

today the Senate begin consideration of the HUD/VA appropriations bill.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER FOR RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I now ask that the Senate stand in recess until 2:30 p.m. today following the remarks of the Senator from Oregon.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, every Member of this body has watched horrified these last few months at the outbreak of gun violence that has struck America's schools. Now, with the new school year just a few weeks away, it is time for this body to respond to America's parents who are frightened for their youngsters and are asking, what can be done to protect their children when they are at school?

Frankly, a lot of those parents don't believe that this Congress will produce very much. They know there has been considerable acrimony about the whole debate over guns in America. Certainly there are many areas where reasonable people can differ. There are constitutional protections with respect to the right to bear arms, and at the same time we are also concerned about the safety of those youngsters when they are away at school.

Senator GORDON SMITH, my colleague from Oregon, and I believe it is time to set politics aside with respect to this issue of gun violence in our schools. That is why we have teamed up on important legislation which we believe ought to be enacted by the time school starts in the fall. We don't think this is the complete answer to this scourge of school violence, gun violence, that our youngsters face, but we think it can make a real difference.

We propose this legislation after the tragedy in Springfield, OR. As the Presiding Officer of this body knows, there has been a rash of these violent incidents at our schools. The problems have literally been seen in schools from coast to coast. Senator SMITH and I have introduced legislation which I believe would lay out the beginnings of a rational policy to control school violence in America.

What we have proposed—we did it after consulting with families, law enforcement officials, educators, people who are for gun control, people who are against gun control—we have proposed legislation which would stipulate that when a young person brings a gun to school, that would, in effect, be a five-alarm warning to society. It would make it very clear that at that point there is a real threat to young people, to teachers, and our society. And young people who bring a gun to school, under our legislation, would be detained for up to 72 hours for a com-

prehensive evaluation, from the standpoint of mental health considerations, law enforcement issues, family questions, the whole gamut of concerns that ought to be looked at when a young person brings a gun to school.

The alleged killer at Thurston High School, in Springfield, OR, was apprehended at school with a gun the day before he shot more than 20 of his classmates. That day, the police made a decision which is duplicated each day across our Nation, a decision that seemed reasonable at the time. The youngster was released to his parents, parents who were themselves teachers and who were known to be concerned and involved in the lives of their children. Currently, many police departments across America have complete discretion to treat young people caught with a gun at school in the manner they deem appropriate. As Springfield's own police chief has argued, the evaluation that needs to occur in these situations is beyond the means and capacity of most police forces across our country.

So Senator SMITH and I have introduced legislation which would provide an incentive for each State to enact a law requiring a mandatory 72-hour detention for any child caught with a gun at school. If a State passes such a law, it will be eligible for an additional 25 percent in funding under the Juvenile Justice Act. The cost of this legislation is small, perhaps \$25 million a year, and certainly modest when you look at the State's overall requirements in the effort to prevent school violence.

Now, Mr. President, we are not suggesting that this is all that needs to be done. Certainly, though, our first responsibility when a child brings a gun to school is to protect all of the kids who come to that school armed only with their books and their calculators. Children caught with a gun at school ought to be detained for a sufficient period to protect the other children and to evaluate the degree to which they are a threat to themselves and those around them.

I believe this legislation can win the support of every Member of this body, be enacted in time for the opening of the fall school year and should be acted on as soon as possible. Mr. President, Bill Clinton has spoken favorably of this legislation during his visit to Springfield, OR. The Nation's mayors—Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives—have spoken favorably of this legislation. I am very hopeful that even though this body has an extremely busy schedule in the weeks ahead, there will be time, on a bipartisan basis, to ensure that this legislation moves forward.

According to Larry Bentz, principal of Thurston High School in Springfield, OR, the Thurston High community is slowly returning to some semblance of normalcy. The kids are engaged in the traditions of summer—swimming, playing basketball, summer jobs. With the memories of the brutal shooting at the

high school seared into their memories, the parents are trying to push ahead and return to family routines and responsibilities. But they want to make sure that this body, and elected officials everywhere, don't forget about the gun violence that has shattered young lives and families in Springfield, OR—and, in fact, in five States over the last school year. Senator SMITH and I urge that this body not let that happen. We ought to listen and learn from the lessons of Springfield and commit to doing our part to end school gun violence now as the schools look to opening their doors for a new school year.

Now, the Thurston community is still processing the tragedy at Thurston High. They are debating a variety of approaches and ideas for reducing school violence. Senator SMITH and I don't pretend to have all of the answers, but we know there are some practical steps that the U.S. Senate can take, and take promptly, to make our schools safer in America.

There are other steps that need to be taken, Mr. President. We have to make certain that communities have the resources to evaluate kids in trouble. I heard again and again, as I visited with families in Springfield, from hard-working, middle-class families, that they simply could not get any help until their youngster was violent. That is just not acceptable in America, Mr. President. It is not right to say that there will be no response until a young person is actually violent. We have to get there early. We have to get there with preventive strategies.

Senator SMITH and I hope to be back before the U.S. Senate with other constructive approaches in the days ahead. But let us make a strong beginning, Mr. President. Let us make a strong effort in the U.S. Senate to take the first step to averting further school tragedies. In Oregon alone, young people were apprehended with guns at school 100 times in the last school year—and those were simply the ones who were caught. So as our country goes about the business of the pleasures of summer, and as the U.S. Senate deals with what we know is going to be a very hectic schedule over the next few weeks, let's not forget about what happened in Springfield, OR, in Kentucky, in Arkansas and in Mississippi. Let us remember that our young people will be back in school in just a few weeks. Let us do our part to make sure that school violence ends here.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate now stands in recess until 2:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:54 p.m., recessed until 2:30 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FRIST).