

from both the House and the Senate to retain these grant provisions in the conference report of this bill.

I thank Congressman SHIMKUS and Chairman TAUZIN for their work in securing passage of Anton's Law by the House of Representatives, and urge President Bush to sign this necessary child safety bill into law as soon as possible.

2001 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION UNIFORM CRIME REPORT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Annual Uniform Crime Report for 2001, 15,980 people were murdered last year; 8,719 of the 15,980 deaths were caused by a firearm, and of those murders, 6,790 were caused by a handgun. Six hundred and seventy-two murders occurred in my home State of Michigan. These numbers are staggering. There are several commonsense bills in the Senate that would reduce gun violence and gun crime, and I am disappointed that it appears that the 107th Congress will come to a close without the enactment of meaningful gun safety legislation.

On April 24, 2001, Senator REED introduced the Gun Show Background Check Act. This bill would close a loophole in the law which allows unlicensed private gun dealers to sell guns without performing a National Instant Criminal Background System check. I cosponsored that bill because I believe it would be an important tool to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals and other people prohibited from owning a firearm.

I am also a cosponsor of Senator DURBIN's Children's Access Prevention Act. Under this bill, adults who fail to lock up a loaded firearm or an unloaded firearm with ammunition would be held liable if the weapon is taken by a child and used to kill or injure themselves or another person. The bill also increases the penalties for selling a gun to a juvenile and creates a gun safety education program that includes parent-teacher organizations, local law enforcement and community organizations. This bill is similar to a bill President Bush signed into law during his tenure as the Governor of Texas.

More recently, I cosponsored Senator KOHL's Ballistics, Law Assistance, and Safety Technology Act, or BLAST Act, which would require licensed firearms manufacturers to test fire firearms, and prepare ballistics images of the fired bullets and casings of new firearms. Expanding the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network to include these ballistics images would increase the crime gun tracing capabilities of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. ATF agents could quickly identify firearms by using the ballistics images of cartridge casings and bullets recovered at crime scenes, even when criminals obliterate the serial number.

In recent months, we have seen snipers with an assault rifle kill people around the country and a student at the University of Arizona go to his school and kill three of his teachers and himself. These events represent only a few of the thousands of murders that have already occurred this year. These brutal killing sprees were given national media attention, and hopefully will generate legislative action. While there is little time left in the 107th Congress to address these issues, it is critical that we press for consideration of these issues early in 108th Congress.

THE CONFIRMATION OF 98 JUDICIAL NOMINEES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate confirmed the 98th judicial nominee of President George W. Bush.

These past 16 months, since the reorganization of the Senate Judiciary Committee following the change in majority last year, have been an historic and impressive period in which we have fairly considered hundreds of the President's executive and judicial branch nominees. Despite partisan rhetoric to the contrary, the Senate has done a good job.

If this Senate had a "lousy" record on judicial confirmations, then the Republican leadership, which controlled the pace on confirmations from 1995 through the first part of 2001, must have been far, far worse than "lousy". Under Republican control judicial vacancies on the Courts of Appeals more than doubled, from 16 to 33, and overall vacancies rose from 65 to 110. We have heard no criticism from the White House of that period, in which Senate Republicans blocked President Clinton's nominees. We have heard no apologies from the Republican leadership that engineered those efforts.

Just last night, in one night, the Democratic-led Senate confirmed more judges, 18, including more circuit judges, than the Republican-led Senate allowed to be confirmed in the entire 1996 session more in one day than Republicans were willing to proceed on for an entire year. Seventeen of those judges were the nominations we were able to get reported from the Committee on October 8 with some significant effort and in spite of Republican efforts to divert the Committee into other matters.

This week the Committee met, again, as I had said it would. We considered the nominations of Dennis Shedd and Michael McConnell and voted on them as the 101st and 102nd judicial nominations voted on by the Committee during the last 16 months and reported them to the Senate. One hundred judicial nominations have now been reported favorably to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee during the past 16 months; two were rejected. One indication of the fairness with which we have conducted ourselves is that as

chairman I have proceeded to consider nominations that I do not support and the Committee has reported nominations that I do not support to the Senate. As I said during this week's Committee consideration of the Shedd nomination, for example, having examined his record as a District Court Judge, I intend to vote against his nomination to the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

With the Senate's actions last night, we have confirmed 98 of this President's judicial nominees in only 16 months. This compares most favorably to the 38 judicial confirmations averaged per year during the six and one-half years when the Republican majority was in control of the Senate. Last night, the Senate confirmed another 18 judicial nominees. In the entire 1996 session over the course of an entire year, the Republican majority allowed only 17 district court judges to be confirmed all year and would not confirm a single circuit court nominee—not one. Last night, the Democratic-led Senate confirmed all 17 district court nominees reported to the Senate by the Judiciary Committee after our October 8 business session as well as a 6th Circuit nominee from Kentucky. The Democratic-led Senate exceeded in one day what it took the Republican majority of the Senate an entire year to accomplish. That should put our historic demonstration of bipartisanship toward this President's judicial nominees in perspective.

The 17 district court nominees confirmed last night were on the Senate calendar because, on October 8, the Senate Judiciary Committee was able to report those nominations despite unparalleled personal attacks by Republicans on me as chairman. The circuit court nominee confirmed last night, Professor John Rogers, is the second of this President's judicial nominees confirmed to the Sixth Circuit this year. They are the first confirmations to the 6th Circuit since 1997, when Republicans for four years shut down consideration of President Clinton's nominees to that circuit. Three of President Clinton's nominees to that court were never allowed a hearing by the Republican majority; the Democratic majority has, in contrast, proceeded to confirm two new judges to that same circuit court.

The hard, thankless, but steady work of the Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee has reduced judicial vacancies substantially during these last 16 months. We inherited 110 vacancies and an additional 49 have arisen since July 10, 2002. Today, after 98 confirmations, district and circuit court vacancies combined number only 60—not the more than 150 vacancies that would exist had we shut down the process or the 111 vacancies that would exist if we had followed the Republican pace of confirmation during the Clinton administration. The President has failed to send nominations for almost half of the 60 current vacancies on the