateful to, including the main authors and the folks who have put this bill together, like Senator CORNYN, who has been such a strong supporter of what has become an evidence-based quality initiative. We don't have to make something up. When folks say, ''What do you want to do about mental health care or addiction care,'' we actually have a proven model now. And also to KYRSTEN SINEMA and to CHRIS MURPHY and Senator TILLIS—so many people have been supportive of this as well.

And I just want to take us back for just a moment because when we came to the floor, Senator BLUNT, when he mentioned 2013, we actually came to the floor to mark the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy signing the Community Mental Health Act. As we know, that was the last bill he ever signed before his being shot. And part of that was to stop housing people in hospitals, just locking people in the hospitals, and create more quality care in the community—you know, shut the hospitals and open up services in the community.

As you have said so many times, half of that happened. The hospitals were closed, but we didn't provide the quality and the funding—permanent funding—for the community care. That was 1963. We are doing it now in this bill. That is what we are doing in this bill is completing what was promised in a national bill signed in 1963.

We know, again, that one out of five people in our country—and this is before COVID—will have a mental illness in their lifetime. So many leading causes of death—again, prior to COVID—for people under age 50 is a drug overdose, most likely opioid overdose. We know that the most likely gun death is a suicide, which, by the way, in this bill, there is an important piece on red flags that I think is so important because that means that if a family member, if those around someone feel that they are a danger to themselves and someone else and should not have access to a gun, they can go through a legal process to have that happen so that that person is not using a gun to commit suicide or a suicide-homicide through a mass shooting.

But what is so significant about this is that we know that across this country, certainly across Michigan, I know in Missouri, we have so many people—I mean, there are millions of people today who want to be able to get help for mental health or addiction as part of the healthcare system. And we want them to do that. We don't want there to be a stigma.

There used to be a stigma. People would whisper, ''He's got cancer,'' and now, we openly talk about that. We have wonderful programs and people get treatment, and there is no stigma related to that. It is very challenging, but there is no stigma. We want that for mental illness, for behavioral health.

So this isn't about saying every person with a mental illness is dangerous at all—at all. This is about saying we want everyone to get the help they need. And in that situation, that rare situation where somebody doesn't get help and then takes those next steps and is unstable and dangerous, we certainly want to address protecting them, their family, the school, the neighborhood, the community. And that is what the gun safety provisions of this are all about.

Let me just say one other thing and turn it back to Senator BLUNT. We now have—between the number of demonstration States we have had now for a number of years, we also have 435

clinics, many of them funded through what we developed as startup grants so that they can get started, develop the quality standards, be able to show what a difference it made.

But I think we were both pretty blown away when we saw the difference it made, when we saw those original numbers from Health and Human Services, the studies that were done—both in Democratic and Republican administrations, reinforcing that. The fact that right now, if you have a 24-hour psychiatric crisis services center, which is part of this, these clinics, people aren't going to jail—60 percent fewer people are going to jail because they are getting the help they need, which is why law enforcement so strongly supports this.

What has been happening is people go to the emergency room instead because there is no place—our jails, our emergency rooms have become de facto mental health treatment centers because there was no place else; 41-percent reduction in homelessness with comprehensive care in the community. And that is what is in this bill.

And it really is transformative; wouldn't you say, Senator BLUNT?

Mr. BLUNT. Yes. I think the point you are making here, too, are that these are—we now have 5 years of evidence in several States, multiple years in other States. So this isn't just assuming what will happen but looking at what we have carefully tried to keep track of, of what does happen. And as you pointed out, that de facto mental health system, mental health delivery system of the emergency rooms and police—nobody was well-served by that. Certainly, the police weren't well-served. The emergency rooms weren't well-served. And people had many mental health challenges that weren't served by that as well. And seeing those numbers go down dramatically of people having to go to the emergency room for mental health services or being kept in jail overnight or longer than overnight for mental health services, nobody benefits from that system.

And so we are seeing real numbers where the people who work at the emergency room, the people who are in the police department are among the biggest supporters of this system when it gets in place. Also, the whole idea of crisis intervention, there are opportunities in this law for that to happen.

In any of the new structures, whether that is drug court or veterans court or other places you would go to try to be sure somebody is getting the help they need when they need it, there also would be due process involved in anything added; that we use this bill to add to the system due process where people have a right.

If there is an emergency moment, obviously, you have to deal with that as an emergency moment. But people then have a right to have their day in court as well, if they are not part of that crisis intervention moment of seeing that happen. And so that is important.

But in Missouri, 150,000 people are now part of this excellence in mental health effort. That is about a 40-percent increase on what some of the same facilities were doing before, but now, they do it with more certainty that they are going to get their cost reimbursed. They do it with the right kind of staff, and 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, they have to be available. And the new States that enter the program will go through that same type of competition to be among the 10 States every 2 years that could enter the program and get us to all 50 States in that program and have the kind of staff they need, the kind of accessibility they need.

I think, originally in our bill, which was 8 years ago now—2014—24 States applied to be one of the first 8 States in the pilot program; 19 of them went through the whole process, and 8 States were selected. But in the other States, there are now 30 States that have big units that were able to qualify as individual demonstration grant units to show what they could do. And we really, I think, both believe that those units in those States will become both the models and the incentive to bring the whole State into that program now that that is possible and seeing what we are seeing with results and also results on the nonmental health side.

One of the unique things I think that this pilot did was—part of the pilot was to see what happens with the other healthcare issues that people have who have mental health concerns. And what has happened is that they have seen those costs go dramatically down. If you have a behavioral health problem that is being dealt with, you are much more likely to show up to your doctor's appointment. You are much more likely to show up to dialysis. You are much more likely to take the medicine that has been prescribed, whether it was for your mental health situation—and occasionally, that is the best way to deal with mental health—or your other health situations. And so those costs go down.

And even in the immediate healthcare space, we are seeing that States believe they are saving money in the immediate space of healthcare. There has never been any question that in the long run you would save money if you treat mental health like you treat all other health. There has never been any question, whether it is the prison system or law enforcement or your personal income capacity, that all those were good things to do.

I think what we have shown in these early States is that even in the immediate healthcare space, you save as much money or virtually as much money or even more money on the other health costs for the one in five adult Americans—and now big numbers among the younger Americans who have a mental health problem—you save as much space for their other health problems, and one in five adult Americans are going to have a lot of other health problems. It is a pretty big segment of our society.

And I think, Senator STABENOW, seeing what happened there has also been persuasive to States as they are beginning to think about making this part of their permanent program when these pilot projects are over.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely. Senator BLUNT, as we know, in the end, this is all about people. And I think what has been most exciting for me, and I know for my friend and partner, is that people's lives are changing. Opportunities for them are changing.

When we look at this legislation broadly, it is about saving lives, whether it is through issues related to gun safety, whether it is through getting the help you need, mental health help and addiction services help, whether it is making sure our schools are safer, making sure laundry services are available in the schools. It is all be creating safety and a better quality of life.

I think it is also exciting—you know, we were talking about community behavioral health clinics with broader investments here on mental health as well. There is a strengthening of the suicide hotline, which is so connected to what we have been talking about today. Telehealth, we know during the pandemic how critically important that was for mental health services and so on. And that is strengthened.

There is about a billion dollars' worth of investments in some way in our schools—school health clinics and other opportunities.

What I think is exciting is that we are not only supporting schools and teachers in all of these areas that are so important, but we are making sure that when they find a child that needs help, there is somewhere to go because when you are talking about really investing in transformative, certified community behavioral health clinics, that means there is a service in the community.

So if a parent or if a teacher or the principal or the coach or somebody is saying, ''This young person needs some help,'' they won't only be trained to identify they need help, they will actually be able to get them help because there will be services available. And so I think that is the whole point of all of this.

And I would also finally say, when we talk about funding as healthcare, traditionally mental health and addiction services have been funded by grants to stop and start. And so you may need help or want your child to get help, but the grant that was doing that went away; or you may suddenly decide you want to deal with your own addiction, you are finally ready—it is so hard—you are finally ready to do that, and you reach out and the services aren't there anymore.

And so this is about funding this as healthcare through the healthcare system, so it doesn't stop and start. It becomes a way of looking at healthcare above the neck the same as healthcare

below the neck. And that is why we call it transformative.

And it is such an important commitment. I am so proud of everyone here that has been so wonderfully supportive and enthusiastic about taking this big step. This is an area of this bill that is a huge step that will really save lives and transform communities, I think.

Mr. BLUNT. Just one final thought, we want to be sure that we are encouraging people to get the healthcare they need. You know, if this system works like it should work, you really never know what you are doing in terms of how you have changed people's lives in the future or the lives of people they might impact.

We don't want to create any stigma here that a resilient, broad-based mental health system that is part of this bill means that you should be hesitant to seek mental health help. You know, if you have a mental health problem, you are more likely to be the victim of a crime than you are the perpetrator of a crime.

But if those problems get out of control—often suicidal thoughts first before you have homicidal thoughts—but if this system works the way it should, who knows what good you have done by just letting people go through their normal lives as contributing citizens with treating their mental health and talking about their mental health.

As Senator STABENOW said, being able to talk about somebody in your family that has a mental health challenge as readily as you talk about somebody in your family that has a cancer challenge or a dialysis trip that they have to make multiple times a week to go somewhere or medicine that they take for something else and talking about this in the context of the good it does in making our society safer should, in no way, be interpreted to mean that people with a mental health concern are unsafe.

But if you don't deal with that problem in the right way at the right time, it has the potential to be unsafe. Most of these shootings we have seen, the shooter goes into that shooting clearly anticipating that they will not come out of that shooting alive either. So it is suicide; it is homicide; it is things that if you dealt with that problem a decade earlier—and maybe in some cases, the specific problem even a week earlier—but if you dealt with it a decade earlier, as people began to see that, you know, We need to get you some help.

Just like if your hearing is going bad or your eyesight is going bad, people say, ''Let's get an appointment and go see what we need to do,'' and anybody can be seen at these certified community behavioral health centers. Anybody can be seen if you are covered by—it is very much based on the federally qualified health center model. If you have insurance that covers this, you can go there. If you have a government program that covers it, you can go there. If you need to pay cash, you can go there on a very affordable sliding scale. But people are seen, and nobody—in our State, at least, and I think this would be the case in all nine of the pilot States—nobody who needs to be seen that day is not seen that day. Nobody who needs to be seen that day is not seen that day.

And nobody who needs to be seen isn't seen pretty quickly as you have time to schedule that appointment. It changes people's lives; it changes communities; it changes the way we talk about mental health.

As Senator STABENOW said on the floor, the last 50 years after President Kennedy signed his last bill into law—now, here we are, almost 60 years after that bill was signed into law taking what would be, so far, the biggest step toward accomplishing what that Community Mental Health Act envisioned.

And Senator STABENOW, I will turn to her for any final comments.

Ms. STABENOW. I just want to say thank you to my friend and partner, and I really do mean friend and partner. And Senator BLUNT thinks he is retiring; I am not going to let him. We have really done so much important work together, and I am going to miss him dearly.

I am really seriously figuring out a strategy where we are not going to let you leave the building.

But I am very grateful and, again, for him, for all of the great staff work, and it is a day to feel good about the ability to come together and get something done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first of all, while Senator BLUNT and Senator STABENOW are still on the floor, I want to thank both of them for their extraordinary leadership on this mental health issue.

I am so pleased that the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act includes robust provisions to deal with community mental health.

I have worked with Senator STABENOW on the Senate Finance Committee. I know her passion on this issue. We have put together bipartisan working groups that are dealing with a lot of different issues in regards to mental health. A lot of that has to do with pediatric mental health, which is very much engaged in the bill that we have before us today. And a lot of those provisions have been incorporated into the legislation before us.

But what you have done on these certified behavioral health centers to be able to have the pilot programs and now to be able to expand them to more communities, to have a 24/7 facility that is available that is included in this legislation, that is going to make a real difference in people's lives.

So I just really want to thank both of you for your tremendous contributions on this issue. Senator STABENOW, I want you to know, through the Chair, I agree with you in regards to Senator BLUNT. We are going to miss his personal presence here on the U.S. Senate floor, but we know that we will be able to continue on having his friendship and counsel on so many issues that have affected us.

And if my friend from Kentucky would allow me just a few more minutes, I would like to make a couple comments about the underlying bill. I know that he is scheduled to speak.

Mr. PAUL. No. Go ahead.

Mr. CARDIN. After the horrific shooting in Uvalde where innocent children were murdered, inaction was not an option. Congress had to do something substantive to help stem the epidemic of gun violence that is scarring our communities daily. For this reason, for all the victims of gun violence who may not make the headlines every day, I was proud to vote today in favor of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

The Senate is taking an important step forward today to break the decades-long gridlock on gun safety. Legislation will save lives by boosting funding for community violence intervention and prevention initiatives like those underway in Baltimore.

It strengthens protection for victims of domestic violence by adding convicted domestic violence abusers to background checks.

It creates a new source of funding for States to implement red flag laws which help to keep weapons out of the hands of dangerous individuals who should not have access to a firearm.

It cracks down on criminals who tried to evade licensing requirements and makes clear which gun sellers need to register, conduct background checks, and keep appropriate records. It strengthens the background check process for those under 21 seeking to buy firearms, by ensuring that officials have access to juvenile and mental health records.

The bipartisan legislation also provides much needed mental health resources to communities by providing funding to improve and expand access to mental health services. It includes policies from the MENTAL Health for Kids and Underserved Act and the Senate Finance Committee Bipartisan Mental Health Working Group telehealth discussion draft led by Senator THUNE and me to improve telehealth services for students with Medicaid and CHIP.

Increasing resources for mental health services are critical, but it is important that we not conflate mental illness and gun violence. And I heard Senator BLUNT talk about that. Not every instance of gun violence is connected to mental illness, and not every mental health crisis prompts the use of a weapon.

To that end, the COVID–19 pandemic has made abundantly clear that our children need additional mental health resources offered in schools. We must

also significantly increase the pipeline of individuals willing to serve in those school-based mental health service positions.

This legislation addresses that challenge head on and provides supplemental funding to both train new school-based mental health service providers and provide students with the specific mental health services they require.

While not able to meet the needs of every school currently without counselors or mental health professionals, this bill will make significant strides to ensure that a significantly greater percentage of students have access to mental health services.

The legislation we pass in the Senate soon will save lives and help keep our communities safer, but there are many more reasonable steps we can and should take, consistent with the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens.

I will continue to strongly support the establishment of universal background checks for all gun purchases, the banning of assault weapons and high-capacity magazine clips from private ownership, and raising the minimum age to 21 to buy assault weapons, in the absence of a ban.

The Senate should also act quickly to confirm the nomination of Steven Dettelbach to be the director of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. The ATF has not had a permanent Senate-confirmed director since 2015, and the Agency is sorely overdue for permanent leadership who can carry out its critical mission to stem the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, among other important priorities.

To that end, let me point out I am a cosponsor of the Background Check Expansion Act, which would require checks for all gun sales, including those by unlicensed sellers; the Assault Weapons Ban Act, which would generally ban the sale, manufacture, transfer, and importation of assault weapons; the Background Check Completion Act, which would eliminate the Charleston loophole that allows for a sale to go forward if a check is not completed within 3 days; the Keep Americans Safe Act, which prohibits the importation, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which we can and will pass, will save lives, but there is still more work that we should do to keep our students and our communities safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, Jon Miltimore, who writes for the Foundation for Economics and Education writes:

> Red flag laws don't involve precogs seeing into the future. Yet, like precrime, they are designed to prevent a crime before it happens, even if it means violating civil rights in the process.

Miltimore asks several important questions: Can people who are flagged as threats be involuntarily committed? Are they appointed legal counsel? Will a Federal database be established to track flagged citizens?

These are questions that civil libertarians should be asking, especially since many people who are red-flagged will have committed no crime.

There will simply be, like Philip Dick's ''Anderton,'' people who might commit or might be a danger to someone. Miltimore reminds us that the idea of precrime didn't originate with ''The Minority Report.'' In ''1984,'' Orwell writes that Big Brother's ''endless purges, arrests, tortures, imprisonments, and vaporizations'' are not the result of people breaking laws, for there are no laws in Oceania. These punishments, readers learn, are merely the wiping out of persons who perhaps might commit a crime at some time in the future.

Red flag laws are well-intentioned. Everyone is searching for a way to prevent the senseless massacres of school mass shootings.

I think accessing the violent criminal records of juveniles is a reasonable way to try to prevent these killings. Though, really, most States have already laws on the books that criminalize threats of violence. The problem isn't a lack of laws to stop these killers, it is a lack of persistent application of existing laws.

The shooters at Parkland and Buffalo both committed criminal threats in advance of their killing sprees, and yet law enforcement did not vigilantly prosecute them. Instead of seeking to enforce existing laws, States have, one after another, instituted red flag laws to use gun confiscation orders to try to predict crime in advance.

The problem comes in trying to create such laws and still protect the constitutional right to bear arms for the innocent.

Basic aspects of the Constitution should not be abandoned, such as the right to confront your accuser. Some red flag laws allow anonymous accusers to initiate a gun confiscation order.

That is not just, and that is not constitutional.

We should not abandon the right to legal counsel, the right to confront the evidence. Many State red flag laws allow gun confiscation orders without the defendant even knowing they have been accused of anything. Many State red flag laws allow guns to be confiscated without hearing evidence from both sides.

Jacob Sullum, in Reason, writes of Colorado's red flag law that the standard of proof for the initial gun confiscation order when the accused does not have an opportunity to respond—see, for the initial order, the accused is not present or doesn't need to be present, and the evidence comes from one side. But the standard that is used is called the preponderance of the evidence, meaning the standard used is that the accused is more likely than not to pose a significant risk.

Historically, gun rights were only removed when the defendant was convicted of a crime using a constitutional standard of ''beyond a reasonable doubt.''

As Philip Mulivor writes at PJ Media:

> Because ''reasonable doubt'' has been long established as the standard of proof for criminal cases, it must naturally apply to judicial proceedings in which an individual, who has not even been charged with a crime, can be stripped of a constitutional right. Nevertheless, red-flag laws often rely on ''a preponderance of the evidence,'' a radically diminished standard of proof. This, above all other injuries—

According to Philip Mulivor—

> to due process, offends our system of liberty and [a] fair trial.

Colorado's red flag law, as well as many other States', confiscates guns using a less-than-constitutional standard.

Using a preponderance-of-evidence standard, which is a standard lower than the Constitution uses for criminal cases, allows a gun confiscation order when a judge decides that it is a better than 50–50 chance of a person being a ''significant risk.''

Think about that. It is a little better than 50–50 that the person who has come before me, whom I have heard evidence only from the person who doesn't like that person—it is 50–50, maybe it is 51–49, but I am going to take away a constitutional right, whereas in a court proceeding where you are convicted of a crime, where you lose your gun rights because of a felony, the standard is beyond a reasonable doubt.

In practice, the other problem with the red flag laws is that judges will be inclined to err on the side of caution. When the only evidence comes from someone who believes the respondent poses a threat, judges will rarely, if ever, decline to issue a temporary gun confiscation order.

One might ask if our laws should allow the abridgement of a constitutional right when only one side of the evidence is presented. Imagine if the proceeding is a complaint filed by an unhappy spouse in the midst of a divorce. Most cases of divorce involve one side cheating or at least one side lying. It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the truth in a divorce proceeding even when both sides are heard. One can just imagine what mischief might occur if divorce proceedings only allowed testimony from one side.

If you think red flag laws will be easy to adjudicate, just imagine the case involving Johnny Depp and Amber Heard.

As Sullum points out, there is—from the judge's point of view, ''The possible downside of rejecting a petition''—a serious downside—''the death of a respondent or someone else—will weigh

heavily on the judge's mind, while the temporary deprivation of the subject's constitutional rights will seem trivial by comparison.''

The presumption will be, if the temporary order, where you only heard evidence from one side, was granted, that the judge is taking a real risk by overturning or not granting the permanent order when evidence is actually heard on both sides.

So you begin with a temporary order—it is ex parte; you don't have legal counsel; evidence is only heard from one side—but then you get to the next stage and you say: Well, the person gets justice later. They are going to get a lawyer. There will be a proceeding. There will be due process at a later date.

Yet the cards are stacked because think of the perspective of the judge, think of the predicament of the judge. He now has before him an emergency order that says this person is a dangerous person. For him or her to rule otherwise, they are taking a big risk because the first judge or the first ruling said this person is dangerous. Now the judge has to say and has to somehow attest and prove and live with themselves that he is now attesting this person is not a danger.

But the first hearing was only one side of the evidence. The first hearing may have been an aggrieved party in a divorce. It may have been an unhappy person who doesn't like you at work. It may have been someone who doesn't like your political views and is reading online and says, that so-and-so had a picture of a gun, or that so-and-so made some sort of violent innuendo. Read Twitter. Find out how much of that is going on. There is a danger to this.

It is not that anyone is downplaying the sad, awful nature of these massacres and that we don't want to stop them, but we should do it in a fashion consistent with the Constitution.

With the red flag law, the initial hearing has evidence only from those who accuse you of something. That cannot be justice. The bedrock aspect of justice in our country is that you get legal counsel, that there is a debate back and forth.

Go to family court—and you think some of this won't originate from family court? You think there is not going to be an angry spouse who says: My husband cheated on me. My husband is a hunter. I am going to accuse him of something so I can get his guns taken away from him.

You have to hear both sides. How could you only hear from the angry spouse? In divorce, we don't hear from one side. How could we have a hearing where you take away an amendment—or take away a constitutional right from the Bill of Rights without hearing evidence on both sides?

You say: Well, we will hear it at the second hearing 14 days later.

The problem with the second hearing is you now have a judge who feels the incumbent pressure of not changing an initial ruling, a feeling of, well, we have already decided this person is a threat, and now I have to take the responsibility of guaranteeing they are not a threat.

See, if you had the jurisprudence, if you had the due process in the first hearing, then you wouldn't have to worry so much about it being fair in the second hearing. If you have time to go before a judge, I see no reason why you don't have time to have your attorney present. They have time enough to have a hearing. They have time enough to hear the person accusing you. Shouldn't they have time enough to have someone defending you?

In Colorado, a temporary gun confiscation order lasts for about 14 days, at which point the judge has to schedule a hearing where the accused finally has a chance to challenge the claims.

At this second proceeding, the legal standard is a little greater—at least in Colorado. It goes from preponderance or 50–50—slightly better than 50–50—it goes from a standard of that to a standard that is ''clear and convincing evidence.''

Under Colorado's red flag law, though, the first gun confiscation order needs to show imminent risk, but when you get to the second order, interestingly—the order that is going to last a year—you don't have to prove that the person is an imminent risk; all you have to say is that they might be a risk at some point in time. So we have lost sort of the imminence to it.

In 14 days, the imminence is gone, and now we have a proceeding where we are going to hear evidence on both sides, and you can have counsel—not always guaranteed counsel, but you at least can have a lawyer present. In order to remove a gun confiscation order, though, and recover one's Second Amendment rights, the burden, though, is now placed on the accused.

So there is something that is very, very common and is throughout all of our jurisprudence: that you are innocent until proven guilty; the burden is on the government. But now, once you have gone through one of these gun-restraining orders, in order to get your rights back, you have to prove that you are not a risk. The burden is now on the accused to prove that either you are sane or that you are not a risk. It is proving a negative. If you never were a risk, how do you prove that you are no longer a risk? How do you prove you are the negative of something? How do you prove that you are not a risk? This turns typical jurisprudence on its head. Instead of innocent until proven guilty, the burden is for the accused to prove his or her innocence. This is the opposite of what our jurisprudence system was founded upon.

Sullum writes:

> If the judge issues a [gun confiscation order], it lasts for 364 days unless the subject seeks early termination and shows by clear and convincing evidence that he [or she] does not pose a significant risk.

Rhode Island's red flag law is similar, remaining in effect for about a year before the accused can challenge it.

For the accused to restore his Second Amendment rights, once again, the burden is on the accused to prove they are innocent.

The ACLU of Rhode Island asks an important question: How does one prove this negative, and how does one do it with such a high burden of proof? The ACLU concludes that in ending a gun confiscation order, ''the burden should be on the GOVERNMENT to prove by clear and convincing evidence that it should remain in effect, not on the accused to halt the continued imposition.''

This is the ACLU of Rhode Island saying the burden should be on the government the same way the burden is traditionally in any other court proceeding in our country. You don't have to prove you are innocent; the government must prove you are guilty.

If the government is going to take away your Second Amendment right, shouldn't the government have to prove that you are either a threat or that you are guilty of something?

Eagle County Sheriff James Van Beek notes that when the subject of a gun confiscation order tries to have it terminated, ''the burden of proof is not on the [government], as it is in every other legal case, but instead, is placed on the [accused] to prove that the accusations are wrong.''

Sheriff Van Beek explains that ''proving one's sanity could be very difficult, as it is highly subjective.'' But proof of one's sanity is not enough to remove a valid gun confiscation order since the accused can be a threat even if determined to be sane.

Van Beek also worries that ''if a person is truly in a mental crisis, this aggressive approach will create even greater stress, possibly resulting in a violent overreaction, as their personal property has been taken without a crime ever having been committed.''

In Maryland, this is precisely what happened. When police attempted to serve a gun confiscation order, a fight ensued. The person was startled by it. He had never heard there was a problem. They showed up at his house, and he ended up dying in the ensuing altercation.

When police seize guns from the subject of a gun confiscation order, Sheriff Van Beek notes, ''[t]here is no warning or ability to defend themselves against the charges.''

In addition, if troubled individuals understand that seeking care exposes them to the risk of a gun confiscation order, some may be inclined to avoid psychiatric help.

With the large universe of people who can initiate a gun confiscation complaint, from ex-girlfriends, to former roommates, to grandparents, to in-laws, to second cousins, Sullum concludes that ''the opportunities for malice or honest error are multiplied.''

In some ways, the process really is biased throughout because of the risk

aversion on the part of the judge. Once a gun confiscation order is issued and the accused has been labeled a threat, many judges will simply not want the responsibility of judging otherwise because of the deadly consequences if they are wrong.

Sullum concludes:

Given that bias, the indeterminacy of ''significant risk,'' and the difficulty of predicting [an accused's] behavior, it seems inevitable that the vast majority of people who lose their constitutional rights under this sort of law will [in actuality] pose no real threat to themselves or others.

Philip Mulivor, writing at PJ Media on the constitutional deficiencies of gun confiscation orders, points out another deficiency. He says:

The Void-for-Vagueness Doctrine, a cornerstone of American jurisprudence, requires laws to be written ''in a manner that does not encourage arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement.''

He goes on to say:

By forcing a judge to predict a person's future criminal behavior in the absence of any violation of law, red-flag statutes descend to the most disreputable level of ''arbitrary and discriminatory'' legislation.

Mulivor concludes that ''due process is always denied when a law fails to comport with the Vagueness Doctrine's imperative for clear and consistent standards.''

Fortunately, the Vagueness Doctrine—

This is also Mulivor's point—

is most likely to prevail when an ambiguous law threatens a constitutional right, such as free speech or the right to keep and bear arms.

The ACLU of Rhode Island has written perhaps one of the best reasoned critiques of red flag laws.

The ACLU of Rhode Island writes:

We are deeply concerned about [the red flag law's] breadth, its impact on civil liberties, and the precedent it sets for the use of coercive measures against individuals not because they are alleged to have committed any crime, but because somebody believes they might someday commit one.

The ACLU of Rhode Island writes that the court order authorized by this legislation would be issued without any indication that the person poses an imminent threat to others. The order would be issued without any evidence that the person ever committed, or has even threatened to commit, an act of violence with a firearm.

The ACLU continues: The Rhode Island red flag law—that the standard for seeking and issuing an order is so broad it could routinely be used against people who engage in overblown political rhetoric on social media.

Realize what we are talking about here. We are talking about red flag laws being used against people for overblown political rhetoric. If you have been on social media, that is 90 percent of what is on social media.

This is, once again, the ACLU of Rhode Island: Without the presence of counsel, individuals who have no intent to commit violent crimes could nonetheless unwittingly incriminate themselves regardless of lesser offenses because, when they are brought in without a lawyer, they can be questioned as to other things that could possibly be illegal.

''The heart of the legislation''—Rhode Island's gun confiscation orders—''requires speculation—on the part of both the petitioner''—the accuser—''and judges—about an individual's risk of possible violence.''

Mulivor writes:

But psychiatry and the medical sciences have not succeeded in this realm, and there is no basis for believing courts will do any better.

He concludes that the potential impact on individuals subject to these gun confiscation orders involves much more than a long-term seizure of lawfully owned firearms.

This is once again from the Rhode Island ACLU. They point out that without a right to appointed counsel, respondents can be forced to submit to a mental health evaluation, be subject to fairly widespread notifications even before a court order has been used against them, face contempt proceedings and prison for failing to abide by any part of the order and unwittingly place themselves in danger.

So the Rhode Island red flag law actually requires that people be notified that you are a risk to them, that they are a potential victim, before the order is issued. So we are not talking just about the lack of due process in the sense that you don't have a lawyer there, you may not have been accused of a crime or informed that you might be potentially going to commit a crime, but, also, in advance of the judge even making the judgment, the police are told that if this accusation is being made, they must inform people.

So you have to imagine the innocent. We can all imagine the guilty. We say: Lock 'em up. Take away their guns.

But imagine the innocent. Imagine someone who is innocent and he is in a divorce proceeding and his angry spouse calls up and says, He's a threat. They go, and even before the judge makes the court order, the judge and the police say: We must inform those who he might be a threat to.

What if that involves his business place? Are we going to inform his boss? Are we going to inform his friends? We are going to call all the schools in the area.

What if they are innocent? You haven't even heard the evidence that is only coming from one side. What if they are innocent? Can you imagine a person's life—entire life—being ruined? How do you ever get employment again? Do you think he could be fired if the boss has now been called by the police and they say: We have a gun order against this guy because we think he's a threat. He might be a threat to his fellow employees; he might be a threat to his wife; he might be a threat to schools. We are going to do this, and we are letting you know so you can be aware.

Who wants that person to work with them?

If you are doing a background check years later and they have had a gun confiscation order in their background, who ever wants to work with this person?

So you have to imagine what happens to the innocent. We can all imagine the terrible, horrible murdering psychopaths who committed these massacres and how we want them locked up, how we want to prevent the killings.

But you have to imagine when you have sweeping laws, what are the potential abuses of the law. You have to imagine what it would be like to be an innocent person accused of something in a divorce proceeding where it escalates and they ask for a gun confiscation order and it is based on malice and it is based on lies and deceit and anger over a broken marriage.

This can and will happen. It happens in family court every day. The difference between a divorce and a gun confiscation order is that in a divorce, if it is very messy, you hear both sides. In a gun confiscation order, the initial order to take away a gun, in almost every red flag law, involves only the judge and the accuser. Nobody believes that to be justice. It has never been justice.

I mean, when people point out the injustice of systems in legal systems, they go back to Venice, and they point out the doge. They had a lion's mouth, and you could put your complaint in the mouth, and it was anonymous, and they would make people walk the Bridge of Sighs to prison or to death.

That wasn't justice. We point that out as the height of injustice—anonymous accusations, hearing only one side.

There are some people who argue that the bedrock of our jurisprudence is the adversarial process of the legal system. The adversarial process is: You get a lawyer, the other side gets a lawyer. And you know what? We go one step further in our system. The government has a lawyer. You have a lawyer. But you know what? The presumption is that you are innocent.

We start out with the presumption of the individual being innocent, and we add the hurdle to the government—the burden of proof that they must prove your guilt. And in the Constitution we say for a criminal offense, we must prove the guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. And yet we are talking about taking away fundamental constitutional rights with only hearing the evidence from one side and the standard would be a preponderance of the evidence.

What is a preponderance? It is 50–50. And if it is 51–49, we think the person may be a threat. But we have only heard from their spouse, and we didn't hear from them. We only heard from their estranged spouse or we only heard from the person who is angry with them from work or we heard only

from the person from the opposite political persuasion that read their writings on the internet.

We can see. We can all see the mischief for this.

So I wish, in the middle of this, in the middle of these tragedies, that we would think of what we could do.

New York has already got these red flag laws. New York has got lots of them. New York has got a lot of gun control, and yet the shooting happened in Buffalo.

But the kid in Buffalo had made a threat. It is a felony to make a threat to kill others. He could have been prosecuted.

So I fear, even with this law, if we don't pay attention to the laws we already have, if we don't persist and persevere in prosecuting these kids that show this danger—we already had—it is not that we just had the signals they might; they are committing crimes. Why don't we prosecute them? Why don't we use the laws on the books? But I would say that there is a big risk today to encouraging, across the country, jurisprudence where you don't have legal representation, where the adjudication is based on evidence only from one side, and then you finally get your day in court and you get your lawyer, and everybody is petrified of reversing a decision where you have been named a threat.

I think we want the same thing in the end. My hope, though, is that people would be very careful because I would not want to see a day where we change and reverse justice in our system such that people are guilty until proven innocent.

The bedrock of American jurisprudence is ''innocent until proven guilty.'' The burden is on the government. And until we can make red flag laws consistent with innocent until proven guilty, we should reject them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRIBUTE TO COLIN MCGINNIS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I would like to honor a longtime member of the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee staff, Colin McGinnis, as he moves on to a new, well-deserved chapter: retirement.

He will be spending more time with his beloved wife Claire—and with the first person he visited upon retirement—his 95-year-old mother Barb, at her peaceful lake home in Minnesota.

Colin is a lifelong public servant. He spent 33 years working in Congress. Even when he briefly left this institution, he remained in service, working for the Orthodox Relief Service.

To say the least, Colin's career is unparalleled. Colin grew up in Morris, MN, and attended Carleton College in Northfield, MN. He went on to earn his masters of divinity from Yale University—and we saw those divinity school values woven throughout his career.

Colin's congressional career began in service to his home State. He worked for Representative Jim Oberstar, Representative Bruce Vento, Representative Terry Sabo, and the former Carleton College professor, Senator Paul Wellstone. In each office, he made a positive difference for Minnesotans.

Colin was serving as chief of staff to Senator Wellstone at the time of his tragic death in 2002. It was a catastrophic loss for Minnesota and for our country. And for his staff, it was a heartbreaking personal tragedy. Colin took care of his colleagues and got them through an unimaginably difficult time. He was a rock for the office and led with composure and grace while grieving a mentor he met while he was a student at Carleton, then later worked with for a decade.

In 2008, Colin became the acting staff director of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee under Chairman Dodd. He led the committee through one of the worst financial crises in U.S. history.

As always, Colin stepped up. It was a scary time. The economy was in freefall. We had never seen anything like that in our lifetime. Colin was the steady hand that Senator Dodd and the committee needed. He was a trusted and an invaluable adviser to Chairman Dodd, Chairman Johnson, and to me.

For the last 9 years, Colin has served as the committee's policy director. I remember when I first took over as ranking member on the committee, meeting with the staff in our hearing room on the fifth floor of Dirksen in late 2014. I didn't know anyone yet, and these talented public servants were experts in their field. Many had spent years working for the committee.

Frankly, I was a little nervous. And at the end of the meeting, of course it was Colin who came up to talk to me, reassure me, break the ice. He could not have been more kind and welcoming.

Colin's many, many accomplishments with the Banking and Housing Committee include his instrumental work on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—the Obama administration's diplomatic success to limit Iran's nuclear program—the bipartisan Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act in 2017, and the historic Anti-Money Laundering Act and the Corporate Transparency Act in 2020.

That bill was the product of over a decade and a half of attempts and months of bipartisan negotiations—often expertly shepherded by Colin. Today, its passage is giving law enforcement new, modern tools to stop human traffickers and other criminals and root out shell companies.

In his 30-plus years on the Hill, Colin has seen administrations and majorities of both parties come and go. And through them all, he had an uncommon skill at fostering relationships across the aisle. Throughout his career, Colin also became known for his deep knowledge on international sanctions—he was the one that everyone wanted to work with. Sanctions have become one of our country's primary foreign policy tool over the last decade. And Colin was the expert. And of course, that expertise has probably never been more relevant than it has this year, as we have worked to unite this body in support of the President's strong sanctions on Russia.

But these wins are only a small part of Colin's lasting legacy on the Hill—he impacted everyone he worked with. He could work effectively with pretty much everyone—Republicans and Democrats alike, through Presidential administrations of both parties. Colin impressed all of us with that effectiveness, with his dedication to his work, and, perhaps most of all, with his kindness.

He worked toward big-picture goals—from mental health parity to international sanctions—but he never lost sight of the individuals: the people whom he worked with and the people whom we serve.

Those who were lucky enough to work alongside Colin describe him as someone who makes the hard things look flawless, day in and day out—an impressive feat in this line of work. Among staff, he was known for his love of language. Colin sometimes referred to his work as ''toiling in the legislative vineyards''—one of many examples that reflect his natural optimism. He is a voracious reader, and he made good use of the Library of Congress, often getting several books a week delivered to the office.

He always had time for his coworkers, regardless of their position—from the staff director to the interns. He carved out space for everyone to grow professionally and personally. He challenged us, too.

Colin had an open-door policy. His office was always tidy and decorated with pictures of friends and family. And most days, you could find a member of staff—sometimes Banking and Housing, but often from other offices—sitting on his couch asking for advice and counsel. Colin always had wisdom to share.

Colin commuted every day from Baltimore for 24 years—rain or shine. He came in to work early so that, most days, he could catch the 5 p.m. train back to Baltimore and sit down at the dinner table with his family.

To his wife Claire and their children Killian and Patrick: Thank you for sharing him with us.

Colin's dedication and commitment to public service made a difference for so many. Our country is a better place because of his service. And each of us are better because of his leadership.

On behalf of everyone in my office and on the committee and all those who had the honor of working with him, we congratulate Colin on his career, we wish him well in retirement, and we thank him for his service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

(The remarks of Mr. PADILLA pertaining to the introduction of S. 4480

are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. PADILLA. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

S. 2938

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition to the bill before us.

All too often, we very often applaud instinctively the concept of ''bipartisanship'' but fail to actually evaluate the policies underlying bipartisan legislation and the effect that our policies may have on law-abiding Americans.

Bipartisanship is a good thing. In fact, bipartisanship is an inevitability in any legislative body that contains multiple parties with significant representation. It certainly is an indispensable feature of this legislative body, as it is virtually impossible to pass any legislation—with only the rarest of exceptions arising at most once or twice in a year—except through bipartisanship.

The question isn't whether to achieve bipartisanship or whether it is good but what policies are produced through the bipartisanship in question.

Don't get me wrong—in this polarized climate, it is good when people of different political affiliations and different backgrounds, representing different parts of our great country, are able to come together and have productive conversations. These conversations occur with some regularity. In fact, they occur far more often than most people would assume based on depictions in the news and entertainment media in this country.

It is also good when those conversations lead to legislation that is further refined on the Senate floor through robust debate and an amendment process, one that refines the legislation in question to make sure that all viewpoints have been taken into account. But that is, tragically, not what happened with this legislation. No one—no one except a small ''gang'' of Senators and a few favored members of the news media—no one was allowed to view the legislation until Tuesday evening. Less than an hour later, less than an hour after it had been released to the public, released to us, the Senate was forced to vote on whether we should proceed to the legislation in question.

Immediately after that vote, the majority leader filled the amendment tree and filed the cloture motion to end debate on the bill without a single hearing held or a single amendment having been debated or considered or even offered. In fact, it couldn't be offered because prior to that time, there was nothing to amend.

Now, less than 48 hours after we received the text of this legislation for the very first time, the Senate has voted to end debate—a debate that never really started; a debate that involved not a single amendment passed—no, not one single one; a debate in which there was not a single opportunity for Members to offer improvements to the legislation. No. This small gang came together, materialized, and put together a bill. It released the bill, and all of a sudden, we were expected to vote on it up or down, yes or no, no changes, no questions asked.

Those of us who are not members of this particular gang were told, essentially: Too bad. We don't want your input. Your only option is to support this entire bill, warts and all, ambiguities and all, vagueness and all, without any changes; or, on the other hand, you can oppose it, and you would be accused of savagely not wanting to protect children from school shootings.

That is not what our Founding Fathers envisioned for the U.S. Senate. It is not how they imagined it working. It is also not how it worked for hundreds of years.

For more than two centuries, the U.S. Senate functioned in a way that has had as its distinguishing characteristic those procedures that earned it the title of being the world's greatest deliberative body. Chief among those features was the willingness and the ability of each Member to offer up improvements in the form of amendments and have those amendments considered, debated, discussed, and ultimately voted upon.

But, unfortunately, this is how the Senate has been run over the last few Congresses. Sadly, we have seen some of this under Democratic and Republican leadership alike. This isn't just bad news for the Senate; it is especially bad news for the American people, who deserve better from an entity that still calls itself the world's greatest deliberative body.

It is not without notice that this has become a problem. It is not without notice that we have deviated from this. The thing is, when we deviate from our own procedure and our own processes, the substance shows. The inadequacies of the substance are the natural, foreseeable result. They are the inevitable product of a defiant refusal to abide by our most time-honored procedures: rules and customs.

In this case, the substantive problems with this bill are pretty significant. The restrictions that it imposes on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans are significant, and those impositions come about in such a way that burdens the American people, while doing little or nothing to address actual gun violence committed by prohibited persons in many of our largest cities.

You would think that a bill that purports to be able to keep kids safe in schools would at least have some funding for school security measures or school resource officers, but if you felt that, you would be wrong.

I am very skeptical of Federal intervention in education. If Congress is going to provide billions of dollars of mental health funding to schools and claim to keep kids safe, we should at least allow States to use some of their funding for security measures, like reinforced doors, school resource officers, or training programs for teachers who are allowed to conceal and carry if they choose.

This bill provides Federal grant funding for State red flag laws without sufficient due process protections. This is a trick—a trick—often used by Congress, increasingly so of late. Congress does this sometimes when it has no constitutional authority and sometimes when it lacks political will.

Instead of passing the Federal law at issue—the Federal law that it wishes it could pass—Congress bribes the States with money to pass the laws that Congress wants, that Congress wishes Congress could pass but for whatever reason can't or won't. This allows Members of Congress to go to their home States and take credit for doing ''something,'' even if that ''something'' does nothing to address the problem.

That impulse to do something has been noticed. It has been noticed by Professor Robert Leider of George Mason University and the Antonin Scalia Law School. He penned an op-ed in today's copy of the Wall Street Journal. In that op-ed, he begins with the following words:

> When mass shootings such as Uvalde happen, a rallying cry emerges for Congress to do something—anything—to prevent such tragedies in the future. On Tuesday, senators introduced the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act—their effort to do something. But when your sole rallying cry is to do something, the thing you do may be worse than the status quo. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is a terrible bill, and in its current form, it ought to be defeated by a bipartisan coalition of Congress.

Professor Leider then goes on to explain why opposition to this legislation ought to be coming from the left and from the right. He explains in great detail why Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives alike, sometimes for similar reasons, sometimes for different reasons, should be outraged, should be upset by this legislation. It offends people at every end of the political spectrum. I will go more into some of those details in a moment from Professor Leider.

But, look, when the government seeks to deprive an American citizen—a law-abiding American citizen—of a constitutional right, we have protections in place, and those protections can be found among other provisions in the Constitution. They can be found in the 5th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution. In both provisions, you have a due process clause. In both the 5th and the 14th Amendments, it says that a person can't be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

What does ''due process'' mean? Well, ''due process'' means the right to be heard. You can't have a deprivation of life, liberty, or property without due process. The word ''without'' has been interpreted and fairly does mean ''before.'' You have to have due process before they take it away from you. It

means meaningful review at a meaningful time. It doesn't—it can't mean they can take away life, liberty, or property and then ask questions later. It doesn't mean they can take away life, liberty, and property and thereafter demand that the person from whom they took it return to litigate his or her right to exercise that thing that was taken.

Red flag laws enacted in States thus far get this exactly backward—confiscation first; due process later. That is not how due process works. That is not what due process is. You can call that process, but it is not due process, not for these purposes. It doesn't work.

The confiscation before notice and a hearing, this model—this confiscation before notice and hearing model of red flag laws raises concerns of civil asset forfeiture, when a person is forced to forfeit her firearm pursuant to a civil order without a hearing.

This legislation places overly broad and undefined restrictions on Second Amendment rights—the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens—creating the risk that false allegations could and inevitably would lead to the deprivation of a constitutional right with no recourse afforded to address the harm suffered.

Now, when you look at the legislation, there are pieces of the legislation that pay lipservice to due process. While the legislation, you might say, draws near unto due process with its lips, its heart is far from it. When you read the fine print, the due process of which it refers is not due process at all; it is post-depravation due process.

The very specific procedural protections that we associate with due process—an opportunity to be heard before a fair, impartial tribunal; the opportunity to offer up evidence; the opportunity to cross-examine adverse witnesses, for example—things that we associate as inextricably intertwined with due process because they are, those things are all articulated at the back end of this due process paragraph of the bill.

And it makes reference to the fact that that is the type of due process that, in the view of the bill, can, according to State law, be made either before or after the constitutional depravation in question, depending on the dictates of the State law at issue. That is not due process; that is something else, and that creates a lot of problems.

There are other problems with the legislation dealing with juveniles, problems arising out of uncertainties that the legislation itself creates.

Now, I want to be clear about something: I could certainly consider supporting a measure prohibiting certain older juveniles who have been convicted of crimes as adults, crimes that if they had been committed by an adult would have been deemed felonies, and, on that basis, deem them prohibited persons. I could consider that. There are a lot of public policy questions surrounding that.

And I think there are a lot of people on the left and on the right who would have concerns with opening that up, with saying: We are going to allow—in fact, require—juvenile records to be entered into the NICS system. Remember, the NICS system is a database, a database that is used to identify prohibited persons, persons who are prohibited from buying or otherwise acquiring or even possessing firearms and ammunition, as defined by 18 U.S.C. section 922(g) or, alternatively, persons to whom one may not lawfully sell or otherwise transfer firearms or ammunition, as defined by 18 U.S.C. section 922(d). Both 922(d) that talks about those to whom you may not transfer a weapon and 922(g), those who may not acquire or possess a weapon—both provisions have nine paragraphs attached to them. In each instance, the nine paragraphs are virtually identical. In other words, the universe of those who may not buy or possess weapons is essentially the same as those to whom you may not sell them.

It is almost essential—in fact, the only distinction I can think of under existing law is that while under 922(g) you may not possess a firearm if you are a convicted felon, that same prohibition extends in 922(d) in such a way that you may not sell or otherwise transfer a firearm to a person who is either a convicted felon or has been indicted for a felony and is standing under indictment, under currently pending criminal charges. Other than that, as far as I can tell, 922(d) and 922(g) are coextensive.

This legislation changes that a little bit, and it prohibits the transfer of a weapon, under 922(d), to a person who, as a juvenile, stood convicted of a crime that would be a felony. Now, this creates all sorts of uncertainties in the law because, in many if not most States, juvenile proceedings—what we would consider juvenile criminal proceedings—are, in fact, not criminal proceedings. The defendant isn't entitled to a jury trial. And in the Federal criminal system, a juvenile criminal defendant may not have a jury trial; that even if they want one, even if all the parties were to agree, they can't allow them.

In many State systems, including the State system in my State, the State of Utah, juvenile criminal proceedings are not even criminal proceedings; they are civil proceedings, very often conducted under civil law procedures rather than criminal law procedures. So the same protections aren't in place.

Again, I am open to the idea of opening this up because I think there are some juveniles who commit some offenses, particularly in their later teenage years, that perhaps ought to be taken into account for purposes of 922(d) such that you can't give them a gun or under 922(g) such that they may not possess a gun without committing a felony.

I think we could have that debate and discussion. We should have that debate and discussion. That hasn't occurred here. Instead, what we have done is muddied the waters by creating a very significant difference between 922(d) and 922(g), between those prohibited from being given a gun and those who are prohibited from possessing a gun. But we haven't defined it well, and it is not really clear what it is that we are doing or what it is that makes it fair; nor is it clear, as I read the legislation—and, again, it has been less than 48 hours since we have had access to it. It is about 80 pages long. It doesn't read like a fast-paced novel. It is full of cross-references.

And even someone such as a former Federal prosecutor who is very familiar with these laws and prosecuted cases under them—even with that level of familiarity, it has taken me some time to get through it and understand what it means. In fact, to this moment, it is difficult for me to ascertain exactly how far these changes go.

It is not clear to me, for instance, which kinds of criminal records for juveniles will be added onto the NICS system. Remember, the NICS system is this database that identifies those prohibited from possessing firearms or being given firearms under 922(g) and 922(d), respectively. It is a database that keeps track of those prohibited persons. It is not clear to me which types of juvenile records can be taken into account in those proceedings.

This also allows for a prohibited—one can be a prohibited person under 922(d) and 922(g) if they have been adjudicated—and this is terribly awkward language—if they have been adjudicated as a ''mental defective'' or if they have been ordered institutionalized. No one really knows what that term means. It is a sloppy term. It is an offensive term to many, and it is full of uncertainty.

We have compounded the uncertainty by now saying that mental health records of older teenagers, those between 16 and 18, will now be uploaded onto the NICS system such that certain mental health crises one experiences as an older teenager could result in an older teenager later in life being unable to possess a firearm without committing a felony.

That raises some concerns—or at least those drafting the bill would probably interpret it differently, to say they may possess one in some cases but not necessarily be someone to whom a gun can lawfully be sold or otherwise transferred. That also raises additional questions. Sections 922(d) and 922(g) are currently nearly identical, except in the rare exception that I noted just a moment ago.

Yet we have had no conversations about these. We have had no conversations about what this does for juvenile criminal justice, about what this does to the rights of individuals who, as juveniles, may not fully understand the ramifications of the criminal proceedings against them or of decisions regarding their mental health at the

time those decisions are made and that might affect them later in life, including after they have become adults.

My point is not to say these things don't matter. They do. And I think there are a lot of these people who probably shouldn't have guns and should be prohibited persons, but we need to know what we are doing. We need to agree on what is actually happening because right now we take some areas of the law that are already fraught with some uncertainty, and we are magnifying that uncertainty manyfold.

I think that is dangerous, and I think it is dangerous in a way that both Democrats and Republicans ought to find offensive—sometimes for the same reasons, sometimes for entirely different reasons. My point is this. There is no reason why legislation like this—it does—it has got some good provisions in it. There is no reason why this couldn't be amended in such a way that would allow more Members of this body to vote for it or vote against it, depending on what it looked like at the end of the day.

But the way it is written, it has got a lot of problems with it. We have got the due process problem that I mentioned with the red flag laws. That is their distinguishing characteristic is due process problem. You have got the juvenile records problem that I mentioned just a moment ago. It is not fair to people to leave them in that state of uncertainty, especially juveniles. So that ought to be a concern to all of us.

Perhaps we might get to the place where these provisions do just what the proponents of the bill say that it does. But in this instance, as in so many other areas, the best way to get there is to go through the normal deliberative process, the process that long defined this institution as the world's greatest deliberative body, which includes a full opportunity to present and vote on amendments and to hear concerns and objections raised by Members of this body, Members of this body some of whom have experience with the statutory framework in question and can offer insights as to what might have been overlooked.

Now, look, I speak here of my colleagues who were part of this effort. I speak with great respect toward them and admiration for the fact that I think they are motivated, by and large, by a desire to help people. I don't think any Member of this body wakes up every day and says, ''I want to make America less safe'' or ''I want to make America less fair.'' I don't think that is what is going on.

But I do think we delude ourselves, we sell ourselves short, and we harm our constituents when we pretend that it is OK to pull the functional equivalent, the legislative equivalent, of running through a congested intersection with our eyes closed and think that that is not going to cause problems. That is exactly what we are doing here. This is the legislative equivalent of driving with your eyes closed through a busy intersection, and we are making some really big mistakes here. And a lot of these are mistakes that could be fixed with relative ease.

Now we will never know. We will never know what might have happened. It may be that this could have been something that, had we gone through the whole amendment process, could have been supported by nearly all or even all Members of this body, but we will never know of that now. We will never have that opportunity. Instead, we are going to push through this rushed piece of legislation that I am convinced no one had read in its entirety prior to its release and, essentially, no one was familiar with by the time we started voting on it.

And then we were told: No opportunity to make it better. If you notice a problem with it—and I have noticed several—we really don't care to hear about it. Expediency demands that we somehow just rush this through.

But the American people deserve better. There are, moreover, other provisions of the legislation that have raised some eyebrows in some corners. They are provisions of this bill that provide funding to encourage States to provide Medicaid and CHIP services in schools under the auspices of an effort to increase access to mental health, to mental health services in the schools.

While Federal Medicaid funding is, of course, something that cannot lawfully be used to perform abortions except in the case of rape, incest, or to preserve the life of the mother, some have pointed out that schools under this legislation easily could use the clinics established under the bill as a means of accomplishing the provision of abortions and also prescribe abortifacient drugs using State rather than Federal Medicaid funds. There has been some discussion even today about this. The fact that we still don't know this is troubling to many. I certainly would like to know what the definitive answer to it is. As far as I can tell, it does open the door to that, and we ought to at least have that discussion.

Now, there are some legislative options before us that address things that can be done practically to improve safety. One is the Luke and Alex School Safety Act, which is included in this bill. Like I said, there are plenty of things in this bill that are unobjectionable. And this is, certainly, first among them. And it codifies into law the Federal clearinghouse on school safety. I spoke in favor of this bill at a Judiciary Committee hearing just last week.

Additionally, I support the bill's provisions increasing penalties for straw purchasers who know or have reason to know that the gun they are purchasing for someone might be used in a crime. And I am open to other proposals that tackle safety in schools head-on.

Senator MARSHALL, from Kansas, has an interesting amendment that would use unspent COVID funds to improve school safety and school security.

Look, there are a lot of things in this legislation that really ought to be discussed in greater detail. And we haven't been able to discuss them. We haven't been able to debate them. We haven't been able to amend them because of the rushed process. It begs the question: Why are we in such a rush? Don't America's schoolchildren and America's teachers and America's moms and dads deserve better consideration than this?

Schools are out for the summer at the moment. It would actually be a good thing for us to take a few more weeks to debate and discuss these things and get to a better solution. Why are we rushing it?

I want to get back to the juvenile provisions for a minute. This is something that Professor Leider speaks about at some length. And he raised some observations that I hadn't entirely considered. And I would like to share some portions of that. At the end of this, I will be offering this.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD this op-ed submitted by Professor Leider.

Professor Leider describes one feature of the bill as particularly discouraging, particular troubling. I spoke of the juvenile provisions a moment ago. I identified some troubling features of them. Professor Leider gives additional commentary on this and provides additional observations, not all of which had been noticed by me. Here is how he puts it:

> The most significant provision in the bill is the prohibition against firearm possession by those convicted of a misdemeanor violent crime against a dating partner—closing the ''boyfriend loophole.''

He goes through this after he has discussed the problems with the juvenile provisions, noting that this will create disparities. It will cause uncertainties with juvenile offenders of one sort or another. And then he does go through a fuller explanation of how those operating under the boyfriend loophole provisions might be affected.

He continues:

> But the senators who negotiated this bill evidently couldn't agree on the definition of a dating partner. They define ''dating relationship'' as a ''relationship between individuals who have or have recently had a continuing serious relationship of a romantic or intimate nature.'' But relationships come in all forms, and this definition provides little guidance.

He continues:

> The senators provided three criteria for consideration: (1) the length of the relationship, (2) the nature of the relationship and (3) the frequency and type of interaction between the people involved in the relationship.

Professor Leider continues:

> This means that a ''continuing serious relationship'' will be some function of quantity of dates, length of time and physical intimacy. But these vague factors don't provide fair notice and are susceptible to inconsistent application.

We pause there to just note what he is referring to. The so-called boyfriend

loophole exists because two of the provisions in 18 USC 922(g), defining the prohibitive persons, paragraphs 8 and 9 respectively, apply to those individuals who have either been in receipt of a restraining order arising out of a domestic relationship, under paragraph 8, or those who have been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence under paragraph 9 of 922(g).

In both cases, there has to be a relationship that makes it about a domestic situation, has to be an intimate partner of one sort or another. Current law tends to define that as a spouse—when you are dealing with a spouse or a live-in partner, for example. But this provision seeks to address what the sponsors of the bill referred to as the ''boyfriend loophole,'' meaning what about someone who is not married and who doesn't reside with or hasn't resided in the past, didn't reside at the time with the person but was nonetheless in a type of romantic relationship.

Now, here again, it is not a bad impulse to want to close some ambiguities in the law, but you have got to do it with language that makes sense. You have to do it with language that puts people on fair notice of what the consequences of a guilty plea might be or what the consequences of not litigating more aggressively in the context of a restraining order or something like that might be. Particularly in the context of 922(g)9, where we are dealing with a domestic violence misdemeanor, the person needs to know when that person is being asked to plead guilty what consequences that might have on the person later in life. And those questions aren't answered here.

Professor Leider continues:

By failing to define ''dating relationship''—

The term ''dating relationship''—

[A]dequately—

That is the term of art that they introduced into this legislation—

Congress is effectively delegating the critical question of who falls within this ban. To whom it is delegating the hard details remains to be determined. Perhaps it will be to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which has regulatory authorities over firearms or the courts may decide as they resolve cases. Either way, Congress has yet again handed off its responsibility for defining crimes to unelected bureaucrats and judges.

Then he continues:

Until a specific definition exists, it is unclear how the federal government will implement this prohibition. Suppose a criminal-records check indicates that a potential purchaser has committed assault or battery. What next? Maybe the trial record will show that the defendant was in a relationship with the complaining witness. Or maybe it won't.

If such information is available, how is the examiner supposed to gauge the relationship? The available records likely won't provide the precise details of the relationship. Even if they do, the examiner still has to decide whether the relationship was serious enough to trigger the gun disability. The Senate compromise feeds many prospective gun owners to the bureaucratic wolves.

Professor Leider's point is an excellent one. When people are going through criminal proceedings, if they have been charged with a misdemeanor and they are deciding how aggressively to fight it—whether to take it to trial, whether to plead guilty, under what terms to plead guilty—it is nearly always going to be in State court. After all, very few criminal convictions are in criminal court, a tiny percentage of them. And the prohibited persons, as defined under sections 922(d) and 922(g), the underlying convictions can be either State or Federal.

These proceedings, nearly always taking place in State court rather than Federal court, are not going to be in a position, it is not knowing to be within their jurisdiction to decide whether, or to what extent, this will put them in that status, in that boyfriend status, in that status of a ''dating relationship.''

The fact that the term is so vague, the structure is so broad and undefined that it is not reasonably possible to know what consequences the law might attach to a guilty plea in that circumstance or to a conviction following a jury trial in that circumstance.

You know, James Madison said, in ''Federalist No. 62''—and I am paraphrasing here—something to the effect that it will be of little avail to the American people that their laws may be written by individuals of their own choosing. If those laws are so voluminous, complex, or ever changing that they can't reasonably know from one day to the next what the law requires of them, this is one of those moments. We are imposing a pretty significant restriction—a restriction on a constitutionally protected right, one that may well apply for the rest of their life in some cases without them even knowing what is happening.

This is the kind of rain that will fall on the criminal defendant of all backgrounds, of all political views. Every demographic could be harmed by this in one way or another. So it really would be better if we were taking the time to draft this legislation carefully. And that is my No. 1 complaint. That is why I can't vote for it.

There are some things in here I wish I could vote for, but they have lumped it all together. They said: Here you go. Take it or leave it.

But, look, you put red flag laws in here, knowing the red flag laws, the way we have now outsourced them to States and that we have now started paying the States, giving them money to adopt red flag laws whose distinguishing characteristic is to take away someone's constitutionally protected right without due process of law—that is a problem. And when you add to that complexity by adding uncertainty about the juvenile records problem that I identified, which ought to be concerning to many liberals as well as many conservatives, and when you add to that by coming up with this vague, broad definition of ''dating relationship,'' it has huge consequences with no reasonable ability to understand and ascertain how certain court proceedings might affect someone's rights, perhaps for the rest of their life, that is a problem.

It doesn't have to be this way. I look forward to the day when the Senate will operate the way that it was designed to, the way that it once did, the way that, in fact, it has operated in the not-too-distant past. But we have to demand it. As long as people continue to tolerate, continue to accept and condone and reward and encourage this type of sham process, we will be left with subpar legislation, sloppily written.

I will conclude with the words, once again, of Professor Leider, who says it well.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act will likely pass because members of Congress feel enormous pressure to do something. But it is not a good bill, and it deserves further deliberation and refinement. The Senate's job is to help draft good laws by cooling the passions of the moment. Right now, it is failing.

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

(By Robert Leider)

''When mass shootings such as Uvalde happen, a rallying cry emerges for Congress to do something—anything—to prevent such tragedies in the future. On Tuesday senators introduced the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act—their effort to do something. But when your sole rallying cry is to do something, the thing you do may be worse than the status quo. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is a terrible bill, and in its current form, it ought to be defeated by a bipartisan political coalition of Congress.

Liberals should hate the bill because most of its gun-control provisions are antithetical to their criminal-justice reform agenda. The law expands the categories of those to whom it is unlawful to sell a gun or ammunition to include anyone convicted of a felony as a juvenile. This will ensnare many because the modern definition of a ''felony'' is exceptionally broad and includes offenses that aren't particularly serious. The bill also changes the federal prohibition on selling firearms to those who have been involuntarily committed to a mental institution. While it excludes involuntary commitments before age 16, the bill significantly strengthens the enforcement of the prohibition against those involuntarily committed between 16 and 18.

We should be cautious before we make it impossible for children to live normal adult lives. As liberals often point out (particularly when the death penalty is involved), children and teenagers lack maturity and impulse control. If this bill becomes law, a 12-year-old who joyrides in a car may find that he may never be allowed to purchase a gun or ammunition. Although liberals may not cry at the thought of fewer people being able to own guns, they should be concerned. A gun ban for youthful indiscretions means that these juveniles will become unemployable as adults in many security, law-enforcement and military positions that require firearm possession. And this ban will affect them no matter how much time has passed since their juvenile convictions.

The gun ban would have significant racial and socioeconomic disparities. Wealthy communities will find ways around the gun ban for their children: having robust pretrial diversion programs that don't result in technical convictions, accessing pardons through the political process, and hiring lawyers to

expunge convictions. In poorer communities, children will simply be forced to take pleas that will forever alter their futures. The same goes on the mental-health side: Wealthy parents can seek voluntary treatment for their children in circumstances that may cause poorer families to seek involuntary commitment. The bill also raises the maximum prison term for unlawful firearm possession from 10 years to 15, and these regulatory offenses—as liberals often complain—disproportionately affect poor and minority communities.

Conservatives and gun owners should hate the bill, too. Gun owners who have committed juvenile indiscretions will find that they are no longer able to purchase firearms or ammunition. The bill also has strange technical defects. It prohibits the sale of guns and ammunition to those convicted of juvenile offenses, but it doesn't explicitly ban possession—a loophole that someone will clamor to close later. For adults who had involuntary commitments before they were 16, the reverse is true:

The bill allows firearms to be sold to them, but it doesn't decriminalize their possession of a firearm.

The most significant provision in the bill is the prohibition against firearm possession by those convicted of a misdemeanor violent crime against a dating partner—closing the ''boyfriend loophole.'' But the senators who negotiated this bill evidently couldn't agree on the definition of a dating partner. They define ''dating relationship'' as a ''relationship between individuals who have or have recently had a continuing serious relationship of a romantic or intimate nature.'' But relationships come in all forms, and this definition provides little guidance. The senators provided three criteria for consideration: (1) the length of the relationship, (2) the nature of the relationship and (3) the frequency and type of interaction between the people involved in the relationship. This means that a ''continuing serious relationship'' will be some function of quantity of dates, length of time and physical intimacy. But these vague factors don't provide fair notice and are susceptible to inconsistent application.

By failing to define ''dating relationship'' adequately, Congress is effectively delegating the critical question of who falls within this ban. To whom it is delegating the hard details remains to be determined. Perhaps it will be the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which has regulatory authority over firearms. Or the courts may decide as they resolve cases. Either way, Congress has yet again handed off its responsibility for defining crimes to unelected bureaucrats and judges.

Until a specific definition exists, it is unclear how the federal government will implement this prohibition. Suppose a criminal-records check indicates that a potential purchaser has committed assault or battery. What next? Maybe the trial record will show that the defendant was in a relationship with the complaining witness. Or maybe it won't. If such information is available, how is the examiner supposed to gauge the relationship? The available records likely won't provide the precise details of the relationship. Even if they do, the examiner still has to decide whether the relationship was serious enough to trigger the gun disability. The Senate compromise feeds many prospective gun owners to the bureaucratic wolves.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act will likely pass because members of Congress feel enormous pressure to do something. But it is not a good bill, and it deserves further deliberation and refinement. The Senate's job is to help draft good laws by cooling the passions of the moment. Right now, it is failing.''

Mr. LEE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the pending business on the floor.

The Presiding Officer and I both arrived in the Senate at the same time 10 years ago. When you and I had barely been here a few days, the country was shocked with a tragic shooting, the Sandy Hook shooting in Newtown, CT, when a deranged monster came in and murdered little children—elementary school children. Everyone across the country was horrified; and over the past decade, we have seen that pattern repeat itself over and over again.

Tragically, my home State of Texas has seen more than our fair share of horrific crime, of mass murder, most recently in Uvalde. I was there in Uvalde the day after the shooting where a deranged monster murdered 19 little children and 2 teachers.

Before that, I was in Santa Fe where yet another deranged monster murdered schoolchildren.

I was in Sutherland Springs, the worst church shooting in U.S. history. I stood in that sanctuary the day after the shooting, a beautiful, small country church. The pews had been flung aside in the chaos. There was shattered glass. There was a cell phone with a shattered screen covered in blood.

And I saw the pool of blood where an 18-month-old child was systematically murdered by that psychopath. I was in El Paso; I was in Midland-Odessa; I was in Dallas. Over and over again, we have seen the face of evil. We have seen horrific crimes. And let me be the first to say there are too damn many of these. And we need to stop them.

Unfortunately, I have also seen what inevitably follows these horrific crimes, which is a political debate that breaks out within seconds of the crime occurring.

There are two principal approaches one can take to try to prevent crimes like this. One is to target the bad guys, to focus on criminals, to focus on felons, to focus on fugitives, to focus on those trying to illegally buy guns, to put them in jail, to lock them up, to get them off the street so that they cannot terrorize and murder innocent people. That is the approach that actually works. That is the approach that is actually successful. That is the approach that is most likely to prevent subsequent mass murders.

There is a second approach, which is an approach that is disarming law-abiding citizens. Inevitably, Democratic members of this Chamber, minutes after an attack, move towards wanting to disarm law-abiding citizens. That approach is, I believe, No. 1, unconstitutional; but, No. 2, it doesn't work. It is ineffective.

Put simply, taking guns away from law-abiding citizens—disarming you or disarming me—is not going to stop a mass murder. And we know this. If you look across the country consistently, the jurisdictions with the strictest gun control laws over and over again have among the highest crime rates and among the highest murder rates.

When you disarm law-abiding citizens, what happens is the people who follow the law disarm. That is almost by definition if they are law-abiding citizens. But the criminals don't follow the laws.

And if you disarm all the victims, the result is it is easier for the criminals to commit their acts of mayhem.

Let me point out a statistic that many Americans don't know. It is a statistic that comes from the Barack Obama White House, so it is hardly a rightwing source. According to the Barack Obama White House, every year in America, firearms are used defensively to stop a crime between 500,000 and 1 million times each and every year.

What does that mean? That means that if Democratic proposals to disarm law-abiding citizens succeed, the result will be even more crimes. The result will be those 500,000 to a million crimes that are right now stopped every year won't be stopped.

That means more assaults. That means more sexual assaults. That means more murders. That means single moms riding home on the train, if they are not able to have a revolver in their purse to defend themselves from marauding criminals, then they are left defenseless.

In debates over how to approach violent crime, that 500,000 to a million people each year who are using a firearm to stop a crime, they get left out of a lot of these discussions. But they would be victims if Democratic Senators succeed in taking away their right to keep and bear arms.

When the Presiding Officer and I were brand new here in the wake of Newtown, CT, there was a Democrat majority in this body at the time. Harry Reid was the majority leader. Barack Obama had just been reelected President. And you will recall well Senate Democrats were exultant. Senator SCHUMER was on TV saying we were in the sweet spot to finally pass far-reaching gun control.

And I will tell you the colleagues on my side of the aisle were discouraged and demoralized, and many thought there was nothing we could do to stop the agenda that was being pushed forward.

Well, I can tell you, I didn't believe it then, and I don't believe it now. And so I sat down and drafted legislation designed to actually do what every person in this Chamber, I believe, really wants to do, which is stop violent crime, stop these murders, stop the next lunatic who would shoot up a school or shoot up a church or shoot up a mall or shoot up a grocery store.

The legislation I drafted was called Grassley-Cruz. I teamed up with my colleague, the senior Senator from Iowa, CHUCK GRASSLEY. Grassley-Cruz focused on several things. First of all,

it focused on strengthening the background check system. It required the Department of Justice to conduct an audit of every Federal agency to make sure that any felony convictions are reported to the background check system.

It provided funding and incentives for States to report felony convictions to the background check system. Interestingly, many States have a lousy record of reporting felonies to the background check database. Ironically, many of those are blue States led by Democrats who talk about gun control, and yet the State governments and local governments often fail to report felony convictions to the database.

Grassley-Cruz provided strong incentives to get those felony convictions in the database. Secondly, Grassley-Cruz provided funding for prosecutors to prosecute those who commit violent crimes with firearms and put them in jail.

Third, Grassley-Cruz provided funding for the Department of Justice to create a gun crime task force to prosecute felons and fugitives who try to illegally buy guns.

Many people don't know this, but it is actually quite shocking. The Department of Justice has a consistent pattern of refusing to prosecute felons and fugitives who illegally try to buy guns.

In the year 2010, roughly 48,000 felons and fugitives tried to illegally purchase firearms. Of those 48,000, the Obama Justice Department prosecuted 44 of them—not even 50—44 out of 48,000. I think that is completely unacceptable.

So Grassley-Cruz provided funding and directed the Department of Justice: Prosecute them and put them in jail. And on top of that, Grassley-Cruz created grants for schools to enhance school safety, to enhance security, to make our schools and make our kids safer.

So what happened? Well, Grassley-Cruz, we voted on it here on the floor of the Senate. And Grassley-Cruz received a majority vote on the Senate floor, 52 Senators voted in favor of Grassley-Cruz, including nine Democrats. Remember, this was a Democrat Senate. Democrats had a sizable majority, and yet nine Democrats—we got the most bipartisan support of any of the comprehensive legislation that was considered on the floor.

So why didn't Grassley-Cruz pass into law? We got a majority vote in the Senate. Well, the answer is simple: Grassley-Cruz didn't pass because Senate Democrats filibustered it. They demanded 60 votes; and so even though it got a majority, it didn't get 60, and it didn't pass.

I am going to share something that is deeply frustrating.

There is a powerful argument that had Grassley-Cruz passed, had Senate Democrats not filibustered it, that multiple of these mass shootings in Texas could have been prevented.

Let's start with Sutherland Springs. Sutherland Springs should never have happened. The shooter was doubly ineligible to buy a firearm. He had a felony conviction. He had a domestic conviction. So under Federal law, existing Federal law, it was illegal for him to buy a gun.

So how did he get his gun?

Well, the Air Force, in the Obama administration, failed to report his felony conviction to the background check database. It wasn't in there.

So the shooter went to buy a gun. He filled out the background check form, and he lied. He lied on the form. The form asked: Do you have a felony conviction? He said: No.

The form asked: Do you have a domestic violence conviction? He said: No.

They ran the check, and it came up clean because the Obama Air Force never reported the felony and so it wasn't in the database and so it came up clean.

He bought that gun, and he used it to murder those innocent people in that beautiful sanctuary.

If Grassley-Cruz had passed, presumably, the mandated Department of Justice audit of every Federal Agency would have caught that felony conviction. The whole purpose of the audit was to make sure we catch every felony conviction that is out there, which would have meant his conviction would have been in the database, but that is where the second part of Grassley-Cruz matters because when he went in and lied on that form, he committed two more felonies. When he checked ''I don't have a felony conviction,'' that is the felony. Lying on that form is a felony. It is a crime.

When he checked ''I don't have a domestic violence conviction,'' that is the felony. And Grassley-Cruz would have directed the Department of Justice: Prosecute him, and put him in jail. And that monster would have been locked in a 6-by-8 concrete cell instead of murdering innocent people in the wonderful community of Sutherland Springs.

You also look at Santa Fe and Uvalde, and there is a possibility that both of those crimes could have been prevented by Grassley-Cruz.

Part of Grassley-Cruz was funding to enhance school security—grants to go to schools. One of the things that is frustrating about these school shootings is they follow predictable patterns.

In Parkland, FL, the shooter jumped over a fence and came inside. In Santa Fe, the shooter went in an unlocked side entrance.

Afterward—you know, the Santa Fe High School is less than an hour from my house. I was at home that morning, the morning of the shooting. I was on that campus about an hour after the shooting occurred. It was horrific. It was tragic. I grieved and cried with the parents who lost their children that day.

I remember sitting down afterward at a roundtable with the parents from Santa Fe and parents from other mass shootings that occurred and talking about what are the solutions we can do. How can we prevent this?

One of the solutions we discussed was best practices. How do you make a school safer? One of those best practices is limiting the number of entrances to a school—ideally, bringing it down to one single main entrance, the front entrance.

Now, that doesn't mean, as some on the Twittersphere have said, that you have no fire exits. Of course, you have fire exits. It means you do what we do in many other places—in Federal buildings, in banks, in courthouses. It is a standard security step to have one major entrance to a building if that building is at risk of violence, and that one main entrance is then much, much safer if you have armed police officers at that entrance.

When you go into a bank, there is a reason you see an armed officer at the entrance. When you go into a courthouse, there is a reason you see an armed officer at the entrance. When you go into the U.S. Capitol, there is a reason you see an armed officer at the entrance. Our kids are at least as valuable.

If the Santa Fe High School or the Robb Elementary School had been able to get a school funding grant to enhance security, those crimes could have been prevented because, I will tell you, when I was in Uvalde the day after the shooting, what was so infuriating is that monster got in the exact same way—through an open back door. Just like in Santa Fe, he got in through an open back door; he got into the classroom; and he began murdering children long before he encountered anyone from law enforcement.

If, instead, that door had been locked, if he had been forced to come around to the front main entrance, if at the front main entrance there were armed police officers, they could have shot that monster dead outside, and 19 children and 2 teachers would still be alive.

So, like millions across this country, I am angry. I am angry that these horrific crimes keep happening.

But I am also angry that this august Chamber plays political games. The bill that is before this body is being heralded in the press as a bipartisan bill because it has got every Democrat and some Republicans.

I think the chances that this bill will do anything meaningful to actually prevent the next mass murder are very low. That is not what this bill is designed to do.

This bill is designed, among other things, to satiate the urge to do something. After every one of these, the call comes out: Do something. I agree. Do something. But do something that works. Do something that will stop these crimes. This bill ain't that.

But it does have provisions that are troubling. It does have provisions that

satisfy the Democratic political priority to go after the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms of law-abiding citizens.

Most troubling in this bill is the funding of so-called red flag laws. Now, these so-called red flag laws have been implemented in multiple States, and they enable the State to take away the right to keep and bear arms from law-abiding citizens.

They render you vulnerable; that if you have a disgruntled coworker, if you have an angry ex-boyfriend, an angry ex-girlfriend, they can go and give the State the power to strip you of the right to keep and bear arms—not if you are a criminal, not if you have committed crimes, not if you have been adjudicated to be a danger to yourself or others. All of those are existing law. Red flag laws lower the threshold and make it easier to take away your right to defend yourself.

And in too many of these States, these provisions have little to no protections of due process.

If the Senate passes this bill, Federal dollars will be used to encourage more States to enact laws like this. That means Federal tax dollars will be used to implement programs that will strip away Americans' constitutional rights.

And mark my words, people will lose their lives over this; that we will see red flag laws that are abused and citizens who are disarmed—and, tragically, we are going to see a citizen who is disarmed who is subsequently murdered.

Look, the right to keep and bear arms—it is not about hunting. It is not about skeet shooting. Those can be a lot of fun to do, but that is not why it is in the Constitution. The Bill of Rights does not have an amendment devoted to recreational shooting.

The reason the Second Amendment is in the Bill of Rights is because you and I and every American have a God-given right to defend our life. There is no right more fundamental than the right to defend your own life and the right to defend your family. If a criminal comes into your house at night seeking to do harm to your children, you and I have a right, I believe that derives from God Almighty, to defend our kids, and whether any individual Member of this Chamber agrees with that right or not doesn't really matter because it is right there in the Bill of Rights. So the Constitution protects it whether you agree with it or not.

And the reason I say these red flag laws, we are going to see people lose their lives over it, is because often when people go and buy a firearm, it is because they are afraid. It is because maybe they have got an angry ex-boyfriend, an angry ex-girlfriend. Maybe they have got a neighbor whom they are scared of. Maybe they have got someone threatening them. And we are going to see these laws abused to disarm someone who is subsequently made the victim of a violent crime.

And none of the politicians in this Chamber who vote for this bill will take any responsibility for the people's lives that will be lost because of it.

You might say: Well, look, that is all fine and good, but if you don't like this bill, what should we do?

Well, it so happens I have an answer to that. This week, I filed legislation, along with Senator JOHN BARRASSO from Wyoming. The Cruz-Barrasso legislation builds on what already received a majority vote in this Chamber, the Grassley-Cruz legislation of a decade ago.

Let me tell you what Cruz-Barrasso does. It focuses on actually stopping this problem. So Cruz-Barrasso funds the Department of Justice to prosecute violent criminals who use firearms.

Mr. President, you are from the Commonwealth of Virginia, a wonderful State. As you know well, some of the most important work stopping violent crime and gun crime was pioneered in the Commonwealth of Virginia. During the Bill Clinton Presidency, an initiative was started called Project Exile in the Western District of Virginia. The U.S. attorney there laid out a policy that if anyone commits a crime with a firearm who is illegally possessing that firearm, meaning likely they are a felon in possession, that the Feds were going to prosecute them, put them in jail, and they are going to face mandatory minimum crimes.

And the U.S. attorney passed out to local prosecutors laminated cards saying: Here are all the Federal prohibitions on gun possession. They put up ads. They put up billboards in Richmond, VA. Richmond tragically had an incredibly high murder rate. They put up billboards: Carry a gun, do hard time.

And Project Exile worked phenomenally. The murder rate in Richmond, VA, plummeted, and we began hearing stories of criminals—criminals who would come to knock off a liquor store, criminals who would come to do a home burglary, who would leave their gun at home. They would say: Do you know what? Look, if I break into this house and I have got a gun with me, I am doing hard time in Federal prison. I think I will just go there without a gun. It worked.

What does Cruz-Barrasso do? It takes Project Exile national. It provides funding for U.S. attorneys to prosecute. If you commit a crime and you have got a gun, you are off the streets.

You want to stop these crimes? That is the step that will stop these crimes.

What else does Cruz-Barrasso do? It creates a gun crime task force at the Department of Justice to prosecute the felons and fugitives year after year after year who try to illegally buy a gun and whom DOJ won't prosecute right now.

If Cruz-Barrasso passes, the next Sutherland Springs can be stopped.

You know, there are some Democrat officials who say: We don't have time to prosecute people who try to illegally buy guns. I repeatedly heard testimony from Democratic witnesses on the Judiciary Committee saying that.

Let me tell you something right now. If a murderer or a felon is trying to illegally buy a gun, I don't think that is a paperwork offense; I think they should be prosecuted and put in jail.

What else does Cruz-Barrasso do? It provides major funding to make our schools safer. It provides much more funding than the Democrats' bill. All told, there is $36 billion in this bill.

It provides funding to double the number of police officers in schools across America—to double them. If you want to keep kids safe, the single best step you can do is have police officers on campus so that our children have the same protection that Members of Congress do; so that our children have the same protection that courthouses do; so that our children have the same protection that banks do.

Cruz-Barrasso will double the number of police officers in schools across America—not only that, let's talk mental health. We all know there is a problem. These deranged shooters over and over again follow similar patterns of being isolated, angry loners with a long pattern of struggling with mental health, often making multiple threats before they carry out a horrific crime.

Cruz-Barrasso provides $10 billion in funding for mental health counselors in schools across the country to help identify troubled youth and to stop them before they commit a crime like this.

(Mr. OSSOFF assumed the Chair.)

Now, earlier today, there had been discussion that Majority Leader SCHUMER would schedule a vote on Cruz-Barrasso. Right now, it appears that may not happen. We are going to vote one way or another, and if I have to exercise the procedural avenues available to me as a Senator to force that vote, I am more than happy to do so. But let me tell you actually why we are not seeing the vote so far—because my amendment is drafted as a substitute. In other words, it would replace the pending bill on the floor, and an awful lot of Senators don't want to have to vote on that.

Now, I challenge any Senator in this Chamber to try to make the case that this Democrat bill on the floor would be even half as effective in stopping violent crime, in stopping mass shootings, in stopping criminals from murdering children in schools, as my legislation would be. The Democrat bill has a fraction of the funding for police officers. It has a fraction of the funding for mental health. The Democrat bill doesn't provide that violent felons who use guns should be prosecuted. The Democrat bill doesn't provide that people who illegally try to buy firearms, who are felons and fugitives, should be prosecuted. The Democrat bill is not focused on criminals. It is not focused on bad guys. It is focused on the Democrat priority of disarming law-abiding citizens. That is a political priority that too many Senate Democrats value more than keeping kids safe.

So if we don't see a straight-up vote on my amendment, it is because too

many Senators in this Chamber don't want to vote on a head-to-head choice between actually keeping kids safe versus achieving the political agenda of the left of disarming law-abiding citizens. That is wrong. It is cynical.

I have to say that in these debates—listen, this is a topic that is emotional. It is a topic that is personal. It is a topic where inevitably the rhetoric gets overheated. It gets overheated on both sides.

Some years ago, I found myself, curiously enough, in a Twitter debate with Alyssa Milano, the actress from Hollywood, the leftwing activist, over the question of guns. We began going back and forth over gun control and the Second Amendment, and at some point, she said something to the effect of, you wouldn't dare sit down and have this conversation with me in person. I said: Of course I would. I invited her to come to my office, and she did. She came to my office, and what proceeded is we had a 90-minute discussion and debate about violent crime, about gun control, and about the Second Amendment. We live-streamed it, so anyone who wants to see it can go and watch a 90-minute discussion. I will say, I commend Ms. Milano. I think the two of us managed to have a much more civil conversation on this than most of the interlocutors on this topic.

One of the things I said to her at the start of that discussion was, I said: Listen, if we start from the premise—if we sit in this room and look at each other and we both assume the other is evil, the other is lying, the other seeks to do harm, we are not going to have a very productive conversation. If each of us thinks of the other ''You want children to die; you want people to be murdered,'' you know what, that is not going to lead to a very productive conversation.

I suggested to her—I said: Why don't we start from the proposition that you and I both would like to see innocent people protected and safe; that you and I both, like anyone sane and rational, are utterly horrified at the depraved monsters who murder innocent people and especially those who murder children?

There is a special circle of Hell for the people who hurt kids.

If we start from the premise that even though we are of different political parties and even though we may believe different things politically, we both want to see human life preserved, then maybe we can have a productive discussion about what steps can be taken to be most effective in saving human life.

We agreed that we both want to prevent future murders, that we both want to protect our kids and your kids and kids across America. Then we can have a real discussion that is factual, that is empirical, that is based on evidence, that is based on data, as to what policies are actually effective in stopping violent crime.

There was a time when this august Chamber had discussions like that, had debates.

I would note, this particular bill—there have been no committee hearings on it. There has been no meaningful debate. This is an exercise of partisan power and political objectives.

So we are not engaged in a meaningful discussion of what policies are actually effective in stopping crime, preventing mass murder, and protecting children. If we were, I would challenge any Democrat in the Chamber to stand up and explain how on Earth this Democrat bill could be even half as effective in preventing school shootings as the Cruz-Barrasso bill. By any measure, the legislation that I am fighting for is stronger, it will put more violent gun criminals in jail, and it will double the number of police officers in schools across America. It will make our children safer.

If we were willing to have a discussion about substance, about the merits, that should be a pretty easy discussion, but, sadly, too many in this body immediately play politics and also give in to the overheated rhetoric on this issue.

Those who advocate gun control inevitably say: If you support the Second Amendment, blood is on your hands.

Well, let me tell you something: If you oppose the Second Amendment and you disarm people who become victims of violent crime, blood is on your hands.

Rather than either of us saying language like that, it seems to me we should come together and say: How do we stop the bad guys? What works? What is effective? What can we do together to make sure to maximize the chances that we prevent another Uvalde, another Santa Fe, another Sutherland Springs, another El Paso, another Midland-Odessa, another Dallas?

The stakes are too serious for political games.

The Presiding Officer wasn't serving in this body 10 years ago when we voted on Grassley-Cruz, but at the time, nine Democrats voted for it. It received the most bipartisan support of any of the comprehensive legislation before this body. It got a majority vote in the Harry Reid Democrat Senate, where the Democrats had a substantial majority.

I would urge you, Mr. President, and every other Democrat to demonstrate the same principle and the same courage that those nine Democrats did a decade ago.

Let's vote for legislation that will actually solve the problem, that will actually stop violent criminals, and that will actually keep our kids safe. Let's resist the political urge to try to attack and undermine the Second Amendment, to try to disarm law-abiding citizens.

I can tell you, as long as I am serving in this body, I will fight with every breath I can to defend the constitutional right to keep and bear arms of every American. It is in the Bill of Rights. It is a foundational right.

We can do both. We can stop criminals and protect the Second Amendment. This bill on the floor, the Democrat bill, does not. So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass Cruz-Barrasso and abandon the Democrat legislation that doesn't stop violent crime but does infringe on the Second Amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

Once again, our Nation has been horrified by mass shootings, this time of shoppers killed in Buffalo, NY, and of schoolchildren and teachers murdered in Texas.

Twelve of us have come together to develop the bipartisan proposal before us to help address the gun violence that is plaguing our country. We were led by Senators CHRIS MURPHY, JOHN CORNYN, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and THOM TILLIS. I want to thank and recognize each of them for their efforts.

Our commonsense plan increases needed mental health resources, improves school safety and support for students, and helps ensure that dangerous criminals and those who are adjudicated as suffering from mental illness cannot purchase firearms. If enacted, our bill will save lives. At the same time, it steadfastly protects the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners. It is not hyperbole to say that this legislation represents the most significant gun safety legislation in decades.

I would like to highlight two specific provisions of this bill that I worked on and that will have a significant impact in Maine and across the country.

First, our bill will fund crisis intervention programs, like Maine's yellow flag law, which our State supreme court just upheld as constitutional this very week.

Maine's law, which has robust due-process protections, allows the court—following an assessment by a medical professional—to determine if individuals should temporarily lose possession of firearms because they pose a serious threat to themselves or to others. Maine's law was developed in consultation with the Sportsman Alliance of Maine, and it has likely saved lives.

This Federal legislation will provide Maine with more resources to fully implement this important program. It will help connect law enforcement, medical professionals, and people in crisis through telehealth services, as well as provide additional financial help to ensure that the law can be efficiently and effectively utilized when necessary.

Second, our bill will also help keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals. The bipartisan package includes the Stop Illegal Trafficking and

Firearms Act that I coauthored with Senator PATRICK LEAHY. It cracks down on straw purchasing and firearms trafficking.

I would like, particularly, to thank Senator HEINRICH, with whom I worked to further refine this proposal so that it could be included in this bipartisan package. Senator HEINRICH was a wonderful partner as we worked through all of the details of this provision.

The trafficking of firearms to violent criminals, gangs, and drug trafficking groups presents a serious threat to public safety in communities across America. Straw purchasers—individuals who purchase guns for other people who are prohibited by law from receiving such weapons—are the linchpin of most firearms trafficking operations, which are responsible for funneling firearms into our cities and across our southern border.

Currently, there is no criminal statute specifically prohibiting straw purchasing or firearms trafficking in the way that we need it to do. Instead, prosecutors rely primarily on paperwork violations that prohibit making false statements in connection with the purchase of a firearm.

Our bill establishes new, specific criminal offenses with significant penalties for straw purchasers and firearms traffickers, along with enhanced penalties when straw-purchased firearms are used in connection with serious criminal activity like terrorism or drug trafficking.

The danger presented by straw purchasers and firearms trafficking is not abstract. It is not theoretical. It is very real—a real and present danger.

Maine's U.S. attorney, Darcie McElwee, recently described how gun and drug trafficking in our State and elsewhere are often intertwined. ''Individuals would come to Maine for guns and leave us their drugs and go back,'' she explained. She added that in recent years, guns acquired in Maine represented ''7% of Massachusetts gun recoveries at crime scenes,'' while Massachusetts guns ''were responsible for 20% of ours. So, that means that both their guns and their drugs are coming into our state.'' I am quoting our new U.S. attorney.

In a recent example of gun and drug trafficking along the I–95 pipeline, a Massachusetts man was sentenced to 7 years in prison after receiving two pistols from a straw purchaser in Androscoggin County, while facilitating fentanyl sales in Bangor. What we have seen are gang members from Connecticut coming to Maine with heroin and swapping heroin for guns.

Gun trafficking is also a border security issue. Law enforcement has long been concerned about the flow of firearms from the United States into Mexico.

According to a recent report, more than 70 percent of all crime guns recovered and traced to Mexico between 2009 and 2014—and that represents more than 73,000 firearms—were traced back to the United States. And the Mexican Government has estimated that 200,000 firearms are smuggled from the United States into Mexico each year.

Our bill provides additional tools to law enforcement and prosecutors to prevent and prosecute these crimes. This is meaningful legislation that reflects input from gun safety advocates, gun rights groups, the U.S. Department of Justice, law enforcement officers, and others. Thus, in addition to helping keep our schools safe and our communities safer, this bill will help to address the gun violence and drug problems that are plaguing our communities, more generally.

Mr. President, I come from a State with a strong heritage of responsible gun ownership. This package reflects conversations that I have had with the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and other responsible groups. It is worth my emphasizing one more time that we are able to make these significant improvements without infringing on the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

Finally, it is important to note that this package demonstrates that Members of the Senate can come together and work in a constructive way to get important goals achieved on behalf of the American people. I urge my Senate colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor tonight sharing the concerns of every Member of this body, to find the best way to protect children who go to school, so that children can go to school in safety and parents can send their children to school feeling that the children will be safe.

And after we have seen the tragedies across the country, I think every Member is here trying to find the best solution, and I think that the one that Senator CRUZ and I have offered is one that will provide the kind of safety and security for our kids, for our schools, and for our communities; and that is why we have introduced this substitute amendment that we are bringing to the floor this evening in an effort to do just that. We bring this at a time when the Nation's attention is focused on what has happened at schools and communities across the country and how to best address it.

And as a physician, a doctor who served in a State legislature and now in this body, I have seen the devastating impact of mental health challenges and problems in families and how much that has contributed to what we have seen with these terrible acts. So what we bring here tonight is legislation focused on safe schools and mental health while protecting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens.

And, with that, I would turn to Senator CRUZ to make a motion to that effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, this body has a choice before it: Do we pass legislation that will be ineffective in stopping violent crime, that has very little prospect of preventing the next mass shooting, that will do very little to make schools safer but, at the same time, will undermine the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens? That is the Democrat bill that is currently on the floor.

Or do we, instead, move to pass real legislation that will stop violent crime, that will put gun criminals in jail, that will prosecute felons and fugitives who try to illegally buy guns, and that will provide serious funding for school safety?

The Cruz-Barrasso legislation provides funding to double the number of police officers in schools across America so our kids can be kept safe—$36 billion total in funding, repurposed from unspent Democrat emergency funds. This bill also provides $10 billion in funding for mental health counselors in schools to stop troubled teens before they go down a horrible road.

The Democrat bill has much smaller funding for cops and schools, much smaller funding for mental health, but much more infringement of the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens.

So it is a choice all of us have: Do we want to stop these crimes, or do we want to play politics?

And I would note, Mr. President, that the proponents of this bill at the outset swore up and down: There will be amendments. We will have amendments on this bill.

Well, right now, the majority leader wants no amendments. And how do we know that? Because the majority leader has filled the amendment tree, has blocked amendments.

This morning, the majority leader was saying that he would allow a vote on Cruz-Barrasso, a straight-up vote. But, for whatever reason, that has changed; and so, right now, amendments are blocked. But, fortunately, it is the right of any Senator to move to table that blocking amendment, and that is what I will do momentarily. And the reason I am moving to table this blocking amendment is to take up Cruz-Barrasso.

And so this vote is a straight-up vote: Do you support serious law enforcement? Do you support prosecuting violent criminals who use guns in their crimes? Do you support prosecuting and sending to jail felons and fugitives and those with serious mental illness who try to illegally buy firearms? And do you support getting serious about

protecting our schools? Do you support doubling the number of cops in our schools so that our kids are safe? Do you support funding mental health counselors so our kids are safe?

This is an opportunity for every Senator to decide if they support doing something that actually fixes the problem or if they put a higher priority on partisan politics. On the merits, this vote should be 100 to 0. We will see what the vote is in reality.

MOTION TO TABLE

Mr. President, accordingly, I move to table amendment No. 5100, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) would have voted ''Yea.''

The result was announced—yeas 39, nays 58, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 241 Leg.]

YEAS—39

Barrasso	Hawley	Risch
Blackburn	Hoeven	Rounds
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Braun	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Shelby
Daines	Lee	Sullivan
Ernst	Lummis	Thune
Fischer	Marshall	Toomey
Graham	Moran	Tuberville
Grassley	Paul	Wicker
Hagerty	Portman	Young

NAYS—58

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Burr	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Luján	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Cassidy	Markey	Tester
Collins	McConnell	Tillis
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warnock
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	
Hassan	Peters	

NOT VOTING—3

Blunt	Cotton	Cramer

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

KEEP KIDS FED ACT OF 2022

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Chair lay before the Senate the message from the House of Representatives to accompany S. 2089; that the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 2089 with amendment No. 5133 be considered made and agreed to; the title amendment from the House be considered and agreed to; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all without intervening action or debate.

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

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 2089) entitled ''An Act to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that grants provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for State veterans' cemeteries do not restrict States from authorizing the interment of certain deceased members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces in such cemeteries, and for other purposes.'', do pass with amendments.

The motion was agreed to.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this effort in this legislation which we have dubbed ''Keep Kids Fed,'' because that is exactly what we are going to be able to do, to help our schools and churches and local providers provide meals for children this summer and help for the school year.

I want to thank my colleague and partner—true partner in this—Senator BOOZMAN for all of his efforts.

We know we are getting back to normal, but we are not there yet, and the folks who run our schools and summer meal programs need extra support through this coming year. And that is what we are doing right now.

So we just passed something fully paid for that will ensure that millions of children don't go hungry this summer and next school year, and I would just finally say this: You know, keeping kids fed is nothing new. We have been doing this on a bipartisan basis since the National School Lunch program was established 76 years ago. So we are just continuing a bipartisan tradition, and I want to thank colleagues for allowing us to be able to move forward on this bill.

And I would now yield to my friend Senator BOOZMAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today for just a moment to discuss the Keep Kids Fed Act, which will help schools and summer providers operate as they return to normal, while facing supply chain problems and fighting food costs.

This bill is a result of a bicameral, bipartisan agreement that assists schools and students as they resume regular operations of the meal programs.

The waivers to provide higher reimbursement rates and universal free meals under these programs during COVID are no longer necessary.

However, schools still face unusual times with a 35 to 40 percent increase in food prices due to inflation and supply chain difficulties. This bill provides targeted and temporary relief for the 2022–2023 school year to help schools with higher food costs and is fully offset.

We all want to ensure that children in this country receive healthful and affordable meals to help them focus on their education.

This bill will help schools provide those meals as they return to normal, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill. And, again, thank you so much, Senator STABENOW, to you and your staff, and to my staff and everyone that has worked so hard to come to an agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tonight, the Senate is passing bipartisan legislation that will keep America's schoolkids fed for the summer.

A hungry child is a horrible thing to see, and because of the amazing, persistent work of a great team, a great bipartisan team—Senator STABENOW, chairman of the Agriculture Committee and Senator BOOZMAN, ranking member of the Agriculture Committee—that won't happen.

The worst of the pandemic is hopefully behind us, but schools across the country are still suffering from the challenges that COVID created—supply chain issues making it harder to provide students free meals they need to stay healthy over the summer.

It would have been just awful—awful—for the Senate to leave without taking action to make sure we provided the waivers necessary to make sure kids can get the free meals they need over the summer.

Kids deserve to be healthy. They deserve to be well fed. And by extending these nutrition waivers before they expire, we can make sure that no student will have to worry about where they are going to get their lunch during the summer.

There is no justification in the world for letting these waivers come to an end, and the good, persistent, steady hard work of Senators Stabenow and Boozman made sure that didn't happen.

JOSEPH WOODROW HATCHETT UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE AND FEDERAL BUILDING—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, in order to expedite matters and move on to the vote, I yield my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

S. 2938

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, tomorrow will mark 1 month since the tragic shooting in Uvalde, TX.

A high school dropout with a history of violence and mental health struggles purchased 2 AR–15s within days of turning 18, and he passed a background check.