Why, at this medical research facility, should these people get pink slips? Are they unnecessary? Of course not. If the food pantry in Utah closes, are the people still hungry? Of course they are—more of them than before this cut took place.

In central Nebraska emergency response times have increased significantly since the local airport control tower closed. In southern Ohio the director of the local public defender's office—a man by the name of Steve Nolder—fired himself. He did that rather than lay off other members of his staff. He figured: I am one; I can save the jobs of three people. And that is what he did. That is quite unbelievable, but it is true. He has worked there for 18 years in the public defender's office. I repeat, he gave up his job so three could keep theirs.

Perhaps most concerning of all, community cancer centers around the country are facing difficult choices. For the people who have experienced cancer or experienced cancer in their families, this is something that is noted. Community cancer centers around the country are facing a very difficult choice: send Medicare patients away or just close their doors. The Washington Post reports that because of the sequester cuts to Medicare reimbursements, cancer centers around the country can no longer afford to administer many common drugs. For people who have watched loved ones have chemotherapy—it was just a few months ago when people worried about whether they were going to be able to get the chemo drugs because there was a shortage. Well, now it is widespread.

The Post reports, I repeat, because of the sequester cuts to Medicare, reimbursements for these cancer centers around the country have to make a choice: close or change their hours, which is tough on patients. These clinics, where two-thirds of the cancer patients receive treatments, would lose so much money so quickly they could have to go out of business. So providers are sending cancer patients to overcrowded hospitals instead, not to the cancer centers. For patients in clinical trials for these new cancer drugs—lifesaving experiments—the situation is really dire. Some in these clinical trials are going to have to travel across the country, to Washington, DC, Boston, or New York. People can't afford that, especially when they are sick.

As I said last month, the effects of the so-called sequester didn't break over us like a big wave, they sneaked up on us like a rising tide, and that tide is here now. But the effects are devastating, even though we didn't feel them immediately, and there is more pain to come. That is the sad part about it.

In the coming months, meat inspectors, FBI officers, and Border Patrol agents will be furloughed. We haven't even begun to see the worst of the job losses. There will be 750,000 jobs lost because of sequester across the country.

The overwhelming majority of Americans wanted us to compromise before their friends and family members got pink slips or furloughed or were told there is no more treatment for them even though they have cancer. For some it is already too late. But we can repair that damage, perhaps, and we should do it immediately, to put Americans back to work—no more furloughs.

To give our economy a foundation for growth, we must replace the sequester with a balanced approach to deficit reduction. A balanced approach is one that asks the richest among us to contribute a little bit more—their fair share—to deficit reduction. The rich are willing to do this. If we did this, we would avert cuts that hurt American families, harm our military readiness, and hinder our economic recovery.

I want everyone within the sound of my voice to doublecheck my statistics, but I heard on the radio on the way to work the Pentagon has decided that one-third of all of our aircraft simply will not be used because they don't have enough resources to fuel them. So that training just will not go forward. That is what I heard on the radio, and someone can doublecheck what I heard, but I am confident that is right.

In the House and in the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats voted to impose these cuts quite a long time ago, so it is going to take Republicans and Democrats working together to avert them. That is what we need to do. It is senseless to go on as we are done with these cuts that are done with a meat cleaver, not a scalpel.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day this Wednesday.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

SAFE COMMUNITIES, SAFE SCHOOLS ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 649, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 32, S. 649, a bill to ensure that all individuals who should be prohibited from buying a firearm are listed in the national instant criminal background check system and require a background check for every firearm sale, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in about an hour the President of the United States will release his budget—65 days after the statutory deadline of February 4, the first Monday in February.

Since taking office, President Obama has raised taxes roughly $1.7 trillion—a number that I know none of us can actually comprehend. But now he wants to raise taxes once again.

I heard the majority leader on the floor this morning advocating for another tax increase. The President's proposed budget will ask for another $800 billion, and that is on top of $600 billion that was the subject of the fiscal cliff negotiations at the end of last year.

The President's budget, which will be released in an hour but which we have heard a lot about already, will never, ever actually balance. Every household in America, 49 States, every municipality, county government, everyone else in America has to live within their means but not the Federal Government.

The President's budget, as I said, does not purport to live within our fiscal means, and it does not balance, but the President says this is a compromise. I heard his spokesman on television say this is not the President's ideal budget; this is what he views as a compromise. But here is the simple reality: America cannot afford this budget, and America cannot afford the President's so-called compromise.

Let's review some recent history.

In November and December of last year, Republicans were asking the President to embrace serious entitlement reform. Everyone who has looked at Medicare and Social Security realizes that both of those programs are on a path to insolvency and that they will not be there for future generations. And we asked for some smart reductions in Federal spending—what we have come to know as wasteful Washington spending—in exchange for more revenue. The President refused, citing the need for a ''balanced'' approach. But I do not want anyone to confuse that with a balanced budget; the President calls for a ''balanced'' approach but never a balanced budget.

Meanwhile, his Treasury Secretary made clear that the White House was absolutely prepared to go over the fiscal cliff—this was in December—unless Republicans agreed to raise taxes. Well, we did not have much choice because after the expiration of the so-called Bush tax cuts, they were going to go up by operation of law. But now, after getting more than $1 trillion in new tax revenue as part of ObamaCare and after getting a separate $620 billion tax increase on January 2, which I have just talked about, as a result of the fiscal cliff negotiations, the President is back for more. It seems as though that is his knee-jerk solution to every fiscal

issue: more taxes, more spending, and more debt.

Not only would his proposed budget raise taxes by more than $800 billion, it would increase annual spending by $2 trillion by 2023 and increase our national debt even more, by $8 trillion. For those keeping score, our gross debt has already increased by more than $6 trillion since the President was sworn into office. It is already larger than our entire gross domestic product—in other words, our entire economy—and we are already spending more than $200 billion a year just on interest payments.

Here is the risk—one of the risks—of this huge overhang of debt: If interest rates were just to go up by 1 percentage point that we had to pay our creditors, such as China, to buy our debt, that would be $1.7 trillion in additional interest we would have to pay on the debt for each percentage point over a 10-year period of time. So you can begin to see very quickly how payment of interest and payment of mandatory programs would quickly crowd out everything else, including national defense expenditures.

A serious long-term fiscal plan must include three elements: progrowth tax reform, which we stand ready to do; structural Medicare reform, which we stand ready to do because we believe we need to preserve and protect Medicare for future generations; and, No. 3, a realistic strategy for reducing our long-term debt burden before we experience a European-style debt crisis. Unfortunately, President Obama's budget does none of that.

Last year, speaking about America's national debt, President Obama's Treasury Secretary told the Republican chairman of the House Budget Committee:

> We're not coming before you to say we have a definitive solution to our long-term [debt] problem. What we do know is we don't like yours.

Since that time, our national debt has grown by $1.4 trillion. Now more than ever, America needs a definitive solution to our debt problem. Now more than ever we need a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution, like one that has been cosponsored by every Member on this side of the aisle. Now more than ever, amid the longest stretch of high unemployment—the highest unemployment—since the Great Depression, we need innovative, progrowth tax reforms that encourage investment and private-sector job creation. Yet the President is still offering more of the same—more taxes, more spending, and more debt. To paraphrase a famous diplomat, it seems the President never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING THE LADY CARDINALS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday I was proud to congratulate Coach Pitino and the Louisville men's basketball team for an impressive national championship win. Today I would like to recognize Coach Walz and the Lady Cardinals for playing their hearts out last night. You know, these women were the lowest seeded team to make it all the way to the title game in decades—and that is really quite an achievement.

So my sincere congratulations to you, Lady Cards. Keep up the hustle for next year's tournament. And to the Connecticut Huskies, congratulations on your hard-fought victory last night. You earned it.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. President, later today we will receive the President's budget. Like nearly every one of his budgets so far, it is late—really late. In the extra 2 months he has kept the country on hold, both the House and the Senate have actually already passed their own budgets. So it is hard to see what the White House plans to accomplish. I want to believe the intention is not to purposely blow up the budget process so the President can campaign against the very budget process he blew up, but from the reports we are seeing, it is getting harder and harder not to draw that conclusion. After all, the document headed our way does not appear designed to bridge the differences between the House- and Senate-passed budgets. That is the role Americans would expect the President to play at this stage. But his budget simply does not represent some grand pivot from left to center; it is really just a pivot from left to left.

I mean, if these reports we are seeing are correct, it is mostly the same old thing that we have seen year after year after year, and that is really too bad because it is not as if we do not know the kinds of things that need to be done to get our budget back to balance and Americans back to work. We need to provide families and businesses a fairer and flatter Tax Code so they can save for the future and create jobs. We do not need a budget that piles on tax increase after tax increase. We need to get government out of the way so the private sector can actually grow again. We do not need a budget that spends more money we do not have. We need a balanced budget that encourages growth and job creation. We do not need an extreme, unbalanced budget that will not balance in your lifetime or mine.

The White House initially made some fantastic claims about the amount of deficit reduction supposedly contained in its budget. But when you cut through the spin and get to the facts, it looks as though there is less than $600 billion worth of reduction in there—and that is over a decade—all of it coming, not surprisingly, from tax increases. In other words, it is not a serious plan—for the most part, just another leftwing wish list. Let me clarify: a wish list, actually, with an asterisk.

The President seems prepared to finally concede this time that at least something needs to be done to save entitlements from their inevitable slide toward bankruptcy. I am glad to see him begin to come to grips with the math. It is well past time for reform, and it is something the President ought to want to do because he presumably cares about saving entitlement programs, not just because he wants yet another excuse to raise taxes.

As we start to think about reforming entitlement programs, we should think about reform this way: Will the changes we make help modernize entitlements over the long term in order to eventually meet the needs of a rapidly aging population in a realistic way or will they just kick the can down the road without actually solving the problem? Remember, kicking the can down the road is how we got to this point in the first place. So we need to have the courage to finally make the tough decisions Americans sent us here to make.

If the President and his allies care about Social Security and Medicare—and I take them at their word that they do—then they need to prove that commitment by proposing ambitious, forward-leaning structural reforms to save them. This budget is their chance to do that, and I hope they will. But if they choose to continue using these programs as campaign weapons instead, then the math points to a clear outcome: The entitlement programs so many Americans rely upon will go bankrupt, and today's Washington Democrats will have to live with that legacy. We cannot get to that point. But Republicans only control a tiny sliver of the Federal Government, so there really is not much we can do until the President and his allies get serious about reform. It is way past time they did.

We do not need another reheated budget. We have had enough of those in the past few years. We need a serious reform-oriented budget. Sadly, I do not believe we will see that one today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today, finally, we are going to see the President's budget—so we are told. When we look over the history of the last few decades, never has there been a budget submitted so late. The budget is due in February, as we know. With the exception of the first year of a President's term, when a new President comes in, when we give that new administration some time to put together its own budget, this will be the latest budget submission in decades.

I hope the wait will have been worth it. In other words, I hope what the President submits today is something serious, that helps us address the central challenge of our time. I see there are some young pages on the floor. I also met with lots of young people from the Ohio State University this morning. I told them the same thing I

will say today, which is their future is at stake.

It is about our economy, but it is also truly about the future. Are we going to get control of the record debt and deficits and begin to turn our country toward the America that has been something we so much have taken for granted over the past century, which is an America that is growing, that is prospering, where wages are going up, where we have the ability to chart our own course and are a beacon of hope and opportunity for the rest of the world? Or, are we going to continue the slide we are on now, where wages have actually gone down, where America's deficit and debt continue to grow at unacceptable levels, where we risk a financial crisis as we have seen in Southern Europe, in countries such as Greece, places where they did not watch what was happening in terms of their fiscal house.

These countries allowed their debts and deficits to grow to such a large extent that they became as large as the entire economy of those countries. Guess what? As of this year, we are told our debt—our gross debt in this country—is now the size of our entire economy. There are studies out there that indicate that when we get to that kind of a level, there is a big impact on economic growth. We are certainly seeing it, are we not?

We are living through the weakest economic recovery since the Great Depression, whether it is measured in terms of our economic growth or whether it is measured in terms of jobs. We just had a very disappointing report last month on the jobs front showing that we only gained about 88,000 jobs, disappointing all the projections.

But significantly, one-half million people—almost 500,000 people left the workforce. We now have the lowest labor participation rate—meaning that as a percentage of people working or seeking work—that we have had since the days of Jimmy Carter. That is over three decades. In some ways, the policies of Jimmy Carter have been replicated over the last few years in the sense of larger government, more taxes, more regulations.

What we are seeing is, frankly, an economy that is starting to resemble what happened back in the Carter days. That is unacceptable. We need to provide opportunities for Americans who are on that first rung of the economic ladder to get to the second and to the third and to the fourth. Those are the folks who are being hurt the worst with this economic malaise we have with this anemic economic growth, with these job numbers that are so disappointing.

They do relate back to the budget deficit and debt. There is a study by a couple economists named Rogoff and Reinhart that indicate we would have about 1 million more jobs this year alone if we did not have debt at these incredibly high levels.

This year we are told we can expect a deficit of $1 trillion again or more. This is the fourth year in a row. Never in the history of our country have we had debts and annual deficits of $1 trillion. Yet the President's budget, it appears, will not fundamentally change the course we are on. I think from what I have heard from the media reports and so on, it is likely to add about $7 trillion to our debt over the next 10 years, putting our debt that is already at over $16 trillion, again, at a level where it is at the entire size of our economy, where we have unfortunately continued economic doldrums because we cannot get out of this huge overhang of debts and deficits.

It is time to make a change. It is a moment for truth. It is an opportunity to address the challenge. My fear is the President's budget will not be adequate to meet the challenge.

There are some things in the budget I think will be positive. I want to say that. I understand the President is likely to propose a more accurate measure of inflation, when we are talking about how to adjust for cost of living and our programs, including the important and vital but unsustainable program Social Security.

Social Security this year is actually in deficit, meaning that $77 billion is projected to be spent for benefits in Social Security greater than the amount of payroll taxes coming in. So people who say Social Security is OK, it is in fine shape—a $77 billion shortfall is not OK. Also, we are told the disability trust fund will be insolvent, bankrupt, belly up by 2016. That is just a few years from now. More people have gone on disability, unfortunately, than have been added to the work rolls in the last 4 years. Yet this trust fund is going bankrupt in just a few years.

Even if we include all the IOUs in the trust fund for the Old-Age and Survivors Trust Fund, the fundamental trust fund for Social Security, that will be insolvent by 2033. That is not that long from now. Folks who are retiring today, many of whom are likely to live to that point, in other words, for retirees today, they are looking at the possibility of this trust fund going bankrupt.

What happens under law when that goes bankrupt? There is a 25-percent cut in benefits. That is the law. So with this hemorrhaging every year, this year again about $77 billion with these trust funds heading toward insolvency, Social Security does have to be addressed. I commend the President for saying let's use the right measure of inflation. It also happens to affect the benefit side and the tax side. So it actually increases taxes as well because there will not be the same adjustment for the rates for indexing on the income tax side. So there is both revenue gained through this proposal and also there are some savings on the programmatic side because the more accurate measure of inflation is used.

This is a controversial issue among some folks. I understand that. Again, I commend the President for putting it in the budget, as I am told he will. But having said that, this is just one step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, even with that proposal, Social Security will continue to have these enormous shortfalls. On the health care side, I am told the President may make a proposal to reduce some spending in health care. That is a good thing but again not adequate to the task before us. I am told it will be $400 billion. We can argue about where that $400 billion comes from. But it looks like most of it will come out of providers; in other words, the people who are providing health care to lower their reimbursement at a time when more and more providers are saying, we are not interested in providing care under Medicare and Medicaid because the reimbursement is already too low.

So we need to be careful how it is done. But let's assume we could agree on the $400 billion. What would that mean? That would mean that instead of rising 110 percent over the next ten years, Federal health care expenses would go up 100 percent.

The point is we have a challenge in front of us that requires a much more aggressive approach. It requires us to be honest with the American people. It requires us to tell the American people: things are not going well. We are not turning the corner because these incredible debts and deficits do not enable us to do that. It is a shadow over the economy. It is a wet blanket on the economy today. Unfortunately, for the young people listening today, it is going to affect their futures in very significant ways if we do not address the problem.

We will see what happens with this budget proposal today. I am hopeful it will have more in terms of savings than has been suggested in the media. Those savings that are in there, I think we ought to support, as Republicans and Democrats alike, and then encourage the President to work with us on taking it to the next level, to truly address this challenge.

On the tax side, we are told the President is likely to recommend additional increases in tax. Remember, taxes were increased about $620 billion already this year, just a few months ago. So the ink is barely dry on that huge tax increase—some would argue the largest tax increase in the history of our country. Yet the President is apparently likely to recommend taxes at about that level again, $600 billion or more. Some say it is more like $1.5 trillion, which was in the Democratic one offered on the Senate floor. But I am told maybe it is more like $600 billion. But whatever it is, we have to acknowledge that increasing taxes again is going to hurt the economy. There is no question about it. The question is whether it is appropriate to have a higher level of taxation in our economy.

Let's think about that for a moment. We are told by the Congressional Budget Office, which is the nonpartisan

group that analyzes all these budget proposals, that currently we have taxes as a percent of our economy, which is probably how you ought to look at it, at levels in 2015 which would be below our historic average. So in a few short years, we are looking at taxes that they say are 19.1 percent of the economy. What does that mean? Typically, it is about 18.3 percent. So it is higher than the average. We are already, under current law, looking at higher taxes, partly because of the fiscal cliff agreement and the $620 billion in new taxes that were raised over 10 years.

The spending, on the other hand, which is already at levels higher than the historic average—which is about 20 percent, today it is at about 23 percent—is projected to go up and up and up. In fact, over the next three decades, according to the Congressional Budget Office, it goes from 20 percent to, on an average over the last 50 years, about 39 percent.

Then, frankly, they stop counting because they cannot imagine spending at that level because we have no sense of how to get revenue at that level. No one is talking about taxes that would be increased that high. It would be tripling the taxes, at least. So these are issues we need to talk about as a country. How much taxation do we want to have on our economy? How much spending do we want to have? I think what we ought to do is come up with a plan. Ten years from now, where do we want to be? Republicans are calling for a balanced budget. We think true balance means we balance the budget. We stop spending more than we take in. Democrats would like to see more taxes and fewer spending reductions.

We need to come up with something that makes sense for the American people. We need to acknowledge the fact that our issue is not the revenue.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. PORTMAN. Instead, it is the spending. That must be addressed. I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, let's work together to get America back on track, to solve this problem which, if we do not deal with it, will not allow our economy to prosper. It will not allow America to continue to be that beacon of hope and opportunity for the rest of the world.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Indiana.

THE BUDGET

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I find myself echoing the words of the previous speaker, my good friend from Ohio. I could have given his speech and he probably could give mine because we are both on the same track.

This is an important day. The President will release his budget for 2014. While it is late, it is welcome. We now have three budgets in place. The Senate has voted on a budget, the House has voted on a budget, and the President will be bringing his budget before us. We now have the outlines of the beginning of a discussion and a debate and action that must take place in the next several months.

We have wide differences on of how we need to get to where we need to arrive, but at least now we have something from which to work. I urge my colleagues and the President to work together to achieve what is necessary to put this country on a path to fiscal health. It may be over a period of years. It may be measured out in terms of where we are now in the economy, what needs to be applied now versus what needs to be applied later.

I have said over and over from this platform and others, if we do not incorporate discipline in our spending, we will have clearly out-of-control spending which will continue to grow year after year. This will also grow the deficit and lead to more borrowing each year, putting our country in an evermore difficult position. If we do not include disciplined spending within this budget, we will not achieve what we need to achieve.

Secondly, if we do not address our out-of-control mandatory spending, we will never achieve what we wish to achieve and we will continue to find ourselves in ever deeper holes. The previous speaker, Senator PORTMAN of Ohio, spoke about the need to make structural reforms in mandatory spending programs.

To those who say: You can't touch this. This has been promised to the American people and we cannot even begin to address this issue because these programs should be exempt—those individuals are immune to the reality of the current situation which stands before us. The situation is these programs are going broke. Spending on these programs is unsustainable.

Those organizations—and I will not name them here, but I will at some point in time; we all know who they are—are flooding seniors with mailings saying: Don't let them touch your Social Security. Don't let them touch one dime of your Medicare. You deserve every penny.

They are lying to those people. They are simply telling them they will be in a situation where their benefits are going to need to be reduced dramatically a few years down the line in order to keep the programs from going insolvent.

If we really want to care for and look out for those who are depending on Social Security and Medicare for their later years, we need to stand up now, tell them the truth, and do what is necessary to protect those programs.

Standing by and doing nothing, standing by and listening to outside interest groups who are trying to scare them to death means we are denying those people the future income benefits they are receiving under Social Security and Medicare. Let's have the courage to stand up and do what is right, and do what is right for the very people who are being told we are trying to take something away from them.

Someone said on this budget coming forward—we don't have all the details. There is the good, the bad, and the ugly. I would prefer to say there is the good, the not so good, and the why are we doing this in the first place. However we categorize this, first of all, let's give the President some credit for taking that first small step toward raising the issue of mandatory spending. My understanding is the President will suggest a modification of the Consumer Price Index, which is used to provide for increases each year in these various programs.

Once again we get this doomsday warning: You can't touch this. This is an index which is not correctly applied. We are still simply trying to bring this in line with the actual cost of living for our seniors.

Suggesting this gets the printing presses rolling and all of the interest groups saying to send us $10 to save Social Security and everything else. Even this correction which the President has proposed is being criticized, which is beyond description in terms of how people try to take advantage of our seniors and those on these programs.

Let's give the President credit for putting this in play. It is a small step. It is not nearly as far as we need to go. There are other structural reforms we need to address. Let's at least acknowledge the President has come forward with something sustentative as a modest first step.

Next is the not so good, the call for new spending, new stimulus. We have been through this. We have had nearly $1 trillion of stimulus, about nine-tenths of which is now documented as not stimulating. It is turning out to be a poor, government-selected, so-called investment in the future, which the market has basically said doesn't work.

We have solar manufacturing plants closing all over the world. We see wind farms being raised through subsidies. Yet they cannot connect to the grid. It ignores the new discoveries in natural gas and fossil fuel reserves in America. The cost-to-benefit ratio is way out of balance. I now hear the word ''investment,'' not ''stimulus.'' ''Investment'' is another code word for ''stimulus.'' That means it is a code for we will decide where this money goes.

The problem is the political animal puts its hands around it and the money goes to beneficiaries or supporters for political reasons. Anyway, government shouldn't be in this business.

This is the not so good of the president's budget because it includes $1.5 trillion of additional net Federal spending. At a time when our spending is out of control, how can we come forward with a budget which adds more than $1.5 trillion of new spending and call it investment when it is really just stimulus? We have been there and done that. It doesn't work, so why are we going there again?

Lastly, why are some of these proposals in this budget, such as the new taxes which were suggested by my colleague from Ohio? This budget contains

well over $1 trillion of new taxes on the American people, after we went through this 3 months ago with one of the largest tax increases in history.

Has anyone ever seen an increase in the economic growth through an increase in taxes? Leaving less money in people's paychecks, would this result in more consumer spending which helps our economy?

Adding new taxes, a new tax burden to the American economy, when has that ever created a job? We have staggering numbers of people who are dropping out of the workforce and giving up the search to find jobs. Our unemployment rate, our so-called official rate, is phony, absolutely phony.

People are withdrawing from the workforce because they have given up on ever finding a job. They are simply changing the numbers to make it look as if we are making progress, but as a result we are not making progress.

I notice the majority leader has come to the floor. I wish to conclude by saying we are in a historic time. We are at a crossroads in terms of the future of this country. This is the time when we need to put aside partisan interests, political interests, special interest groups, and stand up to do what is right for the future.

What is the future? As someone famously said: The future is now. The future is now for all of those people out of work. The future is now for all of those college kids graduating without a job to go to. The future is now for our senior citizens who have seen some of their savings eroded through this recession we experienced. The future is now for doing what is necessary to put this country on the right track to prosperity.

Let's work together. I am willing. I informed the President and my colleagues that I am willing to work with them. I know we will have to make some compromises.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. COATS. Let's seize this opportunity.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, it goes without saying we all do our jobs here and we seek a seat in the Senate for a reason. We decided to run for this high office because of issues which deeply motivated us, whether it be more affordable health care, better housing, or lower taxes. In a job like this we are driven to find the issues which move us. Then sometimes there are issues which find us.

When I was elected to the Senate last November, I never imagined my maiden speech would be about guns or about gun violence. I could have never imagined I would be standing here in the wake of 20 young children dying in Sandy Hook or the six adults who protected them. Sometimes issues find you.

Here I am, pleased to have the majority leader, the majority whip, and so many of my colleagues on the Senate floor with me here today.

I wish to start with the unpleasant part. I think it is important for all of my colleagues to understand why we are having this debate this week and next week about gun violence, why for the first time in decades we were able to break the logjam to do something about the waves of gun violence which have plagued this Nation. It is easy to avert our eyes from the horror of what happened in Newtown. It is just easy to close our ears and pretend it didn't happen.

We can't ignore the reality because it is here. On a disturbingly regular basis it is here—in Columbine, Tucson, Aurora, and Sandy Hook. The next town's name is just waiting to be added to the list if we do nothing. Here is what is happening.

Sometime in the early morning hours of December 14, a very disturbed, reclusive young man named Adam Lanza went into his mother's room and shot her dead in her sleep. A few minutes later, maybe hours later, he took his mother's car and drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School. By 9:35 he shot his way through locked doors with an AR–15 semiautomatic rifle, which was owned by his mother.

He began a methodical 10-minute rampage which left 20 children, all 6 and 7 years old, and six adults who cared for them, dead. In 10 minutes, Adam Lanza shot off 154 rounds from a gun which could shoot up to six bullets a second. This high-powered gun assured every single child Adam Lanza shot died. Lanza shot most kids multiple times. Noah Pozner was shot 11 times alone.

The State's veteran medical examiner, who had been on the job for decades, said he had never seen anything such as this.

Several children did escape. Six kids were courageously hid in a classroom closet by their teacher, Victoria Soto, who shielded her kids from the bullets and died that day. Five other kids ran out of the room when Lanza had trouble reloading. Five kids are alive today because the shooter needed to stop and switch ammunition magazines. Whether it is because he had trouble reloading again or because the police were coming into the building at about 9:45, Lanza turned one of his weapons on himself and the massacre ended, but not before 26 people were dead.

This is reality. The worst reality is if we don't do something right now, it is going to happen again.

It is happening every day. To this country, which has become so callously used to gun violence, it is raindrops, background noise. The reality is the one in which we are losing 30 Americans a day to gun violence.

This chart illustrates how many people have died since December 14 and it is almost unreadable because it is a cast of thousands. This reality is just as unacceptable as what happened in Sandy Hook that day.

The question is, Are we going to do anything about it or will we just sit on our hands as we have for 20 years and accept the status quo with respect to everyday gun violence and these increased incidences of mass shooting? If we are really serious about doing our jobs, we can.

Outside the beltway this isn't a debate; this isn't a discussion. Eighty-seven percent of Americans think we should have universal background checks. Everybody who buys a gun should prove he or she is not a criminal. Two-thirds of Americans think we should restrict these high-capacity ammunition clips. Seventy-six percent of Americans believe we should crack down on people who buy guns legally and then go out and sell them in the community illegally.

The American public knows we need to do something. Why have we been stuck for so long? First, it is because Members of Congress have been listening to the wrong people. We should be listening to gun owners. They are comprised of a lower percentage of Americans than 30 years ago.

About one-third of Americans today own guns, and they are very important constituents. The problem is the NRA doesn't speak for gun owners like it used to. Yet we listen to that organization more than we should.

Ten years ago the NRA came here and argued for universal background checks in the wake of Columbine. Today they oppose those background checks even though 74 percent of NRA members support universal background checks. I don't know the exact reason for that, but maybe it is because increasingly the NRA is financed not by its members—by everyday, commonsense gun owners—but by the gun industry. Tens of millions of dollars come into the NRA from the gun industry—a program that actually allows the NRA to make a couple bucks off of every gun sold in many gun stores across the country. We are not listening to gun owners. If we were, this wouldn't be a debate in this Chamber.

But secondly, and maybe most importantly, we have really botched a conversation in this place about rights, and rights really are at the core of this debate. When I am back home in Connecticut, I hear a lot of people talking about the right to bear arms as an ''unalienable right'' or a ''God-given right,'' and of course the Constitution makes no such claim. The idea of an unalienable right is actually found in the Declaration of Independence, and it is a phrase we know very well.

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But liberty isn't just about having any gun you want anytime you want it; liberty has to also be about the right to be free from indiscriminate violence. I mean, what kind of liberty did these kids have in that classroom in Newtown, being trapped by an assault

weapon-yielding madman? And maybe more importantly, what kind of liberty does a kid just up the street from here in Washington, DC, have when he fears for his life every time he wants to walk to the corner store or walk home from school? That is not the kind of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness our Founding Fathers talked about.

But even if we do accept that part of liberty is owning and using a gun, then we have to ask ourselves these questions: To what degree are our liberties really infringed upon if we just suggest there are a handful of weapons that are too dangerous to own? To what extent are our freedoms trampled upon by just saying you are going to need to reload your semiautomatic weapon after every 10 bullets rather than after every 30 bullets? How gravely do we really risk tyranny when we just moderately restrain the size of a legally purchasable clip?

If liberty is really our chief concern, then preserving and protecting the life of little kids has to weigh pretty favorably against marginally restraining a weapon's payload. If we can't agree on that, what can we agree on?

If we accept this balance, then the policy prescriptions are pretty simple:

First, guns should be available, but they should be available to people of sound mind with no criminal record. We have believed that for a long time. Since the Brady bill was passed, we have had about 2 million people who were stopped from buying guns because they were legally prohibited from doing so. The Brady bill has worked. The problem is that 40 percent of weapons sold in this country don't go through background checks. I hope we will have some good news by the end of the day on this front, but that is a pretty easily accepted premise—criminals shouldn't own guns.

Second, a small number of guns are just too dangerous for retail sale. We have always accepted that premise as well. We have always drawn a line and said some weapons are reserved for military hands, and others can be in the hands of private citizens. We know assault weapons kill, and we know what happened when we banned them the last time: Gun homicides dropped by 37 percent, and nonlethal gun crimes dropped by an equal percentage.

Third, some ammunition too easily enables mass slaughter. What legitimate reason is there for somebody to be able to walk into a movie theater or a religious institution or a school with a 100-round drum of ammunition? Why do we need that—100 rounds, never mind 30 rounds? That doesn't sound too radical, does it?

So what does the gun lobby tell us about these ideas? What do they say is wrong with this approach that is grounded in data and supported by people all across the country? Well, specifically we hear two things over and over again: First, the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is to have a good guy with a gun, and second, guns don't really kill people, people kill people.

As to the first argument, Newtown is part of the answer. Nancy Lanza probably owned guns for a variety of reasons, but one of the reasons was that she was divorced, she lived alone, and she wanted guns to protect herself. She was alone a lot of the time. The guns Nancy Lanza used weren't used to fire upon intruders into her home; they killed her, and they killed 26 other boys and girls and parents. That is not just an anecdote, that is a reflection of a statistical trend. If you have a gun in your house, it is four times more likely to be used in an accident than it is against an intruder. If you own a gun, it is much more likely to be used to kill you than it is to kill someone trying to break into your home.

As to the second argument, as author Dennis Henigan once put it, guns don't kill people; they just enable people to kill people. Guns are employed in only about 4 percent of felonies, but they are used in 20 percent of all felonies involving bodily injury. Guns enable violence that is vastly more violent.

How do we know this? Well, we know it by what happened at Sandy Hook that day, but more importantly we know it by what happened on that very same day on the entire other side of the world. On the same day that 20 kids died in Newtown, in Henan, China, a madman walked into a school and attacked 23 schoolchildren with a deadly weapon. The same day—20 kids in Newtown, 23 kids in China. In Newtown, all 20 kids who were attacked died; in China, all 23 kids who were attacked lived. Why? Because in Henan, the assailant had a knife, not a gun that could spray six bullets a second.

So forgive me if I dismiss those—like the president of the NRA—who choose to ignore the effect of the laws we are debating this week and next week. He said all we are talking about here is feel-good legislation. Well, he is right about one thing: It would feel really good if Daniel Barden got on the bus this morning to go to school. Daniel was an immensely compassionate little kid. He was always sitting next to the kids in school who sat alone. He never left a room without turning the lights off. When his family would go to the grocery store, they would leave the store and get halfway across the parking lot and turn around and Daniel wouldn't be there because he was still holding the door open for people who needed a way out. And he loved s'mores.

It would feel really good if Ana Marquez Greene could still sing all those songs she loved. She sang and performed everywhere she went. She came from a very musical family. Her mom said that she didn't walk anywhere, that her preferred mode of transportation was dancing. She loved most to sing and dance in church. She loved it when her parents read to her from the Bible.

It would feel really good if Ben Wheeler got to enjoy this beautiful spring day outside today. He was a piano virtuoso. He had already done a recital when he was 6 years old. But what he really loved was playing outside with his older brother Nate. They loved to play soccer together. The morning he was killed, he told his mom, as they were leaving for school, he wanted to be a paleontologist when he grew up. He said, ''That's what Nate's going to be, and I want to do everything that Nate does.''

So that is our task—to beat back all the naysayers who say that we can't do this, that we won't change the way things are. I believe we can. I believe we are good enough to drown out the voices of the status quo and the lobbyists and the political consultants. I think that in the next couple of weeks we are good enough to change the way things are.

Finally, I want to tell you one last story to explain why I know we are good enough. I believe that when we see people in need, when we see children stripped of their dignity, we are too compassionate a people to close our eyes. I know sometimes we wonder what we really are inside. Are we truly good or is goodness a learned behavior? And it may sound strange, but after December 14, I just know the former to be true, because after enduring the shooting, as if to swallow up those 10 minutes of evil, millions of acts of infinite kindness rained down on Newtown, from the teachers who protected those kids, to the firefighters who didn't leave that firehouse for days afterward, to the millions of actions of humanity and gifts and phone calls that came in from the rest of the world.

And because of Anne Marie Murphy. Anne Marie was a special education teacher charged with the care of Dylan Hockley, this little boy, a wonderful, gentle little 6-year-old boy who was living with autism but doing great at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Anne Marie loved Dylan, and Dylan loved Anne Marie back. There was a picture on his refrigerator of Anne Marie, and almost every day he would point to Anne Marie with pride to his parents.

Nicole, his mom, who is here this week, said at Dylan's funeral that when she realized Dylan wasn't going to show up at the firehouse that day with all the other kids who were returning from the school, she hoped she would see Mrs. Murphy, but she knew she wouldn't. She knew Anne Marie wouldn't leave Dylan's side if he was in danger. And she didn't. When the bullets started flying, she brought Dylan into her arms. She held him tight inside that classroom. And that is just how the two of them were found.

On Monday, Nicole flew down here to Washington with President Obama and me to try to make the case that things need to change for Dylan, for Anne Marie, and for the thousands of other people before and after who have been killed by guns.

As Nicole and the other parents walked up the steps of Air Force One, one mom raised a piece of paper above

her head with a note she had scribbled on it that day, and the cameras caught the moment. The note simply said ''Love Wins.'' I believe today more than I ever have before that if we are truly doing our job in this Chamber, then love has to win every single time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate and thank my colleague from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, on his profoundly eloquent and powerful statement to our colleagues and join him in calling attention to the horrific tragedy that has brought us to this point in the debate on gun violence. His very eloquent and powerful summary of our losses, I think, is a way to begin a potential turning point after Newtown has given us a call to action. Newtown is a tipping point in this debate, and my colleague from Connecticut and I have spent literally days and weeks with that community and have seen the courage and strength they have brought to this town and to our colleagues, because they have been meeting with our colleagues and they are indeed here today.

Benjamin Andrew Wheeler, who was 6 years old—his father David is here today. Ana Grace Marquez-Greene, age 6—her mother Nelba is here today. Dylan Hockley, age 6—his mother Nicole is here. Daniel Barden, age 7—his mother Jackie and his father Mark are here. Jesse Lewis, age 6—his father Neil Heslin is here. Mary Sherlach, one of the six heroic educators killed at Sandy Hook—her husband Bill is here today.

We can draw inspiration not only from the memories of those children and great educators who were killed but from their strength and resilience and resolve in coming to the Halls of this building, meeting with our colleagues. Indeed, at this very moment, they are with one of our colleagues, looking him in the eyes and saying to him: How can you not approve a bill that stops illegal trafficking, strengthens school safety, and imposes a requirement for criminal background checks? How can you not stop assault weapons and high-capacity magazines that were integral to that killing in Newtown? How can you not do something about gun violence that has caused more than 3,000 deaths since then? How can you not allow a vote? How can you deprive the American people of a vote on a measure that is so essential to their safety, their well-being, the futures of their children, and their communities?

As the President of the United States has said so eloquently—and his leadership has been so important to this cause—the victims of Newtown, of Tucson, Aurora, Virginia Tech, they deserve a vote. The likelihood of a vote has been increased by the leadership of my colleagues, Senator SCHUMER, Senator MANCHIN, Senator TOOMEY, who have worked hard together to bring us to a very promising and profoundly constructive turning point in this process. I want to thank also our leader, Senator HARRY REID, for his determination and resolve.

On the morning of December 14, parents throughout Connecticut and Newtown and Sandy Hook brought their children to school. Thinking of the rest of their days. When they would have play dates and snack breaks, holiday parties, Christmas and Hanukkah present wrapping, paper angels, gingerbread, songs and poems. Those are the memories. And the futures they brought with them. Just hours later, I was at Sandy Hook as 20 families of those children emerged from a firehouse, and I will never forget the cries of pain and grief I saw on that day. I went there as a public official because I felt a responsibility to be there. But what I saw was through the eyes of a parent, as all America did on that day. And I saw the families also of six heroic educators who perished trying to save their children. Those sights and sounds changed America. We are different today than we were before Sandy Hook. This problem is with us, the problem of gun violence is the same problem that has existed for decades, but we are different. Because we know we can and must do something about it.

There was evil that day at Sandy Hook, but there was also great goodness. The goodness of the first responders who stopped the shooting through their bravery. When they appeared at the school, the shooter turned the gun on himself. They saved lives. The knowledge and courage and bravery of the clergy. Father Bob, Monsignor Bob, Robert Weiss, who that evening conducted a vigil that we attended, when many resolved to light candles instead of curse the darkness. The greatness of leadership demonstrated by many of our public officials, beginning with Pat Llodra, the First Selectwoman of Newtown, the legislators who passed in Connecticut a measure that will provide a model for the country in attacking the problem of gun violence and the leadership of our Governor, Dannel Malloy. And, of course, the great goodness of the educators who threw themselves at bullets, cradled the young people seeking to save them, and heroically gave their lives. Their models of courage and leadership should inspire us at this critical moment. They should inspire us to think better and do better and resolve that we will not let this moment pass, we will seize this opportunity and we will demonstrate the kind of leadership the majority of Americans expect and deserve and need at this point.

The majority of Americans want commonsense measures to stop gun violence. The majority of Americans want a vote and they want action from this body. And we need to keep faith with them but also with the victims. The victims who should not be forgotten, the Connecticut effect is not going away. This resolve is not dissipated. We will keep faith with them.

Out of the tragedy, the unspeakable loss, the unimaginable horror of that day and the days since then and the days to come, we resolve that this country will be better and safer. And so as we begin this debate, as colleagues of ours at this moment announce a very promising compromise that may lead us forward, provide us with a path toward bipartisan action—and it should be bipartisan; there is nothing Republican or Democratic about law enforcement or about law enforcement saving people's lives. We should resolve to go forward as one country. I've been working on this issue for many years. I helped to author and support Connecticut's first assault weapons ban in the early 1990s. I went to court to defend it when it was challenged constitutionally, argued in the trial and then in the State supreme court to uphold our law. I have worked with law enforcement colleagues for three decades. And I know they support these measures. Our State and local police, our prosecutors around the country support a ban on illegal trafficking. They support a national background check system. They support school safety and they support bans on military-style weapons that are simply designed to kill and maim innocent people and they support a ban on high-capacity magazines because they know, those are the weapons of war. They enable criminals to outgun them. They put their lives at risk. And so I listen to my colleagues in law enforcement who tell me we need to do something about gun violence. I listen to the people of Newtown who say: Can't we do something about the guns? And I respect the rights of gun owners, the second amendment is the law of the land, and none of these proposals would take guns out of the hands of responsible and lawful gun owners. But there are some people who should not have them.

There are some guns that should not be in use, and there are some weapons of war, high-capacity magazines, that should not be sold in this country. In half the mass killings, high-capacity magazines enabled the shooting that occurred so rapidly and so lethally. In Newtown, the changing of a magazine by the shooter enabled children to escape. In Tucson, the killing of a 9-year-old girl, Christina Taylor-Green, by the 13th bullet, would not have happened if that magazine had been limited to 10 rounds because the shooter was tackled as he tried to change magazines. The high-capacity magazines enabled Adam Lanza to fire 154 bullets in 5 minutes. So these kinds of commonsense measures may not prevent all these tragedies. They may not enable us to stop all the 3,000 killings that have occurred since Newtown. We cannot look back and say with certainty that Newtown would not have occurred if these measures had been in place, but the likelihood would have been reduced, some or

all of those children might be alive today, some of those heroic educators could be in their classrooms now. And the challenge here is to save lives, to do something to stop the carnage and killing on our streets, in our neighborhoods, in communities such as Newtown, a quintessential New England town. If it could happen in Newtown, it could happen anywhere in America.

As we go forward in this debate, I hope we will listen to those brave and resilient and resolved families who are here today. Listen to them when they say to us that we must keep faith. Listen to Nicole Hockley and what she said when the President of the United States visited Connecticut just a couple days ago. She said:

> But now there is no going back for me. There is no way. If you want to protect your children, if you want to avoid this loss, you will not turn away either.

I ask my colleagues, let us face this reality. Let us not turn away. Let us resolve to go forward and keep faith with the children and the educators who, by their example, provide us with an enormous and historic opportunity to make America safer and better. The Nation that we love, the Nation that we all believe is the greatest in the history of the world and will be greater still after we move forward to make it safer and better.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise this morning to speak in regard to the Keystone XL Pipeline project. Much has been made recently about pipeline spills in Arkansas and in Texas. These spills are being used by opponents of the Keystone XL Pipeline project as examples or reasons to not approve the Keystone Pipeline. Now, no one ever wants a spill of any kind, but let's deal with the facts rather than misperception or emotion. This is an important project, and it is important that we deal with the facts.

The Exxon spill in Arkansas involves a pipeline known as the Pegasus pipeline. This pipeline was built in the 1940s—1947 and 1948. Approximately 5,000 barrels of oil were spilled. The EPA considers that a major spill because anything above 250 barrels is considered a major spill. Emergency response personnel were on the ground within 30 minutes of the leak being detected. Approximately 640 cleanup people have responded to the incident in addition to Federal, State, and local responders.

There has been no impact to the drinking water. I will repeat that: There has been no impact to the drinking water, and the oil did not enter any lake or waterway. Fourteen vacuum trucks and sixteen storage tanks are on site. The claim's hotline has been established for residents affected by the spill to register claims and for anyone who wants information. As of today about 140 claims have been made. ExxonMobile is paying for the cleanup and they have committed to honor any valid claims. So that is the Arkansas spill that much is being made about by opponents of approving the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The other one they talked about is in West Columbia, TX, and that is a pipeline owned by Shell Oil. Let's talk about that project for just a minute.

There was approximately 950 barrels of oil spilled, and 50 barrels of that oil entered the waterway. All 50 barrels have been cleaned up. Let me repeat that: All 50 barrels have already been cleaned up. The company is now working to clean up the remaining 900 barrels of oil that is located on land.

This pipeline is an oil-gathering pipeline that gathers oil from the gulf. It is not an oil sands pipeline. The Keystone XL Pipeline, of course, would be an oil sands pipeline, and that is not what this is. Furthermore, Shell believes the break in this pipeline happened because a contractor was working in this area and perforated the pipe. There was not a default in the pipe or the pipe leaking. They believe the injury to the pipeline was caused by a worker in that area.

Let's consider some basic pipeline safety facts. Pipelines are the safest and most efficient way to transport oil and gas. Let's compare accidents at pipelines to accidents for trucks, for barges, or for rail. Accidents are 1,000 times more likely to occur with a truck hauling oil versus a pipeline. What was that number? Accidents are 1,000 times more likely to occur when moving oil by truck than by pipeline. An oilspill is 13 times more likely to occur when it is moved by a barge versus a pipeline. Oilspills are five times more likely if it is moved by rail than by pipeline.

Using a pipeline to transfer oil will result in 1,000 fewer spills compared to moving it by truck, 13 times fewer spills than moving it by barge, and five times fewer spills than moving it by rail. Those are the safety statistics on pipelines versus alternative methods of moving oil.

The Arkansas pipeline was built in the 1940s, so actually the incident highlights the need to build new infrastructure using the latest technology. The Keystone XL Pipeline is one of the most advanced and most studied pipeline projects in our country's history. For example, the Keystone XL Pipeline will be monitored through a centralized high-tech center 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Satellite technology will send data every 5 seconds from 21,000 data points to the monitoring center. If a drop in pressure is detected, any section of the pipeline can be isolated remotely thereby closing any of the hundreds of valves on the system within minutes.

After four environmental impact statements and 5 years of review, the State Department has determined that the Keystone XL Pipeline will create no significant impacts to the environment. Again, they have determined it will create no significant impacts to the environment, and that is why several weeks ago 62 Senators supported an amendment that was sponsored by myself, Senator BAUCUS, and other Senators. Again, 62 Senators went on record approving the Keystone XL Pipeline project.

Furthermore, 66 Senators, two-thirds of the Senators, voted against an amendment that was put forward by Senator BOXER that would have further delayed the project and added more restrictions to the project. Two-thirds of this body went on record opposing more delays and more restrictions; 62 Senators then voted to approve the project. That is why 70 percent of Americans in a recent poll said they want the Keystone XL Pipeline approved.

This project is about more energy and more jobs for this country. This pipeline project is about growing our economy and producing tax revenues to help with our debt and deficit, not by raising taxes but by growing the economy and stimulating more economic activity. This project is about eliminating our dependence on oil from places such as the Middle East and Venezuela. That is a national security issue.

It is vital that when we are working on important issues, we deal with the facts, and those are the facts.

I thank the Chair, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. 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. LEE. Madam President, for several weeks now Washington and the rest of the country have been debating several new gun control proposals. Along with a number of my colleagues, including the minority leader, I have declared my intention to resist an immediate vote on any new restrictions that would serve primarily to limit the freedoms of law-abiding citizens rather than reduce violent crime in America.

Unfortunately, the current gun control proposals would do just that. More than 2 weeks ago, we informed the majority leader that we will exercise our procedural right to require a 60-vote threshold in order to bring this legislation to the floor. We have taken this step under our Senate rules and procedures for three principal reasons.

First, the Senate serves an important function in our Republic by encouraging deliberation and making it more

difficult for a temporary majority to impose its will unilaterally. Unlike the House of Representatives, the Senate's rules and procedures allow for meaningful debate and help ensure that a bare majority of Senators cannot impose controversial legislation on the American people without robust debate, discussion, and broad-based and bipartisan consensus.

Contrary to the statements made by the President and by some of my friends across the aisle and even a few from within my own caucus, we have no intention of preventing debate or votes. Quite the opposite. By objecting to the motion to proceed, we guarantee that the Senate and the American people would have at least 3 additional days to assess and evaluate exactly how this particular bill might affect the rights of law-abiding citizens and whether it might have any significant impact on violent crime.

Already we have seen consensus against passing any new gun legislation—at least not without broad bipartisan support.

During the recent budget debate, I offered an amendment to establish a two-thirds vote requirement for the passage of any new gun legislation. Six Democratic Senators voted with a nearly united Republican caucus to support my amendment by a vote of 50 to 49.

That vote demonstrated that a bare majority of Senators, including at least six Democrats, believe that new gun legislation should have broad bipartisan support in the Senate before it is passed and before it has the opportunity to become law.

A 60-vote threshold will help ensure that new gun laws are not forced through the Senate with the narrow support of just one party.

Second, this debate is about a lot more than just magazine clips and pistol grips. It is about the purpose of the second amendment and why our constitutionally protected right to self-defense is an essential part of self-government.

At its core, the second amendment helps ensure that individuals and local communities can serve as the first line of defense against threats to our persons and our property. Any limitation on this fundamental right of self-defense makes us more dependent on our government for our own protection.

Government cannot be everywhere at all times, so the practical effect of limiting our individual rights is to make us less safe. This is troubling to many Americans. Any legislation that would restrict our basic rights to self-defense deserves serious and open debate. Further, as we have seen just today, Washington sometimes prefers to negotiate backroom deals made in secret far from the eyes of the American people rather than engaging in thorough, open, and transparent debate right on the Senate floor.

The day before the majority leader has set the vote to proceed, the bill's critical components are still not there. Right before we have set the vote for the motion to proceed to the bill, we still do not know what these critical components look like. We have no legislative text to evaluate the so-called compromise language on background checks. We have no sense of what amendments, if any amendments at all, might be allowed to be offered.

So requiring a 60-vote threshold helps us solve some of those problems. It helps us ensure that we have a meaningful debate rather than a series of backroom deals to push controversial legislation through Congress with solely a bare majority to back it up.

Finally, many of the provisions we expect to see in the bill are both constitutionally problematic and would serve primarily to limit the freedoms of law-abiding American citizens. Some of the proposals—for example, universal background checks—would allow the Federal Government to surveil law-abiding citizens who exercise their constitutional rights.

One of the provisions we expect to see in the bill, based on what we saw in the Judiciary Committee on which I sit, would allow the Attorney General of the United States to promulgate regulations that could lead to a national registry system for guns, something my constituents in Utah are very concerned about, and understandably so.

You see, the Federal Government has no business monitoring where or how often we go to church, what books and newspapers we read, whom we vote for, our health conditions, what we ate for breakfast, and the details of our private lives, including our lawful exercise of rights protected by the second amendment and other provisions of the Bill of Rights.

Such limitations may, of course, at times make it harder for the government to do what it believes it needs to do. But we have to remember, the Constitution was not written to maximize or protect the convenience of our government. The Constitution was written to protect individual liberty, and thankfully so. We must not narrow the application of constitutional protections in haste, nor should we allow a bare majority to jeopardize the basic rights of the American people, rights protected in the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

The Senate and the American people are engaged in an important debate. I look forward to this debate. I hope others will join me and my colleagues in demanding that our discussions take place in full view of the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, at long last today we have received the President's budget. It is several weeks actually months—overdue. It was supposed to have been out on February 4. It is generally used to steer or guide the budget debate we have in Washington, DC. In this case, it is going to be a reaction to. It is going to be an after-the-fact discussion of the budget, as the House and the Senate have both passed theirs; the Senate for the first time in 4 years and the House has passed their budget every year on time. One would wish the President's budget would serve as a bridge between the House and the Senate. In this point of the process it is so much after the fact and late in the game the President's budget has come to us.

Regrettably, much of the President's budget is going to rely on the same formula the Senate Democratic budget did, which is to double down, to increase spending, significantly and substantially raise taxes, and add massive amounts to the debt. It never balances.

The budget which was passed by the House of Representatives did balance. It balanced in 10 years.

The budget which was passed by the Senate did not balance in 10 years. It never balanced. There was a real contrast in terms of trying to get to a balanced budget over a period of time, knowing full well it will not happen overnight. We got into a very big hole over a number of years, and it will take us a while to get out.

Nevertheless, the House budget did balance in a 10-year window and 10-year timeframe. The Senate Democratic budget never balances, nor does the budget we received this morning from the President.

For a lot of reasons this budget debate is important, not the least of which is it is a vision, a blueprint for the future of the country. This is true for each of the respective parties in the Congress, as well as the President, about where they wish to lead the country.

I mentioned yesterday on the Senate floor I thought the basic criteria which should be used to evaluate a budget, the question which should be asked is, What will this budget do to grow the economy, create jobs, and increase the take-home pay of middle-class Americans? What can we do, in other words, in terms of a budget process here and a budget itself which actually takes us in a direction which would enable more Americans to work and enable the economy to grow and expand again. This would make these fiscal issues look much smaller by comparison.

Last week we received employment data statistics which were due. The unemployment rate as a percentage actually dropped to 6.7 percent but only because another half million people quit looking for work. If we look at the real unemployment rate—which is to include the people who actually have stopped looking for work, people who

are working part-time because they can't find full-time employment—the actual unemployment rate is 13.8 percent. This is 21.7 million Americans. This is how many people who are either out of work, quit looking for work, or are looking for work part-time because they simply can't find full-time employment. This is a great number of people.

This is a big part of our economy. A lot of folks are out of the workforce today who couldn't find jobs. Many have actually just given up looking for jobs.

What this has done, because there are so many Americans who have given up looking for jobs out of frustration, is it has lowered the labor participation rate to a rate we haven't seen, literally, since 1979. The last time the labor participation rate was at the low level we saw in the month of March, 63.3 percent, was 1979.

In fact, if we had a labor participation rate which was equal to what it was when the President took office in January 2009, the unemployment rate today would not be 7.6 percent, it would be 11 percent. This is how many people have quit looking for work as a result of this slow and sluggish economy.

The President's budget, one would hope, would try to answer in an affirmative way the question: Does this grow the economy? Does this create jobs? Does this increase the take-home pay of working Americans?

Unfortunately, rather than growing the economy, the President's budget, instead, grows the government. Unfortunately, this is what we have seen in the budget which was passed by the Senate a couple of weeks ago.

I say this simply because I think there are two very different ideas about how to solve the fiscal crisis we face. One includes expanding and growing government, raising taxes, and adding even more to the debt. One really focuses on the issue which plagues our fiscal house in Washington, DC: not that we tax too little but we spend too much. It goes after the spending problem we have in Washington, DC, the addiction to spending. We have seen this as the percentage of our economy grow consistently over the last several years since this President has been in office.

The House budget recognized this and does balance in 10 years. It does it without increasing taxes. The House of Representatives actually produced a budget which balances in 10 years and doesn't raise taxes. In fact, it calls for tax reform. Many of us believe this would do wonders in terms of unleashing economic growth in this country, lowering rates, reducing rates, and broadening the base. It also takes on what really drives Federal spending, what really contributes to the debt crisis we have in this country, its runaway spending.

This is true for particular areas of the budget, the areas we call mandatory spending, the part of the budget which is on autopilot. It includes entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Currently, this includes about three-fifths of all Federal spending. At the end of the 10-year window it will represent about 91 percent of all Federal spending. That is how fast those programs are growing—two to three times the rate of inflation.

The President's budget doesn't do anything significant or meaningful to address that crisis. It is flatout serious.

Having said that, there were some what I would call incremental steps taken. I call them baby steps. The President agreed in his budget to address the issue of chained CPI, which recalculates the formula under which certain government programs are calculated. It achieves a certain level of savings over time.

They assume some savings in Medicare, most of which, again, are by reducing payments to providers. We have already cut payments to providers to the point many physicians and other health care providers these days are saying they are not going to serve Medicare or Medicaid patients because we keep cutting those reimbursements.

This is not the way to save and protect these programs for future generations. We must restructure or reform these programs in a way which aligns those programs with the future demographics of this country. Unfortunately, the President's budget fails on that account.

In terms of the direction these various budgets are headed, the Senate's Democratic budget, because it didn't balance in 10 years, nor does the President's, both use similar assumptions about spending. If we look at the new debt which is piled up by the President's budget, he adds $8.2 trillion to the debt over the next decade.

The Senate Democratic budget added $7.3 trillion to the debt over the next decade. Both have net spending increases. The spending amount over the 10-year period in both the President's budget proposal and the Senate Democratic proposal is on the order of $46.5 trillion. This is the amount of money, the amount of taxpayer money, the Federal Government would spend over the next decade under the budgets proposed by the Senate and House Democrats.

The House budget, passed largely by the House Republicans, spends about $5 trillion less than that over the same time period. How does it do that? It does so by reducing the rate of growth of Federal spending. If we limit the rate of growth in Federal spending to 3.4 percent, as opposed to a 4.6-percent number in the Senate Democratic budget or the 5.2 percent-increase in mandatory spending called for in the President's budget, we may achieve significant savings over a period of time.

This is not cutting government but simply slowing the rate of growth by growing government at a slower rate and moving it back into a more reasonable level. This would actually achieve $5 trillion in savings over the next decade in terms of what the Federal Government was spending. This is the way the House approached their budget.

What the Senate Democrats and the President have both done is called for massive new tax increases. The only deficit reduction which will occur under the President's budget will be cut because of tax increases. He wipes out the $1.2 trillion in spending cuts which were in place as a result of sequester.

He replaces those and achieves somewhere on the order of $600 billion in deficit reduction. This deficit reduction would be entirely accomplished by tax increases, raising taxes yet again after we put in place tax increases on the fiscal cliff on January 1. The President received a huge tax increase, something he had been wanting for for some time, $620 billion in new taxes. Add this to the more than $1 trillion in new taxes which are in the ObamaCare bill passed a couple of years ago and this President, on his watch, has signed into law more than $1.7 trillion in new taxes.

This is not a revenue problem, this is a spending problem. What we need to be focused on is what do we need to do to rein in out-of-control Federal spending. How are we going to reform and restructure these programs in a way which protects and saves them, not only for people who depend upon them today but for those who will need them in the future. This is really the question before the House.

Today we receive the President's budget. It will be the latest point at which the President has submitted a budget. Literally, it has been 100 years, let's put it that way. Around the early 1900s was the last time the President submitted a budget to this Congress at this late date. Again, having already acted in the House and Senate, I am not sure what meaning it has other than to perhaps give the President the luxury to be able to say he actually at least presented a budget. But on most of the criteria we ought to be looking at, in terms of evaluating this budget, that I mentioned earlier, it is not a serious attempt. It doesn't do anything to rein in these out-of-control programs that are growing at two to three times the rate of inflation, it has a massive tax increase, a $1 trillion tax increase on top of the $1.7 trillion in new taxes the President has already signed into law, and it adds $8.2 trillion to the debt over the next decade. So for that reason I think it fails the fundamental test of fiscal responsibility, but more important perhaps even than that, it fails to answer the question I posed earlier, which was: Does the President's budget grow the economy, does it create jobs, and does it increase take-home pay for middle-income Americans? The answer to that is simply no.

When you are raising taxes consistently—raising taxes on the people who create the jobs in our economy—it makes the economy grow at a slower rate, we have more sluggish growth, which is what we have seen now for the past several years. When we are growing at 1½ to 2 percent as opposed to 3 to 4 percent, it makes a huge difference in terms of the number of people in this country who are employed, the number of jobs that are created, and, obviously, it makes a huge difference in terms of the fiscal imbalance, because when the economy is growing at a faster rate, it means more people are working and investing and, therefore, making money and paying taxes. So tax revenues go up when the economy is growing and expanding.

That ought to be the goal. That ought to be our goal—not only to get those 21.7 million Americans who are out of work back to work but also to get the fiscal imbalance we face in a more manageable place. If we are going to get our fiscal house in order, we have to do those two things: We have to restrain Federal spending and we have to put policies in place that grow the economy.

There is a relationship between the two. It has been well documented, well studied, well researched that when we have spending that is out of control, when we have a debt as a percentage of our GDP that exceeds a certain level, it harms economic growth. It reduces the amount the economy grows on an annual basis and, in so doing, also reduces the number of jobs created. So this is the question that should be asked. Again, when we compare or stack up the President's budget against that question—does it grow the economy, does it create jobs, does it increase the take-home pay for middle-class Americans—the answer is simply no.

I would compare again the budget that was passed by both the House and Senate. In the case of the Senate, a study was done that suggested it would cost 800,000 jobs a year, again because of the tax increases that are included and the higher level of Federal spending. Simply raising taxes to fuel yet more Federal spending does nothing to grow the private economy. What we want to see is a smaller Federal economy and a bigger private economy where the real good-paying jobs are created. Clearly, this budget relies heavily—doubles down on Federal spending, adds more to the debt, doesn't achieve balance, increases taxes by $1 trillion, and takes us in absolutely the wrong direction.

I hope before this is all said and done, the House of Representatives and the Senate—both of which have passed budgets and now that we have the President's budget—can somehow sit down together and figure out how we get a proposal that would actually deal with out-of-control spending and would focus on growing the economy, creating jobs, and increasing the take-home pay for middle-class Americans. That ought to be the criteria we use.

I would hope before this is all said and done, people in this city would realize we don't have a taxing problem. The problem isn't that we tax too little, it is that we spend too much, and that is what needs to be addressed. I hope we can reconcile these budgets, but it will require the President to be engaged on a level he hasn't demonstrated so far. I hope he gets to what this real issue is and wants to get serious about reining in out-of-control government spending and we can make some headway yet. I have not lost hope. There were some incremental gains, some baby steps the President took in this, but it is far short of what needs to be done to get our economy back on track and get government spending back under control.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am honored to stand again on the floor of the Senate, as I will be doing, along with my colleague Senator MURPHY and others who are allied in this effort to make America safer and to stop the scourge of gun violence that has plagued this country for decades and has been dramatized so horrifically and tragically by the nightmarish, unspeakable tragedy that occurred in Newtown. I stand here on behalf of the families, but they are speaking much more eloquently and powerfully than I could ever do, as they go around to the offices of my colleagues and look them in the face and say:

How could you not favor a ban on illegal trafficking and straw purchases? How could you not support strengthening school safety? How could you not favor a national criminal background check?

As one police chief told me, a national background check makes sure we do not put criminals on the honor system. Without a criminal background check, criminals are on an honor system to not buy weapons. What kind of a guarantee of safety would that be? And how could you not be in favor of banning the kind of weapon that killed the children and educators of Newtown or the high-capacity magazine that enabled and facilitated that killing to take place? 154 bullets fired in 5 minutes, tearing apart those beautiful, innocent children and six great educators who perished trying to save them.

We are on the cusp of success in this critical first step, and I am increasingly hopeful—in fact, I am confident that we will have a vote in this body on gun safety measures. We will have a vote in the United States Senate to impose sensible and commonsense measures to stop gun violence. We will have a vote in the Senate in a matter of days that will enable America to hold accountable its elected representatives here on this floor in the Senate for measures that will stop gun violence in this country that has killed 3,000 or more people since Newtown. The epidemic of gun violence is stoppable and we will have a vote in this body that makes sure all of us are held to answer to the American people. The majority of the American people favor these measures. Ninety percent or more say they want a national criminal background check. Their voice deserves a vote, and I am confident we will have it.

I am confident, in part, because of the bipartisan compromise that has been announced today. I am going through the details, listening to my colleagues in law enforcement, the mayors, and others who have been so responsible and resolute in working over years and decades for these kinds of measures. And I'm listening to the families from Newtown. And we will make sure this compromise vindicates and upholds the vital law enforcement and safety interests these measures are designed to vindicate and uphold. And I am confident this compromise is a positive and constructive step toward our having a vote, ending unlimited debate on this bill, achieving cloture, and stopping a filibuster, as we have a responsibility to do.

And I want to focus for the moment on one aspect of these measures I consider critically important. A ban on high-capacity magazines—all magazines, all clips that hold more than 10 bullets—that I will be introducing on behalf of Senator LAUTENBERG, working with Senator FEINSTEIN and others, to make sure this measure has a vote, whether it's as an amendment or a separate bill. I wish to thank Senator LAUTENBERG for his leadership on this issue. He has championed it here for some time, and I will be working with him and others to make sure this measure I have introduced has a vote, and my colleague Senator MURPHY will be working with me in this effort.

The statistics show the terrible impact of high-capacity magazines. A recent study of 62 mass shootings since 1982 shows that half involved high-capacity magazines. Statistics also show bans on high-capacity magazines actually work. The 1994 ban on these devices reduced their use dramatically. A study of gun violence in Virginia showed just 10 percent of guns recovered by police in 2004 used high-capacity magazines, but after the ban was allowed to sunset, the prevalence of high-capacity magazines more than doubled. Garen Wintemute, head of the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California at Davis School of Medicine, said: ''I was skeptical that the ban would be effective, and I was wrong.'' He said the database analysis offers ''about as clear an example as we could ask for of evidence that the ban was working.'' And the limitation I am proposing—that I will be working on with Senator LAUTENBERG and Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator MURPHY and others who have

championed this cause—would be even more effective. Because unlike the 1994 law, it will prohibit imports of high-capacity magazines, not just production here but imports of these high-capacity magazines. More than ten rounds, we need to say no.

We also have to implement a buyback program for the existing high-capacity magazines in use and circulation today. The proposal I'm advocating allows for better grant funding to be used for exactly that purpose. It doesn't require, doesn't mandate owners of high-capacity magazines participate in a buyback program, but it gives them that option. And over time, this measure will reduce the number of high-capacity magazines out there. The provision I am spearheading was part of legislation actually offered by Senator FEINSTEIN in the Judiciary Committee, approved by that committee on March 14. It's supported by a long list of mayors as well as organizations representing law enforcement.

I ask unanimous consent to have that list printed in the RECORD.

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

This legislation has been approved by, among others, the following groups:

LAW ENFORCEMENT

International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
International Association of Chiefs of Police
Major Cities Chiefs Association
National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives
National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
Police Executive Research Forum
Police Foundation
Women in Federal Law Enforcement

HEALTH CARE

American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Surgeons
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Association
American Public Health Association
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Doctors for America
National Association of School Nurses
National Physicians Alliance
Physicians for Social Responsibility

EDUCATION AND CHILD WELFARE

American Federation of Teachers
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
National Association of Social Workers
National PTA
National Education Association
Save the Children

GUN SAFETY

Arizonans for Gun Safety
Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Mayors Against Illegal Guns
Newtown Action Alliance

RELIGIOUS

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Alliance of Baptists
American Friends Service Committee
Catholic Charities USA
Catholics United
Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
National Council of Churches
National Episcopal Health Ministries
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness
United Methodist Church

OTHER ORGANIZATINS

American Bar Association
Grandmothers for Peace International
NAACP
Sierra Club

LOCALITIES

U.S. Conference of Mayors
National League of Cities.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. This provision is supported as well by educators, the civil rights community, health care providers and others. It is a proposal that is eminently sensible, reasonable. It's a matter of common sense. A majority of Americans have consistently supported a ban on high-capacity magazines. A poll in January of this year showed 65 percent of Americans, including 55 percent of gun owners, support such a ban.

But the most powerful argument for a ban on high-capacity magazines comes from the experience of Newtown, where the changing of magazines enabled children to escape. When the shooter changed magazines, it allowed time for the children to evade his nightmarish slaughter.

In Tucson, we know from CAPT Mark Kelly, husband of Gabby Giffords, who testified before the Judiciary Committee, that the limitation on that magazine enabled spectators and bystanders to tackle the shooter. If there had been only 10 rounds in that magazine he was using, Christina-Taylor Green, shot by the 13th bullet, would be alive today. We know high-capacity magazines enable and facilitate these mass killings. They don't cause them. They don't compel them. They enable them. High-capacity magazines allowed Adam Lanza to fire more than 150 rounds of ammunition in 5 minutes. And we know from men and women who have lost loved ones that these devices are part of the attacks too often.

Bill Sherlach, the husband of Mary Sherlach, who has come to Washington this week to speak out against gun violence, had this to say about high-capacity magazines. And his wife Mary is with us in this picture today.

It's just simple arithmetic. If you have to change magazines 15 times instead of five times, you have three times as many incidents as where something could jam, something could be bobbled. You just increase the time for intervention. You increase the timeframe where kids can get out. And there's 11 kids out there today that are still running around on the playground pretty much now at lunchtime.

Another Sandy Hook family member who is with us today, Nicole Hockley, mother of Dylan Hockley, said the following:

[W]e looked at the search warrants . . . and know that [the shooter] left the smaller capacity magazines at home. That was a choice that the shooter made. He knew that the larger capacity magazines were more lethal.

The fact is that Adam Lanza had smaller capacity magazines that were found in his home at the time a search was conducted. He left those behind. He used the 30-round clips. He brought with him three 30-round magazines for that AR–15 because he knew he could fire more bullets more rapidly, more lethally, with a 30-round clip. David Wheeler, who is also here today and is the father of Benjamin Andrew Wheeler, said the following:

The more bullets you can get out the end of that gun in the least amount of time, that is the single area that I believe affects lethality. And the size of the magazine placed in that weapon is a direct contributor to that—a direct contributor to that factor. There is a place for 30-round magazines, in the military, on the battlefield.

The families of Sandy Hook have shown tremendous courage and strength. Their resolve and resoluteness are an inspiration and a source of strength to all of us who have spent time with them, who have come to know them, the privilege of knowing them. They have come here to talk about something no one would want to talk about, and they have done it so that no mother, no father, no husband, no wife ever has to again experience the unspeakable and unimaginable horror and tragedy that has befallen them. We owe it to them to vote on this measure. I'm confident there will be a vote. I'm proud to offer this measure banning high-capacity magazines to reduce the scourge of gun violence. There is no turning back, as Nicole Hockley has said so eloquently. There is no turning back from a proposal to ban high-capacity magazines.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I wish to talk about the issue of gun violence.

Our hearts are still heavy from the reminders of what happened in Connecticut, and I want to say that I come to this issue from a position of moderation and common sense. I come to this issue having grown up in the country as a hunter. I grew up on a ranch. I have had guns all my life. I am very familiar with guns. And to this day I still enjoy hunting quail and pheasant with my son. But is there anybody who realistically doesn't believe we ought to have a criminal background check for the person who is purchasing a gun?

I am very encouraged to hear that Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY have come together to find a way to close the gun show loophole. That is instructive.

In my State of Florida, years ago we amended the State constitution with an overwhelming vote of the people in Florida, and then there were ways that in practice had been found to subvert the law that was the will of the people in our State—that you can't purchase a gun at a gun show without having a

criminal background check. What they do is they say: I will consider you a personal friend, and therefore that is an exception to doing a background check on you. So Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY have come to an agreement to find a way to close that gun show loophole, and that proposal will also establish a commission to better understand the root causes of how to prevent mass violence.

There is simply no reason we shouldn't be able to do a criminal background check, which is one way to find out the intention of somebody who is buying a gun. If you bring it back to basics, it is all about common sense, and it is especially so given the circumstances in which we find ourselves where people are slaughtering children.

Is there anybody who thinks we need ammunition clips for 60 rounds? That is not common sense. When I go hunting, if it is quail, I usually have two shotgun shells in the gun. If you are going to give the quail a chance and if it is hunting instead of killing, then let's see how good a marksman you are. So I can't see any reason that common sense would dictate that we would have more than 10 rounds in a clip. Yet people want to go out and buy clips for 60 rounds. I think that is telling us something about their intention. I voted on this back in 2004, to extend the existing law that came out of the 1990s. We said in that legislation that 10 and fewer is OK. Now, is that not reasonable? Is that not common sense? So if we don't reasonably have a need for more than 10, then that is where we ought to draw it in the law.

Then there is another element of common sense; that is, why assault weapons? I served, wearing the uniform of this country. The U.S. military has assault weapons. People are going out and buying these AK–47s that are a derivative of the same weapon that was used by the North Vietnamese against us in the Vietnam war. And I simply ask this question: Are these guns for hunting or are they for killing? And if the legitimate answer is that they are not for hunting or for some collector's purposes, then they have another purpose. Obviously, that is what they were designed for—as an assault-type weapon in a combat circumstance.

So how do we approach the legitimate recognition of the second amendment, the right to bear arms, with assault weapons? And I don't think we can. It seems that among people of good will, using common sense and moderation, that we can come to some definitions that would ban these types of assault weapons. Now, we are probably not going to have the votes to pass it here, but we need to take the vote and we need to see how everybody feels about this issue.

I wish to conclude by saying that those of us who are portrayed, by taking this position of moderation and common sense, as if we were not for the second amendment, that is false. Of course I support the second amendment. I just gave you my history of growing up in the country with guns, having guns all my life and still having a number of guns in my home today. I support the second amendment. I do so in light of the circumstances in our society today that have changed.

My final comment is that in all of this it is moderation and common sense that are so much the solution to facing the issues that confront us today, and here is another example. Let's use a little common sense.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Florida for those very thoughtful remarks and, of course, my colleague, the senior Senator from Connecticut.

We are here on the floor today to help lead a discussion about how this Nation can finally own up to its responsibility to take on the scourge of gun violence that has certainly been highlighted by the massacre in Sandy Hook that I spoke about earlier today in my first speech before this Chamber. But it has, frankly, become too routine throughout the streets of this country, with 3,000 to 4,000 people having lost their lives to gun violence since Sandy Hook happened.

Lost in a lot of the debate here about the particular policy prescriptions we are talking about, whether it be universal background checks supported by 90 percent of Americans or a ban on high-capacity magazines supported by two-thirds of Americans or a Federal law ending illegal gun trafficking supported by three-fourths of Americans, lost amidst all of the political back-and-forth over negotiations between Republicans and Democrats and the pronouncements of the NRA and of gun control groups, lost amidst all of that debate about politics and policy are the victims. The victims are the people—boys and girls, men and women, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters—who die every single day in this country. I described it this morning—like raindrops. It is just background noise to this country now, the number of people who are dying every day.

I decided after having given my maiden speech this morning that I would come back to this floor—not to occupy the floor or commandeer the floor, but to the extent that there is time today and tomorrow and next week, to spend time on this floor telling the stories of the victims, telling the stories of the individual people whose lives were tragically cut short by guns—because it happens here more so than almost every other nation in the world. More people lose their lives, more people have their lives ended prematurely because of guns here than almost any other corner of the world.

It is time that we do something about it. Yes because of the aggregate numbers, yes because of the horror in Sandy Hook, but also because every single additional life that is cut short is a failure of our responsibility to do something about it. So I am going to spend some time down on the Senate floor in between others giving speeches today and tomorrow and next week to talk about these victims, to just tell you a little bit about who they are—especially for the little ones, maybe who they were going to be.

Let me start in Newtown. Let me start in Sandy Hook. We can put up some pictures of just a handful of the victims from Sandy Hook and from cities across this country. Let me start with the little guy in the middle, Daniel Barden. I talked about him this morning.

Daniel was a pretty amazing little boy. His parents talked about the unbelievable compassion he had. I talked about it this morning. He never failed to turn off a light when he left a room. He was always the kid in school who was sitting with the kid who did not have anybody to sit with. When his parents would leave a grocery store they would get halfway across the grocery store parking lot, turn around, and Daniel wasn't with them because he was still holding the door open for other people who were leaving the store. He was a pretty amazing little kid. He loved to spend time with his family. He loved riding the waves at the beach. You can see with that long hair he was a beach bum.

He played drums in a band with his brother James and sister Natalie. His family is very musical, so on that morning his father, who is a professional musician—he is here this week, actually—taught him how to play Jingle Bells.

He woke up very early that morning. It was funny because he was the last of the three kids to go to school. They were all in separate schools. His parents thought it was strange that on that morning he woke up early. In fact it was the first day all year—this was December 14, so they had been in school for months—it was the first day in the entire year that Daniel had awaken before his oldest sibling went to school.

As the oldest sibling was walking down the driveway to go to school, Daniel ran after him to tell him that he loved him. The first time, he had never done that all year. It just shows what a compassionate little kid Daniel was. I actually wear a bracelet for Daniel. It is a bracelet that links to a Facebook page called ''What Would Daniel Do?'' It has 16,000 ''likes.'' The point of this page is people can hear about a lot of these kids. The families have done a lot of amazing things to try to spread the word about who these kids were and what they were going to be. Daniel's page is, ''What Would Daniel Do?'' It is a forum for people to invest in little acts of kindness to try to live up to the inspiration this little 6-year-old set for his family and his neighborhood.

So people posted stories on that Web site for the last several months about

these little kind acts they performed: For example, the woman who bought coffee and donuts for a firehouse in her home State of New York, the Missouri woman who helped restock a food pantry in Daniel's honor, the Illinois woman who paid for a stranger's meal and on the back of the bill wrote: ''Love, from Daniel Barden.''

Daniel was going to grow up to be an amazing young man. He loved life. He did amazing things for people. But we did not get to know Daniel Barden later in life because he was gunned down that day in Sandy Hook.

Let me tell the story of someone equally amazing whom we got to know for 20 more years than the kids that she was charged with looking after. Her name is one that you might know, and that is Victoria Soto. Victoria Soto was 27 years old. She was a teacher at Sandy Hook Elementary School. That is what she wanted to do. She had wanted to be a teacher, her mom said, since she was 3 years old. Imagine knowing what you want to do when you are 3 years old and sticking with it. A lot of people think they know what they want to do when they are 3, but they change their minds. She did not. She worked every day from the time she was 13 to get ready to be a teacher. As early as 13 she was charting out her classes so she could ultimately be a teacher. Even when she got to Sandy Hook Elementary School she made time for night classes at Southern Connecticut State University where she was getting her master's degree in special education.

A mentor of hers said she was the last one who would have wanted hero status, but nobody was surprised to hear what she did in that classroom that day. When Adam Lanza walked into her classroom, Victoria Soto was the only person he saw. Why? Because she had ushered her special education teacher, Anne Marie Murphy, and several of her kids under a desk. She had pushed a number of other kids into a closet to hide them. Lanza came into the classroom, he faced her and killed her. Then he killed the kids who were under the desk. The kids who hid in the closet, many of them lived. Many of them survived—they were discovered after the incident—because of the heroic actions of this one 27-year-old teacher.

Imagine what she could have done with the rest of her life. Students loved her. Parents loved her. She was made for teaching. Think of all of the impact. She probably had 30 more years in the classroom. She had hundreds if not thousands of kids she still could have touched with her life—gone. Victoria Soto's genius as a teacher will no longer be able to be realized because of what happened that day.

If we do not do something about it, Victoria Soto will not be the last teacher who is going to be gunned down. If we don't take some steps here this will not be the last selfless educator we will mourn on the Senate floor.

Let me tell a little about Charlotte Bacon, 6 years old. I lost count of the number of funerals and wakes that I went to, but I do remember Charlotte's funeral. She had this crazy head of curly red hair. She was described by her family as sweet and outgoing and exuberant, someone who was willing to argue for whatever she believed in, even at 6 years old. She loved the color pink, and she loved animals—any animal she met—but she really loved her golden retriever. She wanted to become a veterinarian. A lot of these kids we will hear about today knew what they wanted to do with their lives. These were ambitious kids, in part because they had special parents as well.

She was really looking forward to Christmas because she wanted to show off this new pink dress and pink boots she had gotten. It was a Christmas outfit, so she was waiting until Christmas to be able to show it off. But on the morning of December 14—again, another theme we will hear is that these strange things happened that morning—that morning she woke up and she wanted to wear that pink dress. She wanted to wear those pink boots, and her mother let her do it. She wore that special pink dress and those boots to school on Friday, December 14.

Her family has established a nonprofit called Newtown Kindness. The organization is comprised of community members who were trying to bring positivity and strength back to the Newtown community. I talked this morning about the fact that for many of us who have lived through this tragedy—not anywhere close to the way in which the victims' families have—but what we see Newtown defined by is not the 10 minutes of violence and evil, but all the millions of acts of humanity that have spilled forth from inside the community and from outside the community in the days and weeks since, and this is what Newtown Kindness is about. It is encouraging children to do their own acts of kindness like Charlotte did and submit their stories through drawings and letters to the organization. Newtown Kindness is going to show some light on all these little wonderful things that kids do every day in the same way that Charlotte did for the kids she loved and the family members she loved and for the animals she loved.

Let me talk a little bit about another teacher, Rachel Davino. Rachel was very much like Victoria, in that she knew she wanted to work with kids. She had a lot of interests, Rachel Davino did. She was born in Waterbury, received her undergraduate degree from Hartford, she got her masters from Post University. She loved animals. That is probably why she connected with a lot of these kids. She loved baking and photography and karate. She drew lots of things, loved to draw animals—dogs, frogs, anything with scales or feathers or fur she loved to draw. But her passion was working as a behavioral therapist, working with kids with autism. There were a number of kids in these classrooms who had autism. They were doing great because of the work of people like Rachel and Anne Marie Murphy, who reached out to work with these kids.

Rachel was exceptional because she integrated these kids into her daily life. She brought the kids to her home. She involved the kids in her family. She treated the kids like family and they matured. They did better under her care.

She probably didn't know it when she died, but her best friend and her boyfriend, Tony, was about to propose to her. In fact he had already gone to her parents to ask permission to ask to marry her. He was going to do it on Christmas Eve, just 10 days after the incident. He didn't get to ask for Rachel's hand in marriage. Instead, the wedding ring he had planned to present to her was placed on her finger before she was buried.

Rachel was an amazing teacher, an amazing person who invested herself in these kids, day in and day out. It would have been great to know what Rachel Davino would have become as she matured as an educator.

This is just a sampling of the stories from 1 day in Newtown, CT. Fewer kids and adults died in Newtown that day than die every day across this country. We think how exceptional it was and how awful and how horrific that we lost 20 kids and 6 adults—and, by the way, 2 others in Adam Lanza and his mother—yet that number is less than the average number of people who are killed every day by gun violence across this country. So I want to talk about them too. I want to talk about just over the last couple of weeks and months what we have witnessed across this country.

I want to talk about Hadiya Pendleton in Chicago. We have heard a lot about her because she was here for the Presidential inauguration. She was performing with her school's majorette team in the President's inauguration festivities. She loved performing. She was an honor student at King College Prep High School in Chicago. She was 15 years old.

She is remembered by her friends as somebody who was always raising her hand in class. She had all the right answers in that chemistry class. She wore bright lip gloss that made her stand out. She loved to dance. She danced on the Praise Dance Ministry in her church, and she was a member of her cheerleading team as well. She liked Chinese food, she loved Fig Newtons. She was thinking about going to college, thinking about either journalism or pharmacology, two pretty different things. Either way, she wanted to go to Harvard. She knew where she wanted to go.

She was 15 years old. She was shot and killed while standing with her friends in a park in Chicago after she took her final exams, just days after she came back from Washington, DC,

probably one of the most amazing experiences in her life.

I watched some of that parade, and I always think to myself whether I saw her performing with her majorette team. She was 15 years old. She was going to go to Harvard. She was going to become a journalist or a great dancer. All the things we missed just because she was standing in the way of a bullet at a park with her friends after she took her final exams.

I think about Lavanial Williams, who in January of this year, was visiting with his mother and two sisters in Marin City, CA, to celebrate his 17th birthday. He was checking in on his sister April to make sure she was fine because there was some suspicious activity going on in the housing complex that day. He went downstairs to check out the commotion, and moments later he was shot dead just because he walked down some stairs to check out some commotion.

The deputies who arrived on the scene found a group of people trying to revive the teenager by CPR, but he was pronounced dead at the scene. He had been hit by several bullets. He was there visiting his mother and two sisters to celebrate his 17th birthday. Lavanial Williams died on January 11, 2013.

If we talk about the connection to the background checks piece of this discussion, we could talk about Annemarie Bautch. She returned home after dropping off her kids at school on April 8—just a week or so ago—in Milwaukee. Her live-in boyfriend pulled in behind her in a taxicab he drove for hire. He walked to her van's window and shot her in the head. He then took his gun and turned it on himself.

He was on probation for recent domestic violence incidences involving his daughter. He had beaten up his daughter. He had firearms arrests going back 20 years. He was a convicted felon, and he was prohibited from carrying weapons. I don't have in front of me why he had the weapon that day or how he got it, but he was not supposed to have it. He had a long rap sheet when it came to convictions regarding firearms.

He was ordered to undergo anger management training after his most recent conviction, but it is unclear as to whether that ever happened. He is not here to answer those questions and neither is his girlfriend Annmarie who died that day at the age of 39 after dropping her kids off at school.

Earlier this week in Akron, OH, there was a 28-year-old man who was fatally shot while taking garbage to a trash bin in the parking lot of a McDonald's restaurant at which he worked. He was taking garbage to a trash dump and he was shot and died. His name has not been released, but he had been working at that McDonald's for 10 years. His coworkers said: ''He was the kind of person who would give you his last dollar.'' He would give his coworkers gifts on holidays—Christmas and Thanksgiving. He worked in McDonald's. He could not have had a lot of money to go out and buy gifts for coworkers. He worked at that place for a decade. Because of his generous nature with whatever money he had, that he scraped together, he made sure people knew he loved them.

He was 28 years old when he died earlier this week in Akron, OH.

This stuff is happening every day. I mean, I will keep on going through them, but this is happening every day throughout this country. People are dying on our streets by casual gun violence while bringing garbage to a dumpster outside a McDonald's, walking down the stairs to check out some commotion at a sister's housing complex, and pulling into a driveway after dropping their kids off at school. These were not people who were going out and looking for trouble. These were people who were just doing their regular everyday business.

President Obama came to Connecticut on Monday, and he told the story of a mother who was so frustrated at the phrase regarding her daughter's death due to gun violence that her daughter was ''in the wrong place at the wrong time.'' She just happened to be in the way of a stray bullet. Her mother's point was, no; she was in the right place at the right time. She was walking to school.

This guy was bringing garbage to the dumpster. Anne Marie was coming home after dropping off her kids. Lavanial was just looking out for his sister. They were not in the wrong place at the wrong time, they were doing what they were supposed to be doing. Yet they were gunned down. We have no answer? After 20 years of this, we are not able to step up and do something about it? It is like raindrops. It has just become routine.

Let me go back to Newtown and talk more about these kids. Olivia Rose Engel was a bright-eyed, brunette, 6-year-old girl. She loved school. She particularly loved reading and math, which is good because a lot of what first graders do is reading and math. If you love reading and math, you are probably in good shape.

Her favorite stuffed animal was a lamb, and her favorite colors were—a theme we will hear often—pink and purple. She was set to play an angel in her church's nativity play on the night of the tragedy. She laughed a lot, and her parents said she just lit up a room when she walked in.

Olivia played soccer and tennis, and she took art classes. She loved swimming and ballet classes, and she took hip-hop dance lessons. She was also involved in her Daisy Girl Scouts. Every night when they gathered for dinner, her family would have Olivia say grace.

She was a great big sister. Olivia really loved her little 3-year-old brother Brayden. She was killed that day in Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Josephine Gay celebrated her seventh birthday just 3 days before the tragedy. Joey is what she was called by her family. She was a kid with an indomitable spirit. She was autistic, as were a handful of these kids, but she was still social. She was very affectionate. She was getting very good care from some of these paraprofessionals who were there.

She grew up—actually not too far from here—in Maryland with a house full of Ravens fans. Josephine fell in love with the color purple. I don't know if she bought into the Ravens as a team yet, but she loved the color purple. She had a great sense of humor; she smiled all the time.

She loved hugs even though she participated in rigorous therapy for her disability. She had treatment on a daily basis. She did it without complaining. She loved her Barbie dolls, her iPad, and her computer. She loved to sing and swim and be anywhere her sisters were. Joey Gay was killed that day at age 7 in Sandy Hook Elementary School.

I want to talk about Avielle Richman. I have gotten to know Avielle's parents pretty well over the course of the last few months. Frankly, I have gotten to know a lot of these families over the last few months.

Avielle's parents have done something remarkable, which I will mention, but first I will talk about Avielle.

Guess what color Avielle loved. She loved the color pink. She loved to wear her pink cowboy boots and adored riding her pony Betty. She turned 6 years old just about 2 months before the tragedy.

She moved from Connecticut a few years ago from San Diego. She loved San Diego. She was barefoot all the time. She would run on the beaches of San Diego until the Sun went down. Her relatives used to joke about how hard it was to get shoes on Avielle even after moving to Connecticut. When she lived in San Diego, she never used to wear shoes, so she certainly was not going to wear them even in a colder climate like Connecticut.

She had curly brown hair and an infectious smile. Her parents kept a blog about her. They called her their little hummingbird. She loved horseback riding, swimming, ice skating, and superhero adventures. She loved pretending to be a superhero. She loved the movie ''Brave,'' and Avielle tried out archery, which is a brave thing for her parents to do as well. She tried out archery because of her love for the movie.

Before her life was taken that December, Avielle was obsessed with an Easy Bake Oven she was hoping to get for Christmas.

Her parents are scientists, and in the wake of Avielle's death, they started a nonprofit to raise money to try to get to the root cause of the illness that caused someone like Adam Lanza to pick up a gun. That is an amazing thing for the Richmans to do. I talked about a number of efforts that have been taken, whether it is a Facebook

page for Daniel Barden, a Web site to try to encourage kids to engage in acts of kindness, or what Avielle's parents did. This is an amazing thing for them to do. While they are grieving, they are trying to find a silver lining in all of this.

The Richmans' hope is that they can use the memory of their precious 6-year-old daughter to go out and raise money to try to research the causes of the illness that led to this tragedy. It is an illness. We talk about it in terms of evil, and I have certainly used that term. It is really illness masquerading as evil.

The Richmans are going to do their part to raise money to try to do a better job to figure out what is going on in the brain to cause someone to leave their parents' home, drive to an elementary school, and start shooting, or walk up to a McDonald's employee as they are delivering garbage to the dumpster and shoot them. It is a different kind of illness, I suppose, but it deserves examination nonetheless.

The Richmans are heroic in the fact that they have decided to reach out and try to make this discovery.

Another teacher to talk about is Lauren Rousseau. She wanted to be a teacher so badly. She was 30 years old. Up to the point she was hired as a full-time substitute teacher at Sandy Hook Elementary, she spent 6 years working at part-time jobs just to make ends meet so she could substitute teach during the day. During that 6-year period of time, she was looking for a full-time job, and she finally found it. That October she had been hired in Newtown to be a full-time substitute teacher. It is just what Lauren wanted to do, and she was really good at it. She was literally on the verge of realizing that 6-year dream when her life was taken.

She was very bubbly and outgoing. She spent the morning of December 14 looking forward to a movie she was going to see that night with her friends and her boyfriend, ''The Hobbit.'' She was a huge fan of Tolkien, so it was a big deal to see ''The Hobbit'' that evening, and that is what she was talking about that morning.

She loved animals too. She was passionate about doing something about child poverty. Part of the reason she went into education was she believed she needed to live her life in a way that was going to reach out and eradicate the scourge of child poverty.

Purple was her favorite color, and so everybody at her funeral wore the color purple.

She was a huge UConn basketball fan. In particular, she was a big fan of the UConn women's basketball team. So if Lauren is looking down from up above, she is very happy because her UConn women are national champions again. She would have been watching that game last night, and hopefully she was.

Lauren Rousseau was right there. Her dream was within her grasp, what she had worked for all of her life, and in an instant it was gone.

Teachers, little girls, and little boys who could have been great people, great educators—they could have been dancers and singers. Daniel Barden said he wanted to be a paleontologist just like his older brother. He could have done great things, but he is gone.

This isn't the first massacre we have seen. Daniel Barden and Ana Marquez-Green and Dylan Hockley and Benjamin Wheeler—these are all kids who were killed in Newtown, CT, but unfortunately Newtown is just the latest in a line of mass shootings. Forty percent of the mass shootings that have happened in this Nation's history have happened since the assault weapons ban expired. Forty percent of all of the mass shootings in this Nation's history have happened in the last 8 years—8 years—since the assault weapons ban expired. I am not an expert in cause and correlation, but that cannot be a coincidence. It can't be a coincidence because we also know that during those 10 years of the assault weapons ban, along with a ban on high-capacity magazines that was in effect, we saw a 37-percent decrease in gun violence. We saw a two-thirds decrease in the crimes committed with assault weapons. Those are real numbers, real reductions in overall gun violence and in gun violence perpetrated with these dangerous assault weapons. But the minute that ban was lifted, a dramatic increase in these mass shootings occurred.

Newtown was the second worst school shooting. It is seared in our memories in a different way because these were precious, young, little kids, and we can't help but grieve in a fundamentally different way for 6- and 7-year-olds. But Virginia Tech was worse. Still to this day, Virginia Tech saw the highest number of people gunned down. So I wish to talk about a few of those people.

Ross Alameddine was a Virginia Tech sophomore. He loved computer games, and he actually played a lot of them competitively. He was very much into home computer repair, and it was something he wanted to do with his life. His customers always loved him because they would bring their computers to him and he was one of the few people who knew how to fix them.

He did a lot of stuff outside of his fascination with computers. He loved rollerblading, whether it was in between classes or going out for long rollerblading expeditions on nice days. He loved movies, and he loved music. He played the piano, and he actually sang at a local coffeehouse. He had a fondness for language. He had strong opinions too. He was part of the debate club at Austin Prep, where he went to school. He talked in every single one of these classes. We know these kids who always have something to say, and Ross was definitely one of them.

He loved life. He sought to make other people laugh. He used his music to do that. One of his classmates, Liz Hardwick, remembered his many qualities. She said that Ross's wit, humor, and insightfulness made him so much fun to be around, but his caring for others was also always present. Ross was one of the 32 victims killed during the Virginia Tech massacre on April 16, 2007.

Christopher James Bishop—''Jamie'' Bishop—was a German teacher who was shot at the age of 35. He was a dedicated husband and son. He was a gentle colleague. He was a really generous friend.

He had a long ponytail that he wore. That was kind of Jamie's signature. But he didn't keep the ponytail for long because once he grew it, he would regularly cut his hair and donate it to Locks of Love. He was doing it for style reasons, I am sure, but he saw his ponytail as a means to donate to other people who needed some help.

He was another techno guru. He knew a lot about complicated gadgets, and one of those was cameras. He was a great technician with a camera, but he was also a very avid photographer. Jamie leaves behind a lot of wonderful art that captured the intensity and the beauty that surrounded him in Blacksburg.

He hailed from a very small town—Pine Mountain, GA—and he was a big fan of the Atlanta Braves, so he would probably be pretty excited about the start the Atlanta Braves have had this year.

He was a foreign language teacher. He was a tough teacher—''Herr Bishop'' is what they called him—but he really believed that understanding language was a way for people to engage in the world. It was a joy, but it was really fundamental to understanding humanity. If people understand languages, they understand different cultures and they understand something more about what it means to be a human being in this world. Jamie believed in what he did not just because he wanted to teach kids German but because he wanted to teach kids about the world. He died at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, at the age of 35.

Brian Bluhm was a graduate student. He was a TA at Virginia Tech. He cared about water resources—something we actually are going to be talking about here pretty soon—something not a lot of graduate students think about. He cared deeply about a just distribution of water assets across the country, and that is what he was working on at Virginia Tech.

But his real love was for God. He was dedicated to building a relationship through his church with his God.

He was one of the friendliest guys one could ever meet, his friends said. He had a smile for everybody.

He was a big sports fan. Brian grew up with a passion for sports, particularly baseball, and his favorite team was the Detroit Tigers. He was one of these guys who follow everything about their favorite team. He watched all the games, but when the Tigers weren't playing in the winter and in

the early spring, he would be analyzing every statistic from the past season and getting ready for the next season. He also loved Virginia Tech sports, especially football and basketball. He was one of those people others would see on TV who came to all of the games with the colors on their chests to show their support.

His family says he will be remembered for his love of God, family, friends, the Detroit Tigers, and Virginia Tech. He was lost that day, April 16, 2007, as well.

Ryan Christopher Clark was known to his friends as ''Stack.'' He maintained a 4.0 GPA when he was a student at Virginia Tech, and he was a kid who had a mastery of science. He had a triple major. I didn't even know one could have a triple major, but Stack had a triple major in psychology, biology, and English. Can my colleagues imagine what Stack was going to be able to do with his life? Can we imagine what he would have been able to contribute in his life with a triple major?

He was a leader on campus. He played baritone in the Marching Virginians university band, and he was a resident adviser. So he was doing great things on campus and passing along a lot of knowledge to kids underneath him.

His friends said: He was a wonderful part of our baritone section. He was fun. He was loving. He was a delightful person to be around. He cared so much for other people. He would befriend anyone. He was a light and he was a joy.

Ryan Christopher Clark was going to do great things with his life. He was a student leader. At his young age, he had already shown a compassion for his fellow students by being a resident adviser. He had shown a talent for music by going out and performing in the band, and he was a triple major who was probably going to do something great in the scientific field in this country. But Stack didn't get to live that dream because, along with so many others, he was gunned down that day at Virginia Tech.

Virginia Tech, Newtown, Aurora, Tucson—these are just the mass shootings. I will keep on going, but these victims just don't end. Stack on top of that 40, 50, 60 people every day being killed on our streets. It is important to talk about these victims. That is why I wanted to come to the floor today to do this, because if we don't do something in the next 2 weeks, these lists are going to grow.

The illegal guns used on the streets of Chicago and Bridgeport and New Haven and Washington, DC, and New York weren't always illegal guns. They were legal guns before they became illegal guns. Somewhere along the line, their status transferred. The question is, What can we do to stop that transfer from happening?

I believe in the second amendment. I believe in the protection that it affords people to own a gun, to be able to hunt or to shoot for sport or to protect themselves. But I want to make sure guns stay in the ''legal'' category and don't leach into the ''illegal'' category. That is why 90 percent of Americans think we should have a law in this Nation that provides for universal, mandatory background checks for everybody who buys a gun. That is a really simple thing to do.

This is just a sampling of the lives that could have been protected. The gun used in Newtown went through a background check, but so many of the guns used to kill boys and girls and young adults and men and women in our cities don't go through background checks. We think about 40 percent of guns sold across this country don't go through background checks.

One of the tragedies in this long line is directly relevant to this bill. At Columbine High School, the gun used was bought outside of the background check system, and the friend of the shooter's who bought the gun said after the incident that the reason she bought it with the method she did was because had she gone to a gun store, it wouldn't have passed the background check. That is the gun show loophole. What has it been—a decade-plus since Columbine, and we still haven't closed the gun show loophole? We still haven't made the collective decision that we should make sure criminals don't buy guns? She said she couldn't have bought the gun if she went to a licensed gun dealer because it would have been prohibited. So a bunch of kids died at Columbine High School.

Someone could make the argument that if the gun hadn't gotten in their hands that way, it might have gotten in their hands another way. I get it. Nothing we are talking about guarantees that another Sandy Hook isn't going to happen, and it certainly can't guarantee that our streets are going to all of a sudden be safer overnight. But if we make it a little bit harder to get that gun, if we make it a little bit more difficult for a criminal to get his hands on a weapon, the chances look a whole lot better to survive on the streets of our cities or in our schools and mosques and movie theaters.

As Senator BLUMENTHAL pointed out, I can absolutely make the case that if we had stronger laws on the books today, Newtown may not have happened, and even if it did happen, some of these kids would be alive today.

What happened in one of those classrooms is instructive. A handful of kids survived because Victoria Soto put them into a closet, and when the shooting was over, they were discovered in that closet.

Another set of kids survived a different way. When Lanza went to switch magazines, there was a delay in the shooting and a bunch of kids ran out of the classroom. Five of them—six were found in the closet, and five of them ran out of the classroom when Lanza decided to switch magazine clips. There are five kids who don't look much different from Ana and Daniel and Dylan and Benjamin who are—and Jesse, there is Jesse—who are alive today because Adam Lanza had to switch clips. He only had to do it about 6 times to get off 154 bullets. We don't exactly understand why, but he didn't actually discharge all of his 30-round clips. Sometimes he only shot about 10 or 15 bullets before he switched, but some of them he went straight through. He only had to switch clips we think about 6 times to get off 154 bullets in 10 minutes.

If we had on the books today a law such as the law we had back in the 1990s and early 2000s that restricted ammunition clips to 10 rounds—an amendment Senator BLUMENTHAL and I will bring to the floor next week, either an amendment or in a separate bill—that shooter would have had to change ammunition clips 15 times—9 more opportunities for kids to run out of the classroom. I know we can't guarantee that things would have been different, but let me tell my colleagues there are an awful lot of parents in Newtown who believe their sons or daughters might likely be alive today had we continued to have a restriction limiting ammunition clips to 10 rounds.

What we know is that in Tucson, people would be alive today because that incident absolutely stopped when the shooter switched clips. It was during the transfer of ammunition magazines that he was tackled. We know that if he had 10 rounds rather than a higher number, there would still be people alive there.

We know what happened in the movie theater in Aurora. That guy walked into the movie theater with a 100-round drum. What on Earth is the reason why somebody needs a 100-round drum? It jammed because these guys are amateurs. They have not done this before. People say: It is not going to make a difference—10 rounds, 30 rounds—because it takes 3 seconds to switch clips, so it is not going to provide any different outcome.

For a professional shooter, it takes 3 seconds. But for a nervous 21-year-old kid, hyped up on adrenaline, it is a different thing. Five kids escaped in Newtown; the shooting stopped in Tucson; the shooting stopped when the gun jammed upon exchange of magazines in Aurora. People are alive today because there is something that happens when you have to exchange magazines in these incidents of mass violence. More exchanges of magazines mean more kids alive today.

Let me talk to you about Porshe Foster. She was 15 years old when she was killed over the Thanksgiving holiday last year in Chicago. She had five sisters—six daughters, and Porshe was the youngest of them. Porshe was 15, and she was shot in the back of the head when she was standing with her best friends in a backyard during a sleepover.

The intended victim was a gang-related individual. They were targeting

somebody else, but she got hit. Twenty-five shots were fired, by the way. Twenty-five shots were fired. Porshe was the only victim that was hit.

She was a sophomore at ACE Tech. It is a charter school that specializes in getting kids ready for college in architecture and construction and engineering. This is exactly the kind of student we wanted, where, on the floor of the Senate and the House of Representatives, we are all the time clamoring for more girls to go into STEM education—into science, technology, engineering, and math. Porshe was doing it. She was living up to our expectations. She was going to a charter school. It was going to get her ready to go into a career in architecture, construction or engineering. Imagine what she could have done if she lived beyond the age of 15.

She played volleyball and she played basketball. She sang in the church choir. She loved art. Her classmates actually honored her death by holding an art sale in her memory. Because funerals are expensive, especially in inner-city Chicago, they used the proceeds from the art sale to pay for Porshe's funeral.

Let me tell you, that is no small expense. We do not think about that, but one of the biggest issues in Hartford, CT, today—a city that has had relatively low gun violence this year but on an average year can have a couple dozen gun deaths—is how do you pay for the funerals, how do you come up with the money as a community to pay for a funeral every other week in a small, little city such as Hartford. Porshe's friends decided to do an art sale to pay for her funeral.

Her family and friends remember her as happy, as friendly, as a great student, always busy, someone ''you couldn't be quiet around.''

Her five sisters had planned to give their youngest sister a guitar for Christmas. She was killed on November 26, 2012, about a month before she was going to get that guitar.

I know there are other people who are here to speak, and so I will yield the floor at this time. But I will be back today and tomorrow to talk about more victims. I just think we need to tell their stories. I just think the people need to know who these people are because there are going to be more of them if things do not change, and we have the power this week and next week to do something about it—not to eliminate future victims. We are never, ever going to change the fact that people are going to pick up a gun, are going to violate the law, are going to shoot to kill. We are never going to stop that. But we can do something to reduce these numbers so next year at this time or 2 years at this time we cannot come down to the floor with a binder full of victims just from the past 3 months.

I will be back later today and tomorrow to continue to do this, but at this time I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized as in morning business for 10 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. First of all, Madam President, let me say, I certainly sympathize with the tragedy that took place and those who lost family members. Having 20 kids and grandkids myself, I am probably in a better position to sympathize with that than many others are.

I have to say I think somewhat of a disservice is being done to some of these families. It is almost akin to saying we are looking at legislation that would have prevented that from happening—and that is not the case—or we are looking at legislation that would preclude something such as this happening again.

I listened to my colleagues on the right side, on the Republican side, and on the left, the Democratic side, and they all have good ideas and they all are sincere in wanting to do something and maybe I am looking at it too simplistically. Because I look at the second amendment, I look at what historically has been our privilege in exercising our right to keep and bear arms—I mean since the very beginning—then I see and I have lived through, on the State and on the Federal level, all kinds of efforts of people to think: We can do something about gun violence, and let's do it by background checks, let's check everybody out there, let's do it, and let's approach the gun shows.

Let's talk about all these things that could be done. We could restrict the number of the cartridges and the magazines and all these things, but it is all predicated on one assumption, which I cannot buy. That assumption is that somehow we think that the criminal element will single out this one law to comply with.

Let's look at the facts. When we look at what they are trying to do, anything that is up that we are going to be voting on in the next 2 or 3 weeks—however long it takes—is going to, in some way, restrict the number of firearms. I think we would all agree with that. Whose firearms will they restrict? They would restrict the firearms of law-abiding citizens. That means the ratio between guns owned by the criminal element versus the law-abiding citizen is going to change.

When they talk about the background checks, I cannot imagine anyone being so naive as not to know that if the criminal element is going to get a gun, they are going to get a gun. Sure, they would kind of like to have some of these restrictions. They would like to have that background check because that eliminates the numbers of guns in circulation. So the criminal element is the only one who is not affected.

I was asked a question not long ago about this. It was on a national TV show. I was actually down at the border at the time, the Mexican border. They asked the question: Why is America so wrong? He talked about a poll that was taken where the results were 90 to 3. The question that was asked was: Do you believe we ought to have stronger background checks?

I said: Fine. If you were to ask that same question—90 percent of the people, by the way, answered: Yes, we need to have stronger background checks. But if you asked the question: Do you believe we should have stronger background checks on the law-abiding citizens and not the criminal element, then I can assure you, it would be like 99 to nothing the other way.

That is the thing. That is the one thing people just overlook. We can pass all the laws we want, and the criminal element is going to sit back and smile. Is anyone naive enough not to think, not to believe that regardless of background checks, a criminal element can find someone who can go and get a gun, make $100, and they have a gun. But the ratio changes and not in a healthy way.

In a way I think it is a disservice to an awful lot of people who have had tragedies in their lives to believe we are doing something that is truly going to change that when, in fact, I do not believe it is.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I rise again to continue my attempt on the floor of the Senate today, without holding up the Senate or allowing others to speak their mind, to really draw attention to the names, faces, and reality behind this chart. This is probably difficult to see for some of my colleagues because it represents the over 3,300 people who have died since December 14, since the Newtown tragedy. Over 3,300 people have died from gun violence since December 14 and are represented by all of these individual figurines, which are so many that the picture becomes muddled. It almost looks like lines going back and forth. Behind each one of those small, tiny figurines is a story of a man, woman, little boy, or little girl who had their life stolen from them and from their family prematurely because of gun violence.

I wish there weren't enough material to fill today, tomorrow, and next week, when others aren't on the floor speaking. I wish there weren't 3,300 stories in the last several months alone with respect to people who have died from gun violence, but that is the reality.

The reality is that this Nation has become callous over time to the everyday incidents of gun violence that have happened on our streets, in my cities of Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven, and also in your cities of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Baltimore.

We have come to believe, over the course of the last 20 years since we passed the last major gun violence initiative, through the Congress, that we can't do anything, that we are powerless. We have come to delude ourselves of that fact.

I gave my first speech on the floor of the Senate this morning, and I have been moved to come back and spend time today talking about the victims as a means to try to move us to do something. We know what we need to do because people out there have already decided what it is. Ninety percent of Americans support the universal background checks. Two-thirds of Americans support a ban on these high-capacity magazine clips. We haven't figured it out for ourselves.

I wish to speak for a few minutes about these victims. I will start these remarks with a school near Littleton, CO. Columbine High School, on the morning of April 20, 1999, was visited by two very disturbed young men who walked into the school. Their names were Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, and they opened fire in the school. They killed and injured 12 more. It was at the time certainly one of the worst instances of mass shooting in a school this country had ever seen. Of course, it has now been eclipsed by what happened at Virginia Tech and what happened in my State last December 14 at Sandy Hook Elementary School. At the time, it shocked the Nation because we didn't know how to comprehend 10 students going about their day at Columbine High School being gunned down by 2 of their fellow students. Now we are grappling with how to comprehend the deaths of 20 kids, 6- and 7-year-olds at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Although it has now been almost 14 years since the incident on April 20—we are about to come up on the anniversary—we shouldn't forget the people who were killed. Before the next Senator comes down wishing to speak, I will speak about those kids who were killed in Columbine.

Cassie Bernall was a really sweet, kind little girl. She was active in her church. Her work in her church meant so much to her that after she died her parents set up the Cassie Bernall Foundation, which provides support to youth ministries. I was a part of my youth group in my church growing up, and I know what a wonderful connection it is, both to God and to your fellow adolescents. It was a big deal for her. She also was fascinated with the United Kingdom, and she had a dream to attend Cambridge University. She wanted to become an obstetrician.

Today Cassie would be about 30 years old. She would most likely have completed her training and would be in a residency or be a practicing OB/GYN. We spend a lot of time talking about the fact that we need more preventive care doctors practicing medicine. Cassie was gunned down that day. She didn't get to live her dream or contribute to a field we know is very important.

That wasn't the only thing Cassie cared about. She loved the outdoors and spent a lot of time in Breckenridge. She had a passion for rock climbing, snowboarding, backpacking, camping, and taking photographs of everything she did so she could record her love of the outdoors.

She was buried along with a poem her mother wrote:

> Bunny Rabbit, my friend, my daughter, my mentor, I will love you and miss you forever. I promise to take good care of your kitty. I know that Jesus is elated to have you in His presence.

Cassie would have been an amazing person and was an amazing person. She was 17 years old. She hadn't yet told us exactly who she was going to be, but she was going to do great things. She was killed that day at Columbine High School.

Steven Robert Curnow was the youngest victim at Columbine. He was only 14 years old when he died. He loved his family. All of these kids loved their families, but he was especially close with his family. He was pretty close to his true passion as well—''Star Wars.'' He was 14 years old, and his parents said he watched the ''Star Wars'' movies so much he could speak every single line of the movies in sync with the actors. He was also a great athlete. He played soccer, trained very hard, and even worked locally at 14 years old as a part-time referee. He wanted to go into the Navy. He was a pretty well-rounded kid who loved ''Star Wars,'' was a great athlete, and wanted to go into the military and become a Navy pilot. He was great with young kids too. This is what his friends remember, how compassionate he was with young kids. He was 14 years old.

We already had this window into who this kid was going to be. He loved having fun and watching ''Star Wars.'' He was great with kids as a volunteer referee. He wanted to be a Navy pilot and serve our country. He never was able to do these things because he was gunned down in Columbine High School.

Corey DePooter is remembered as a really courageous kid. He was 17 years old, and he had a very strong sense of right and wrong, maybe stronger than he needed to have. When he was growing up and played cops and robbers, he refused to be the robber. He needed always to be law enforcement in that equation. He wanted to be a marine, as Steven did. Steven wanted to be a Navy pilot; Corey wanted to be a marine. After he died, he was named an honorary marine in a ceremony in front of his grave.

His friend Austin said: People said Corey was just the kind of guy you want to be around. He would always pick up our spirits in a gloomy situation.

He was on the wrestling team. He loved playing golf. He was going to serve our country. He was 17 years old, and Corey never was allowed to live out that dream.

Kelly Ann Fleming was a year younger when she died in Columbine. She was 16 years old. She was an aspiring author. At 16 years old, she had written a great deal of poetry, prose, and a lot of stories about her own life. She actually started writing her autobiography. What an amazing thing for a 16-year-old. She was writing an autobiography covering her life from age 5 until the point she died. The library was what Kelly loved. Her mom said it was her one true safe place. She felt right in that library surrounded by learning and books. Ironically, in school her favorite subject was math. Her favorite math teacher served as a pallbearer at her funeral.

Like most teenagers, she was very much looking forward to obtaining her driver's license. She wanted to get out there in a Mustang or Corvette and drive around with her friends. She was very bright and very good at math. We need more mathematicians, scientists, and engineers in this country.

Kelly Ann, who was 16 then, would be about 30 today. She was not allowed to fulfill those dreams.

This is what happened at Columbine. The two students who walked into the school and started shooting couldn't get the weapons themselves. They had a friend buy them for them. The friend knew that if they went to a gun dealership, they wouldn't get them because they wouldn't be able to pass the background check. They went outside the background check to get them a different way—a way thousands of people go to buy their weapons. The vast majority of them do this not because they are trying to get around the background check system but because in private sales, gun shows, and on the Internet, we largely don't require background checks. This is one of the things we are attempting to fix this week.

There is a belief among many of the family members of the Columbine victims that had background checks been universal, possibly the two shooters in the school might not have had those weapons. We can't guarantee that. I don't want to stand here and say that we know for certain that if we had universal background checks, Kelly Ann, Corey, Steven, Cassie, and all the rest would still be alive today. We don't know that, but chances are a little better. Those families want to have had the chance that their sons and daughters might be alive today, might have kids of their own today, might be an OB/GYN, a Navy pilot, a marine, or mathematician. They would take those chances.

So when we think about these victims, we need to think about the real

policy consequences of what we are debating, and while nothing we are talking about is going to guarantee these students who died would be alive today, boy, it gives it a much better chance it would have happened. That is just a sampling of the victims in one high school, in Columbine High School.

What we know is the names reflected by these little figurines are largely not victims of mass shootings. These are just the victims since December 14. These are folks who just got killed by a stray bullet or as a result of a crime of passion or, as I explained in an earlier speech today, just because they were taking out the trash from McDonald's or going to check out some commotion in their housing complex or driving home after dropping off kids at school. They were doing what they normally do every day. And because somebody else had a gun, legally or illegally, they got killed.

So let's talk about some of those victims as well. As I said, I am going to be down here as much as I can today, tomorrow, and next week telling these stories as a means to hopefully inspire us to some bipartisan action on the floor. I hope some good things are happening today while I am down on the Senate floor. I hope we are coming together on this issue. But if these stories don't move people, I am not sure what does.

On January 7 of last year, 2012, a 14-year-old boy in Bridgeport, CT, by the name of Justin Thompson, and his friends from Barnum Middle School went to a Sweet 16 party for a neighborhood girl on the east end of Bridgeport. Justin was a popular eighth grader. His friends and his family thought he looked exactly like Alex Rodriguez. Down in Bridgeport that is a good thing; up in the rest of Connecticut, maybe not so much.

The parents of the girl had rented a hall and hired a DJ. There was no alcohol, there was no fighting. It was just a regular Sweet 16 party. Eventually, as more kids showed up, it kind of started to get a little too big and the police had to come and break it up. But Justin left the party and began walking down a street nearby with two other young people when all of a sudden two men appeared and started shooting. Justin was hit in the head and he was killed in the commotion.

He was 14 years old. He was walking home from a Sweet 16 party. He didn't do anything wrong. He wasn't in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was in the right place at the right time. He was doing what he was supposed to be doing that night—walking home from a Sweet 16 party—and he got killed by guns. That is Justin Thompson.

Keijahnae Robinson was 15 years old when, on July 21, 2012, she was shot. She told her friends she wanted to be the next Mariah Carey. She was a big singer. She loved to sing and she loved to perform. Guess where she went on July 20 in Bridgeport, CT. She went to a Sweet 16 party as well. Her 16th birthday was actually the following week, and she was telling friends that she couldn't wait for her party. She was enjoying her friend's party but she couldn't wait for her Sweet 16 party, which was happening the following week.

After the party, her friend's mom invited some of the girls to sort of take the party to her house. It was a warm, beautiful night, and the girls were sitting out on the porch when two men came by and opened fire on the porch before driving away in a car. Two hours before she was shot, there was a robbery just down the street, and somehow this was connected to it.

She was 15 years old. She was sitting on the porch with her friends, basking in the afterglow of a wonderful Sweet 16 party, getting ready for her 16th birthday and she was gunned down by a drive-by shooting. That is Keijahnae Robinson.

Blair Belcher was 17.

This is all Bridgeport, CT. I am just giving one city in 2011 and 2012.

Blair was dreaming of one day going to college. He wanted to go into electronics and computing. He was walking through an east side park in Bridgeport on July 31—he was about to enter his senior year at Harding High School—when three shooters gunned him down in the middle of that park—a life cut short.

He was a real talent. Blair had a penchant for fixing things. He could fix anything. His mom said it was like a gift, and he wanted to do something with it when he graduated. He was 1 year away from graduating. He was 17 years old and killed in Bridgeport, CT. He was just in a park and he got gunned down in a cross fire.

It is hard to even figure out why these things happen, but they just get built into the background noise of urban gun violence.

''TJ'' Mathis was good at a lot of things in Bridgeport. Excuse me, TJ, I am sorry. TJ was from New Haven. I got to know TJ's father Lenny well. And Lenny will tell you that TJ was good at a lot of things, but basketball was at the top of the list. He was the star of Hamden High School's team. He led them to three division titles. He was all-State and he went on to play Division I basketball at Morgan State University and had just been signed to a minor league basketball contract with the ABA. He was a star. He was good at a lot of things—this was a multitalented kid—but basketball was his thing. He did well and led his team. He was going on to a career in basketball.

On a warm Saturday night in September 2011, he and his friends went to a party honoring another basketball legend—someone we are really proud of in Connecticut, Ryan Gomes of Waterbury. Ryan went to Providence College, went to the NBA and had a great career. After leaving the party, his friends realized they were too tired to drive. They were responsible. This kid had a career ahead of him. He was going to be a basketball star. He was going to the ABA, and a lot of people who go to the ABA get to the NBA.

So TJ decided he needed to get some sleep. Unfortunately, TJ never made it home that night. He pulled over to get a little sleep on the side of the road and a young man, seeing the three boys asleep on the side of the road, pulled up next to them and tried to rob them. When TJ woke up and realized he was being robbed in his car, he resisted, and the young man shot and killed him.

On the verge of a career in the ABA, a basketball standout in Hamden, CT, and at Morgan State University, just sleeping in his car trying to get a few winks before he drove home, being responsible so he didn't do something silly like get in a car while he was tired and run off the road and hurt somebody else, he gets robbed and shot.

Just part of the background noise of the people who die every day in this country—30, 40, 50, 60 a day. I will come down here today and tomorrow and next week, and I won't get through a few days' worth of shootings all across this country. The truth is a lot of these shootings in cities are happening with illegal guns.

The opponents of gun legislation are right in one respect. They are right that the majority of crimes are not committed by assault weapons. Assault weapons have become the weapon of choice for mass shooters. That is true. But the reality is these kids I am talking about—Justin and Keijahnae and Blair and TJ—were killed by hand guns, most of them illegal hand guns. Why do we have so many illegal hand guns out there? Because we haven't done anything about it here. We allow 40 percent of guns to be sold in this country without background checks.

Hopefully, we are getting closer to changing that, but we don't have a Federal law making gun trafficking illegal. People don't understand that someone can take a whole bunch of guns out of a store legally, then sell them on the street to people who are legally prohibited from purchasing guns, and they have not committed a Federal gun trafficking violation. Maybe they have committed a State violation, but they haven't committed a Federal violation.

We can't solve this problem entirely. We are not going to stop bad people from taking guns out on the street and doing bad things, but we can substantially decrease the likelihood that another Columbine or Sandy Hook happens, that another TJ Mathis, a standup young kid, a basketball star, gets gunned down just because he is in the wrong place at the wrong time, or the right place at the right time with the wrong person with the wrong gun. We can do something about it here.

Throughout the day I have been trying to talk about the variety of victims, people on the streets of our cities but also in our schools. So before I yield the floor again, I want to go back

to the reason we are here. I think it is important to tell you who the victims are, but I think it is particularly important to tell you who the victims in Newtown, CT, were because while Newtown should not have been a tipping point, and it should not have taken this long for us to have this conversation, I think we all recognize we are having this conversation because of the 20 6- and 7-year-olds and the 6 adults who were killed that day. And I believe if we don't do something about it there will be another Newtown; that we will have another town added to the list of Aurora and Littleton and Tucson and Newtown in a matter of weeks or months—hopefully longer—if we don't take some action.

So let me go back, before I yield the floor again today, to talk some more about the wonderful children and adults who were killed in Newtown.

Mary Sherlach's husband is here today in DC lobbying on behalf of his wife, who was 1 year away from retirement as Sandy Hook's school psychologist when she was murdered that day in Sandy Hook Elementary School. He is here to talk about the insanity of not taking these high-capacity magazines off the streets. That is his passion. He believes there is a chance there would be boys and girls alive today in Newtown had Adam Lanza had 10 bullets per magazine instead of 30 bullets per magazine.

But let me tell you about Mary because Mary is pretty amazing. Mary had worked for years at Sandy Hook Elementary. She had actually been there for 18 years. She was not just the school psychologist, she was involved in basically every school improvement effort you can imagine. She was a member of the District Conflict Resolution Committee, the Safe School Climate Committee, ironically, the Crisis Intervention Team, and the Student Instructional Team. She cared so deeply about the school, it wasn't just a 9-to-5 or 9-to-3 or 7-to-3 job for her. She put in all sorts of extra hours to make the school better. She was 1 year away from retirement, and, oh, how she and Bill were looking forward to retirement. They had a little cabin on the Finger Lakes—still have a cabin in upstate New York—and they loved going up there. They had planned on spending a good part of their retirement up there when they weren't spending time with their daughters Katie and Maura.

Mary loved gardening, reading, and she loved the theater. She was a great neighbor. She was a very beautiful person, who, on that day, did something a lot of us hope we would do, though we can't really be sure. About 9:30 that morning, Adam Lanza blasted his way through the locked doors of Sandy Hook Elementary School. The principal of the school, Dawn Hochsprung, and Mary were meeting, I believe, when they heard the bullets and the glass crash. They must have known something horrible had happened. There are two instincts at that point—maybe three—you freeze, you run the other way, or you do what Dawn and Mary did. You run to the bullets. That is what she did. Her school was in trouble, something awful was happening, and Mary and her principal ran to the gunfire and the gunman. They didn't run away.

Now, plenty of people in that school did heroic and courageous things that day—they stowed kids in closets and classrooms, they hugged kids as the bullets rained down, but Mary and Dawn were the first people who died because they ran right to the bullets.

Mary is a hero not just because of the 18 years she spent dedicated to those kids, not just because of all the efforts she put in to make that school a better place, but because that day she did everything in her power to make that shooting end. She wasn't successful, but she tried, and we all hope we have a little bit of Mary Sherlach in us as well.

Mary is different than those kids. Those kids had their whole life ahead of them. We don't know what they would have done. So at least we have the benefit of knowing who Mary Sherlach was. At least we have the benefit of knowing the wonder that was her life. But she deserved retirement, and Bill deserved to have his wife, who had worked so hard and had spent all these nights trying to make her school a better place—he deserved to have her for their retirement up in the Finger Lakes, and he doesn't.

Ben Wheeler, whom I talked about earlier today, was a very gifted musician. Ben was 6 years old when he died that morning. Just before December 14, he had performed his first recital at 6 years old. I have a 4-year-old at home, and I know what an amazing thing it is to have a child be that dedicated to music that by 6 years old they can perform a recital. He loved trains. They would go to New York City a lot, and he was always more interested in riding the subway and the train than he was in visiting the museums or the zoos. That is not uncommon for kids. Maybe doing a recital at age 6 is but loving trains is not.

More than music, more than trains, more than subways, though, Ben loved his 9-year-old brother Nate. The two of them did everything together. They played soccer, they swam. As I said this morning in my first speech before this Chamber, on the way to school that morning Ben told his mom he wanted to be an architect when he grew up, but he was going to be a paleontologist because that was what his brother Nate was going to be, and he wanted to do everything Nate did.

Ben was going to be a pretty amazing man, that kind of musical talent at an early age, a love for his family, and, unfortunately, Ben Wheeler lost his life that day.

Emilie Parker was 6 years old. The one thing you will hear about with respect to Emilie when you talk to the Parker family is that she had an infectious laugh. You know those laughs you hear once and hope you get to hear it again before you leave that person's presence? That was Emilie. Her father Robbie described her as bright, creative, and loving. She always wanted to try new things, so much so that at 6 years old she was actually learning Portuguese. Her father was trying to teach her that and it was part of their bond.

She was an artist. She loved to draw with markers and she was talented. At 2 years old, she could write her own name and she could draw stick figures of her family. She loved art so much that her parents Robbie and Alissa have decided to spend a part of their period of mourning and time after that to set up a fund that honors her creativity. As I said earlier today, what is amazing is that so many of these families have dedicated big portions of their time in the horrible 4 months since trying to figure out ways to bring out some of the goodness and light from these kids' lives to the rest of the community. So Robbie and Alissa have set up a fund that is going to support art programs in schools, so art programs have a little more resources so other kids similar to their daughter can experience the joys of drawing and painting. She was learning Portuguese. This is somebody with a very inquisitive, thoughtful mind, and we never are going to get to know who Emilie Parker was going to grow up to be.

Jack Pinto was 6 years old, and he was already a jock. He loved the New York Giants, and he had an idol whose name is Victor Cruz. He loved Victor Cruz. He followed everything Victor Cruz did. He was ecstatic when the Giants won the Super Bowl and Cruz played a big part. Victor was wonderful enough in the days following the tragedy to honor Jack's memory. During the game after the tragedy, he wore writing on his cleats and his gloves that said: Jack Pinto, my hero. Jack was buried in a Victor Cruz jersey.

He was also a wrestler. I didn't even know that you wrestled at 6 years old, but Jack did, and he was pretty good at it. To show how tough Jack was, in one of his practices, he lost a tooth. When a 6-year-old loses a tooth, you would think that would start the tears flowing. But Jack didn't cry when he lost that tooth. He just took the tooth, handed it to his coach, and went back wrestling with a gapped-tooth smile on his face. That was Jack. He was tough. He was an athlete. He had perseverance. Imagine who Jack Pinto was going to be when he grew up. We are not going to know because of what happened that day.

I get it. I know there is a risk of overselling policy change. I don't want to make it sound like I am coming down to the floor and telling you these stories because these kids are going to come back to life if we pass some bill or that we are going to guarantee this doesn't happen again. I don't want to oversell what we are going to do.

But the 3,300 people who have died since Newtown should tell us that enough is enough and that we should try something. Even if we are not absolutely, 100 percent, ironclad guaranteed that what we are going to do is going to work, we should try something. Because it is not OK that somebody can walk into a school with a military-style assault weapon and shoot bullets at the rate of six per second. It is not OK that a couple students can do an end-around on the background check system to buy guns so they can walk into their high school and kill 10 people and wound as many more. It is not all right that there are thousands of illegal guns on our streets that are used to kill 16- and 17-year-olds on their way home from Sweet 16 parties. There are no guarantees that what we are going to do this week and next week is going to solve everything, but we have to try something.

So I am going to continue to come down to the floor over the course of the next few days to talk about these victims—the victims from Newtown, from Columbine. Hopefully, later today I will be able to talk about some of the victims from Virginia Tech and Wisconsin. Of course, there are just binders full of stories that we could put on this floor regarding urban gun violence that plagues our cities every day. These stories are important because too often we trade in this body in statistics, that we just talk in terms of politics. Underlying this debate are 20 little kids in Newtown whose lives were cut short but also thousands upon thousands of other kids, young adults, and adults whose stories deserve to be told.

At this point, I yield the floor and 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. SESSIONS. 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. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the President submitted his budget today. It is very late. It was due February 4. It is the first time since the Budget Act was passed in 1974 that a President submitted a budget after the Senate has voted on one and after the House has voted on one and both passed budget resolutions. That was a disappointing event. The President, as the Chief Executive, as any mayor, as any Governor normally that I have ever heard of, wants to be the one who lays out a financial plan for his city or State to advocate for what would make the State and city better and then encourage the members of the board of directors—the Senate and the House—to evaluate his plan and support it so they can put the country and the State and the city on a sound financial path. Once again, we have had a very irresponsible approach from the President on the question of budgeting.

A few weeks ago, this Senate passed a budget for the first time in 4 years. The law requires that the Senate bring up a budget in committee by April 1. It requires that it be brought to the floor and passed by April 15. This is the first time in 4 years that process has been completed; whereas, every year the House of Representatives has produced a budget, a responsible budget that would put America on a sound financial course.

This year the Senate passed a budget that was irresponsible, did not change the debt course of America, left an annual deficit virtually the same as if we had no budget at all. It did not improve current law. The Senate budget left us with a very substantial budget deficit in the 10th year of the budget.

On the other hand, the House, Congressman PAUL RYAN, chairman of the Budget Committee, produced a budget that balances in 10 years. We have heard great complaints that his plan cuts spending too much. Do you know that plan did not cut spending? It allows spending to increase every year for 10 years. It allowed spending to increase at the rate of 3.4 percent a year, which is higher than the inflation rate is expected to be in America. Yet it balances.

The Senate budget, on the other hand, has a 5-percent-plus increase in spending every year, leaving us on an unsustainable debt path, leaving us increasing deficits every year, nowhere close to balancing the budget. That is not the right path.

What happened today when the President produced his budget? It is no better, maybe even worse, than the Senate bill. For example, in his budget it would add, over the 10-year period, $8.2 trillion in new debt to the Nation. We now have already $17 trillion in gross debt. This would add another $8.2 trillion to it; over $25 trillion will then be the debt of the United States. The 1-year interest in 2023, under the President's budget, would amount to $763 billion.

The base defense budget is about $540 billion; $763 billion exceeds Social Security—which is the largest expenditure. It exceeds Medicare in spending. It would be the largest single item in the budget and the fastest growing. It is still assuming relatively low interest rates, which are extraordinarily low at this moment but could surge in the future and would hurt us substantially.

How much is that? We now spend about $3.7 trillion, so $763 billion is a lot of money just to pay the interest. The Federal highway bill today is about $40 billion, a little over $40 billion. Interest on the debt would be $763 billion in 1 year.

Young people, we are indeed borrowing from their future to spend and live high today on the theory somehow it will be paid back in the future by the people there. How will it be paid back, interest of $763 billion in 1 year? This is not responsible. It is an unsustainable course.

Erskine Bowles, who was chosen by President Obama to head the fiscal commission, former President Bill Clinton's Chief of Staff, a successful businessman, he told us in the Budget Committee a couple years ago this Nation is on an unsustainable course. This Nation ''has never faced a more predictable financial crisis.''

What he is saying is that if we do not change the course we are on, it is guaranteed we are going to have a financial crisis and we should avoid that. We have the opportunity to avoid that. We do not have to slash spending, as Congressman RYAN has made clear in his budget. You can allow spending to increase faster than the growth of inflation and still balance the budget. But, oh no, not here, not the President of the United States, not the Members of this Senate, the majority. They say we cannot live with a 3.4-percent increase in spending every year. We will run the risk.

The President said recently he was not setting a balanced budget as a goal. That is absolutely true because his budget does not balance. It never comes close to balancing, has no intention of it balancing ever. They use the words ''sustainable balance,'' but it is not a responsible approach to the business of America. I will talk a minute about some of the dangers of this debt beyond just the fact that interest is going to suck huge amounts of money out of our annual budget that we ought to be using to invest in America.

How do they do it? When you eliminate the accounting gimmicks and honestly look at the budget presented by the President today, over 10 years, the net deficit reduction is only $119 billion. Each year that is about $12 billion in deficit reduction. The deficit last year, 2012, was 1,080 billion—1,000-plus billion, and we are going to average an $12 billion reduction in the deficit under this budget? That is virtually nothing. Properly accounted for, properly analyzed, based on the current law, I am correct in giving you those numbers. It is not an unfair number.

What about this year that we are in, 2013, that will end September 30? Does he cut anything from our spending level this year? No. Spending and debt increases. The debt is projected to increase, between now and September 30, by $61 billion, more than where it would be under current. So it increases the debt this year.

What about next year? Does it increase or reduce the deficit? It increases the deficit again by approximately $100 billion-plus—$100 billion. I believe that figure is correct. I might be incorrect on that figure, but it definitely increases the deficit this year by $61 billion.

Taxes go up by $1.1 trillion—$1,100 billion—in new taxes. So taxes go up

$1.1 trillion, on top of the $650 billion in new taxes that were passed in January of this year and on top of the $1 trillion in new taxes passed as part of ObamaCare, the health care reform.

That is another huge tax increase. But we are told not to worry because this is a balanced plan. As we talked about the budget plan that was on the floor—and we had 50 hours of debate, a lot of amendments, a lot of discussion—our colleagues kept using the word ''balanced.'' They refer to their budget, the majority's—Democratic budget that they laid forward, they used ''balanced'' over and over again. I put up a chart. The numbers kept running up. We got to 100, 200 times the word ''balanced'' was used in 15 or 18 hours of debate on their side; ''balanced,'' over 200 times.

My staff went back and reviewed the numbers and it was 230 times. What do they mean by the word ''balanced''? Why did they use the word ''balanced''? Because some pollster somewhere, some political consultant, said people like to hear that. They want a balanced budget.

Their budget didn't balance, nowhere close. So they had several spins on it,—first, they wanted a lot of people who were not following closely to hear the word ''balanced'' and believed they had a balanced budget when they didn't come close to having a budget that balanced. They never said the budget balanced because they knew that was not true. They had deficits every year, $400 billion-plus every year. So a balanced approach was what I think people who kind of kept up with things believed—that we would raise taxes by $1 trillion, we would cut spending by $1 trillion, and this would be a balanced approach. This is the way to reduce our debt and deficit: raise taxes and cut spending. That is the responsible balanced approach to getting our fiscal house in order.

But that is not what the budget did. The budget increased taxes by $1.1 trillion—$1,100 billion—but it increased spending by $964 billion. It did not cut spending at all. It increased spending. Basically, we ended up with only $119 billion in deficit reduction over 10 years—zero, basically, an insignificant amount. So it increases taxes and increases spending. It is the classic Democratic weakness, I have to say: Tax; spend. Tax more; spend more. Don't worry about the deficit.

But somebody needs to be worrying about the deficit because it is a very important matter and we have to deal with it. This morning at the Budget Committee we had a new nominee, Ms. Sylvia Burwell, for the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, one of the most important positions in the entire government. She is a delightful lady and I know she wants to do well. She held a position in that office some time ago under President Clinton, a deputy position, and she had some experience in it, but it is a tough job. We need somebody who can whip these agencies and departments into shape. The OMB is the one who answers to the President. The OMB is the one who says: Mr. Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Secretary of Defense, we don't have that much money. You can't spend that much money. I send your budget back to you. Take another $10 billion, take another $5 billion out of it. They are the heavies. So she is asking for a tough job, no doubt about it.

At that hearing, I talked a little bit about a great concern of mine. My concern is that our debt is so large now that it is pulling down economic growth in America. Let me repeat that. Our debt is so high it is pulling down economic growth, and slow growth means fewer jobs created. The difference between 2 percent growth and 3 percent growth is 1 million jobs, according to Christina Romer, who served President Obama in the White House: So the more growth we have, the more jobs are created. The less growth we have, fewer jobs are created.

We had a disastrous jobs report last Friday. It was terrible and deeply disappointing. What it said was we added 88,000 jobs when they were predicting we would add about 200,000. But more significantly, 486,000 people dropped out of the labor force, had given up finding work—almost one-half million, and less than 100,000 got a job. That was a very dangerous trend.

It comes around to this question: Is our debt so high that it adversely impacts economic growth? Let me explain it this way. The Rogoff-Reinhart study and book that they wrote analyzes debt in America and it calculated it and over the world. They examined economies worldwide. What they found was that when debt reaches 90 percent of the size of your economy, 90 percent of GDP, growth begins to slow. It slows a median amount of 1 percent, on average much more, as much as 2 percent. Growth—GDP growth begins to slow when debt reaches that high a level.

What kind of debt level is it we are dealing with? Many people think, and the President keeps saying, our debt-to-GDP ratio is 77 percent.

We have examined the Rogoff and Reinhart study. Rogoff and Reinhart used a higher figure because they compared countries from around the world, and those were the numbers they had. When the gross debt reaches 90 percent of GDP, we begin to have an economic decline. Our percentage of gross debt to GDP is 104 percent.

I contend and I believe that the projections for growth for the last 4 years have all been higher than the growth we have actually seen. In fact, it has been much lower than projected—even by the President and the Congressional Budget Office. It appears to me that the gross debt figure being over 100 percent is indicative of a slowing growth.

Rogoff and Reinhart are not the only ones who have done studies. Others have done studies as well. Europe has high debt rates. Per capita, we have more debt than any country in Europe and even more than Greece.

There have been studies in Europe. The International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the Bank for International Settlements all have economists, and they are concerned about high debt in Europe. They have also been analyzing these figures. All three of those, through an independent process of analyzing the impact of high debt on economic growth—studies indicated that high debt slows growth. Well, how much? Looking at each one of those three studies, the U.S. debt is in the range that pulls down growth.

I say to my colleagues today, please be aware that there is a cost to borrowing and spending and adding debt.

The budget the President submitted today would add $8.2 trillion in debt. It would take us from $17 trillion to $25 trillion in debt. Even with a growing economy, we would still remain well over 90 percent GDP to debt, and that is an unacceptable figure.

It is deeply disappointing that we do not have leadership in the White House that would lead us to get off of this path.

Mr. President, I see the majority leader is here. I know he has extraordinary duties and challenges in his busy life, and I will just wrap up and say that I am disappointed in the President's budget. It does not change the debt course of America in any way. It is not a responsible plan for the future. It does not balance the budget ever and has no intention of ever balancing the budget. All he talks about is some sort of sustainable debt course. We cannot continue on that course, as Mr. Erskine Bowles, his own fiscal commission chairman, has told us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate my friend yielding. My time on the floor is going to be very brief.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE NOMINATION

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 4 p.m. today the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 59; that 2 hours of debate be equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. 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. MURPHY. Mr. President, I gave my first speech on the floor of the Senate this morning. This week and next week, we will be debating one of the most fundamental issues that come to a body such as this: What can we do to better protect our kids and our loved ones from unexpected death? I care about this issue not just because it is one that is important to the families of victims in New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, and others who have been the victims of routine gun violence in Connecticut but, of course, because of what happened in Sandy Hook.

I spoke this morning more broadly about the awful experience of being in Connecticut, the personal experience of having been at the firehouse that day, the wonderful experience of having gotten to know the families of the Sandy Hook victims since then, and to have witnessed the millions of acts of kindness that have showered down upon Newtown in the days and weeks and months since. That tragedy has become the tipping point that has brought us here to talk about a solution to at least some of the epidemic gun violence that for too long has plagued the streets of our cities but now comes to us in waves of mass shootings happening in our schools and in our movie theaters and in our places of worship.

My hope, as a brandnew Member of the Senate, as someone who has lived through this experience as one of the representatives of Sandy Hook, is to just try to tell my colleagues whom we are talking about here. I think we get caught up in the numbers and the policy debates and we forget these are real kids, these are real people.

This is just a small sample of the victims in Newtown and the victims from across Connecticut, in Bridgeport and in New Haven, who have been gunned down prematurely. There are just too many of them. Over 3,300 people have died from guns since those 20 kids and six adults were killed in Newtown. We are not powerless. We can do something about it.

I have said over and over as I have been here on the floor today that there are no guarantees. We are not going to pass a law that is going to immediately flip a switch and assure that gun violence would not continue to be a problem, but it can be less of a problem. It can be less of a reality for kids who are walking to school fearing for their lives in urban America. It can be less of a reality for parents sending their children to elementary school, never thinking that something like what happened at Sandy Hook could occur. We can do something about it.

So I wanted to come back again to continue talking about the victims, to give them a face. I am very encouraged, as I think all of us are, to see some movement between both parties coming together on one element of this debate: background checks. Hopefully, this will be looked upon as a very good week in the midst of this debate. So I want to tell my colleagues whom we are talking about.

Let me go back to Newtown. I think this is my fourth time on the Senate floor today, and I still haven't told my colleagues about everybody who perished in that school.

The youngest victim that day was barely 6 years old. His name was Noah Pozner. He was the youngest victim and he was the first to be buried. His was the first funeral I went to amongst countless funerals I lost count of. He was young, but he was described by his uncle as ''smart as a whip.'' He had a real rambunctious streak. He could be a handful for his family and for his twin sister Arielle who was also in that school on Friday morning. She was luckily in a different class. Arielle survived; her brother did not.

He was already a very good reader. He was one of the youngest kids in his first grade class, but he was a very good reader and he was looking forward to a book he had just bought at a book fair. I will butcher the pronunciation, but it was a Ninjago book he bought at a fair he was excited about.

He was going to a birthday party on the following day, Saturday, that he was just bubbling about in the hours before he went to school. As is true for so many of the victims, his family describes him as having a huge heart. The Pozners are an amazing family who have spoken out. His mother and his uncle have been so articulate since the shooting, calling on the Nation to change. They have been in Washington visiting my office, and I know they have visited with other Members of the Senate—just another one of these families who have somehow found the courage and the strength amidst this awful grieving to come here and explain why things need to change, how they will not feel any justice until we do something here.

Caroline Previdi loved to draw and to dance. She was 6 years old as well. She had one of these big smiles that everybody loved. It brought happiness to everybody who saw that smile. She and her family were active members of the St. Rose Church. I can't tell my colleagues enough about St. Rose Church. About 10 of the victims were parishioners there. This hit that church harder than any institution save for the school. The monsignor there has been an absolute hero to the community, having buried almost a dozen of his kids. He has come down to Washington to try to lobby for some sense of change, and he has brought that community together.

At that funeral he presided over, everybody wore pink. It was Caroline's favorite color. My colleagues have heard me say that about a number of little girls who died, a lot of whom were big fans of the color pink. Her mom will always remember Caroline as the shadow of her older brother. Sometimes to his dismay, she followed him around everywhere and she adored him. Her brother Walker and she were big New York Yankees fans. Even though she was only 6 years old, when her family recently went to Boston for a family trip, she refused to walk into Fenway Park because she was a devoted Yankees fan.

Caroline had a wonderful spirit and we will never know exactly what she would grow up to be. She died that day.

Jessica Rekos was 6 years old and, as do so many little 6-year-old girls, she loved everything about animals. Again, another trend. This was a couple of first grade classes full of animal lovers, and even some of their teachers were big animal lovers as well.

Jessica loved horses. So anything having to do with a horse, she wanted it. She watched movies about horses, she read books about horses, she drew pictures about horses, and she wrote stories about horses. She was murdered just 11 days before Christmas. She was hoping that Santa would bring her a cowgirl hat and cowgirl boots, and her family even promised her that maybe, if she was really good, in a couple years she could get her own horse.

She loved going to Cape Cod and she especially loved seeing the whales. She had a fondness for aquatic life as well, a big fan of the movie ''Free Willie,'' and she loved going to the cape to see if she could catch a glimpse of those whales.

She was curious. That curiosity was going to spring forth into a wonderful young woman who was going to take her loves and her curiosity and her passion for life and make it into something great. We will never get to know exactly what that would be. Jessica died at age 6.

Ana Marquez-Greene, I talked about Ana this morning in my first speech. Her mother Nelba, who is just amazing—Nelba is a social worker who has a passion for helping people. She is in DC right now as we speak trying to push us to change things. Her little daughter Ana grew up in a musical family. Ana's father Jimmy is a very well known saxophone player, a Hartford native. The family came back to Connecticut to raise their kids. So Ana was musical. She used to love to sing and dance. She loved most of all doing that at church. She was so connected to her church. She loved reading the Bible. She loved having the Bible read to her. She loved being part of the dance and singing experience at her church. Her parents said she didn't walk anywhere. That was not her method of transportation. Her mode of transport was to dance from place to place.

She is survived by her older brother Isaiah who is a third grader at Sandy Hook Elementary and who survived that day. My colleagues can find Ana's performances on YouTube. Ana's performances have been viewed tens of hundreds of thousands of times online.

She was a talent. She had talent in her blood. Who knows whether she was going to choose music and dance as a career, but those creative muscles she had and the amazing parents who were raising her were going to assure that she was going to be something special. She died that day, horribly, but her family—her mother Nelba especially—is just determined to make sure we honor her memory by doing something here.

Five kids escaped Sandy Hook Elementary School that day out of those classrooms. Eleven kids—around that number—survived. Six of them hid in a closet, but five of them escaped because the shooter had to reload. When he reloaded, he perhaps fumbled the exchange, and five kids ran out of a classroom and were discovered nearby some moments later. Five children—unfortunately, none of those pictured in this poster—are alive today because as does happen in so many of these mass shootings, an opportunity presented itself when the shooter changed magazines.

I wish we didn't have to get into the detailed nuances of how these mass shootings play out to try to find a way out of mass violence, but we do because they are happening over and over. So we now have some experience. We now, to our great horror, have some data.

Empirically we know what happens. And what happened in Sandy Hook that killed Ana and Jessica and Noah and Caroline and so many others is that he had trouble reloading, five kids escaped, and either at the end of the 10 minutes because he had trouble reloading, or maybe just because the police were coming in, he decided enough was enough and shot himself. In Tucson, when the shooter reloaded, it was enough time for somebody to jump on him and end that incident. In Aurora, again, when the shooter had difficulty reloading—the gun jammed—the shooting ended.

So 154 bullets in 10 minutes at Sandy Hook Elementary School killed 26 people. The shooter had to reload about six times. What would have happened if he had to reload 15 times? How many more kids would have escaped? How many more opportunities would we have had for the shooting to go wrong? Would there have been a moment where somebody could have jumped on him and stopped him, as they did in Tucson? I don't know the answer to these questions. Nobody knows the answer to these questions. But they are important ones to ask because they are relevant to the conversation we are having. If the answer is that there is a pretty good chance one of those three things would have happened—the gun would have jammed, kids would have escaped, or somebody could have stopped the shooting—then we should think twice before dismissing the idea that a limitation on the size of magazines sold in this Nation wouldn't have an effect on future mass shootings.

Our first job should be to stop that shooting from happening in the first place. But given the fact we are living in this terrible, awful reality in which they are happening on a regular basis, then we have to be talking about what we can do to limit the damage and the carnage when they do occur.

I will tell my colleagues while no one is sure of the difference in outcome at Sandy Hook had the assault weapons ban still been in effect, there are plenty of parents there who do believe there is a pretty good chance some of their kids might still be alive had that bill still been in effect. Remember, these were guns and clips purchased legally. For all the arguments that all the laws on the books aren't going to stop criminals, I am not sure Nancy Lanza was going to go onto the black market to purchase an AR–15 or ammunition that was illegal. Things could have been different.

But as we know, every day there are more people killed in this country by guns than were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary that day. I will tell my colleagues that I have heard some very visceral anger from parents and gun victims in the cities I represent because they rightfully wonder why we are talking about this issue now—after Sandy Hook—when, for the last 20 years, young men and women have been getting gunned down in our cities and it didn't seem as though this place stood up and cared too much about it. They welcome the conversation, but they wonder where all of this compassion was when people such as Ronnie Chambers were being killed.

Ronnie Chambers was 33 years old when he was shot in January 2012. He grew up with his mom and his siblings in Chicago's notorious Cabrini-Green housing projects and he became involved in the gang problem at a young age. But he had to watch something that no one should ever have to watch.

You think it is terrible that Noah Pozner's twin sister has to grow up with the knowledge that her brother was gunned down. Think about what Ronnie Chambers had to grow up with, having watched his other three siblings die at the hands of gun violence.

Ronnie became convinced, after watching his three other siblings die from gun violence, that he had to turn his life around. So he did. He went into the music industry and he became a music producer and he decided to go even further and to start to mentor young performers.

People remember him in the industry as ''everybody's hero.'' He was always ''pointing kids in the right direction'' despite his own difficult upbringing.

He was fun too. He loved banana milkshakes and onion rings. Then he was killed—the fourth of four siblings to be gunned down in and around Chicago. Four brothers and sisters: His brother Carlos shot in 1995; his brother Jerome shot in 2000; his sister LaToya shot just 3 months after Jerome; and then Ronnie, dead at 33.

How about Amber Deanna Stanley, who was killed last summer in Kettering, MD. She was spending a nice, quiet evening at home when a gunman literally kicked down her door and opened fire. She was shot multiple times while she was in her bed. She was 17 years old—17. She just started her senior year at Flowers High School in Springdale, MD. She was enrolled in a very elite science and technology program.

It is crazy, but this is probably the third or fourth or fifth young woman I have talked about here today—and I am probably into 30 or 40 people I have talked about—another young woman who was pursuing a career in engineering and science. She had big dreams. She was an honors student. She was in AP classes, and she wanted to go to Harvard University and maybe become a doctor. She had the grades to do it. She could have gone anywhere she wanted.

She was also very popular. She was a kid whom people were drawn to. She was a peer leader and she would do wonderful, magnanimous things for her classmates, such as she would bring cupcakes to them somewhat spontaneously.

One classmate said three words: ''She was amazing''—until August 23 of last year, a gunman kicked down her door, opened fire, and Amber was gone.

How about Angela Player, 37 years old, shot on February 21 of this year, an avid reader who also loved the outdoors, gardening, and kayaking. She was a fan of everything fun and exciting—fast cars. She liked training dogs. She was killed by her ex-husband.

A lot of these are random killings, but a lot of these killings are by somebody you know. Her ex-husband actually did not have a history of domestic violence but had a gun ready and available in a fit of rage, and she left behind a son and a daughter.

Mr. President, 3,300 people have died since Newtown, and I think it is important, as we have this debate, to come down and talk about who these victims are. I will be doing this over the course of today and tomorrow and this week to try to bring a little bit of color to the discussion we are having.

At this time, I yield back the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague, Senator MURPHY, who gave his first speech on the floor of the Senate this morning on the same topic. He is eminently qualified to speak to this issue because of his unhappy circumstance of being a Senator-elect when the Newtown, CT, massacre occurred. I have spoken to him and Senator BLUMENTHAL about their personal life experiences and memories they will never forget about that day and those that followed.

I thank him for his voice on this issue, for his inspiration, and for speaking for many in Newtown, CT, and across the Nation who otherwise might not have as strong a voice on the floor of the Senate. I thank the Senator very much for that.

I would like to speak as in morning business briefly and then return to the underlying bill on firearms. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

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

REMEMBERING ROBERT REMINI

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in an interview with Roll Call newspaper a while back, Robert Remini—one of the great historians of our time—talked about what he hoped for after he died. Professor Remini said his idea of Heaven would be listening with his own ears to debates involving congressional giants such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun.

On March 28—Holy Thursday—Robert Remini died in a suburban Chicago hospital from complications of a recent stroke at the age of 91.

I hope his wish comes true. I hope right now he is listening in awe somewhere in Heaven as the great issues are debated in the Great Beyond.

Robert Remini lived a good and full life. He spent most of his career at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he founded the university's respected Institute for the Humanities. He produced a remarkable body of work that brought important chapters of America's history to life.

In 2002, at the age of 80, Professor Remini became a distinguished visiting scholar of American history at the Library of Congress.

At the request of Librarian of Congress James Billington, Professor Remini spent the next 3 years writing the history of the House of Representatives. That is where I met him. What a man, a great historian, a great personality, with a smile on his face every minute of the day.

Professor Remini was once asked how he found the stamina to start writing another book at the age of 80. He said he started by setting a goal for himself to write nine pages a day. Then he did what he had been taught by the Jesuits who trained him. He designed a plan to reward success and punish failure. This historian, this writer, this man who had assigned himself nine pages a day, would only get his reward at the end of the day—a martini—if he met his goal of nine pages.

His system worked. ''The House'' was published in the year 2006.

In 2005, House Speaker Dennis Hastert, from Illinois, asked Professor Remini to become the official Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives. The post of House Historian had been empty for more than 10 years. Over the next 5 years, Professor Remini rebuilt the office's small staff and reestablished its reputation for impartial scholarship and integrity.

He retired from the House in 2010, but he kept writing until shortly before his death.

In all, he wrote and coauthored more than 20 books. His subjects included Presidents John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren, House Speaker Henry Clay, Senator and statesman Daniel Webster, and Mormon leader Joseph Smith.

As one former colleague said, he wrote with such immediacy ''that you might think he'd had lunch . . . with Martin Van Buren. He is an American treasure.''

The subject that interested him the most, though, was none of those great figures but Andrew Jackson. At least 10 of Professor Remini's books were about Jackson, including an influential three-volume biography, the third volume of which won the National Book Award for nonfiction in 1984.

To Professor Remini, Andrew Jackson was ''the embodiment of the new American.'' He was:

> An orphan, poor, and yet talented, who through his own abilities, raised himself to the highest office in the land. He personified what the American Dream is all about. That it is not class or money or bloodlines that are rewarded in [America], but rather the ability of each individual to achieve something worthwhile in life.

Professor Remini did not excuse Jackson for his backward views on slavery or women's rights or his harsh treatment of Native Americans.

He regarded Jackson as admirable because:

> He believed in this Union. He believed in this country. . . . [H]e . . . believed that government shouldn't be for only a small segment of society, but for all of us. That's what I want in [a] President.

So said Professor Remini.

Robert Vincent Remini was born in New York City. He graduated from Fordham University in 1943. He wanted to be a lawyer, but that changed after he enlisted in the Navy during World War II. To pass the time on board ship, he read history, including all nine volumes of Henry Adams' ''History of the United States of America.'' By the time the war ended, he knew it was history, not law, that he loved the most.

He returned to New York to obtain his master's and doctorate in history from Columbia University, and he married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth Kuhner. He taught at Fordham University for 12 years.

In 1965, he moved to Chicago and became the first chair of the history department at the newly established University of Illinois at Chicago's Circle Campus. He later founded the university's interdisciplinary Institute for the Humanities. He chaired that from 1981 to 1987. He became a professor emeritus of history and research professor emeritus of humanities in 1991.

He was an institution, not only in the field of history but certainly in Chicago and at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

In addition to the National Book Award, his other honors include the Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation Award, the Carl Sandburg Award for Nonfiction, the University Scholar Award of the University of Illinois, the American Historical Association's Award for Scholarly Distinction, and the Freedom Award from the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

Professor Remini's wife Ruth passed away last year. I wish to express my condolences to their children, Robert, Elizabeth, and Joan, their three grandchildren, and to Professor Remini's friends, colleagues, and former students. I will close with this: In 2003, the National Endowment for the Humanities invited Professor Remini to deliver its inaugural ''Heroes of History'' lecture. He chose as his subject the Members of the first Congress.

This is part of what he said of those men in whose footsteps many of us follow:

> Ordinary. Most of them were ordinary individuals as far as the record shows, yet they performed heroically. And they deserve to be called heroes because they set aside their local and regional differences, their economic and personal prejudices, in their effort to make the Constitution succeed and thereby establish an enduring union. They had many disagreements, but they resolved them in compromise. And they did it for the sake of showing the world that a republican government was a viable instrument for the protection of liberty and betterment of its citizens.

If Professor Remini were here today, he would tell us that the spirit of principled compromise is more than a noble part of our past; it is the best hope for our future.

Now I will make a statement as part of the continuing debate on the outstanding legislation, S. 649.

As I mentioned before when Senator MURPHY spoke, I rise to speak about a vote the Senate is going to take tomorrow as we begin debating legislation to reduce gun violence.

I am glad we are finally having this vote. There were some who thought we would never reach this point. It has been far too long since the Senate held a reasonable debate on how best to protect our children and families and schools and communities from violent shootings.

When we talk to the families who have lost children to gunfire—and it has been my sad duty to do that over and over again—and when we talk to law enforcement officials who are getting outgunned by criminals on the streets every day, we know this debate is long overdue.

Some Senators have said they do not want to touch this issue. They have announced their intention to filibuster in order to try to stop us from even debating gun safety. This is an extreme political position. It is an unfortunate position. But, fortunately, over the last few days, a growing number of Senators from both sides of the aisle have made it clear this debate is going to move forward.

I hope the vote tomorrow reflects that, and when we get to the point where we are in debate, we can roll up our sleeves and get to work. We can look at our Constitution, which we have sworn to uphold, including the second amendment, and we can also look to the needs of America to protect the life, liberty, and opportunity for happiness for the people who live in this country.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, over 11,000 Americans—11,000—are murdered with guns each year. That is more each year than all the American lives lost in the 9/11 attacks, Iraq, and Afghanistan combined.

When we count suicides and accidental shootings, more than 31,000 Americans are killed by guns each year. That is 87 Americans killed every single day by guns. Another 200 are shot each day but survive. Think of those numbers.

Gun violence in America is truly at epidemic levels. Gunshots now kill over four times more Americans per year than HIV/AIDS, and shooting deaths are projected to surpass car accident deaths within the next few years.

These statistics should give us all pause. But numbers cannot truly capture the deeply personal impact of gun violence. There are too many families who now face an empty chair at the dinner table, too many parents who walk past an empty bedroom, too many husbands and wives who have lost the loves of their lives because of guns.

It is heartbreaking. But, sadly, it is almost routine—in a park in Chicago; at a nightclub in my hometown of East St. Louis, IL; in a movie theater in Auroro, CO; in a shopping center in Tucson, AZ; in a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, WI; at military bases in Texas, Virginia, and Kentucky; in college lecture halls in DeKalb, IL, and Blacksburg, VA; sadly, in the first-grade classrooms in Newtown, CT.

Since the Newtown shooting on December 14, more than 3,300 Americans have been killed by guns, including at least 220 children and teenagers. The violence continues. Americans all across the country are saying with one voice: Enough. We have to do something. We need to protect our kids, our communities, our schools, and this epidemic of gun violence has to come to an end.

On Thursday, we will vote to begin debate on a bill that would take commonsense steps to prevent gun violence. It is called the Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act. The Senate Judiciary Committee reported the parts of the bill last month. The committee held three lengthy hearings and four markups which I attended.

The Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act would do three things: First, it makes sure that the FBI NICS background check programs are conducted on all gun sales with some reasonable exceptions. Currently, up to 40 percent of all transfers of firearms include no background check. Someone raised the point in one of our hearings, what if you got on the airplane and they announced to you—the flight attendant said: Welcome to this flight from Washington to Chicago. The Transportation Security Agency has checked 60 percent of the passengers to make sure they are not carrying a bomb but not the other 40 percent. Have a nice flight. What would you think about it? You would think, for goodness' sake, we have to do everything we can to check everyone if we are truly dedicated to safety. That is what this universal background check is about.

We would also create tough Federal criminal penalties for illegal straw purchasing and the trafficking of guns. Get the picture. If you are going to buy a gun from a licensed dealer, they are going to run a background check on you. If your background check discloses, for example, that you have a felony conviction or that you are under a domestic violence order or that have you been adjudged mentally incompetent, unstable, and you should not own a gun, you will not be sold that gun.

Since we came up with this idea of background checks, up to 2 million unqualified people tried to buy them and we stopped them. That is what the law is supposed to do. But under the current circumstances, straw purchasers go in and buy a gun because they have a clean record. So the gangster, the mobster, the drug gang member, the thug sends his girlfriend in to buy the gun. She does not have a criminal record. She buys the gun, comes outside and hands it to him. He turns around and uses it to kill someone. This bill is going to change what happens to her. Of course, he is still going to face the full brunt of the law for his misdeeds. But she is now going to be held accountable, too, up to 15 years of hard time in Federal prison for buying that gun.

We had a press conference in Chicago and said: Girlfriend, think twice. He ain't worth it. To run the risk of spending 15 years in prison if you buy a gun to give to that boyfriend who is going to turn around and use it in a crime, it ain't worth it. This bill would also authorize additional resources to keep schools safe.

These proposals just make sense. They have strong support from the American public, including a majority of gun owners. The National Rifle Association may speak for the gun industry, but it does not speak for gun owners. Gun owners, and I know them. They are part of my family. I have grown up with them my entire life. They are good, God-fearing, churchgoing, patriotic Americans who value their guns and use them properly, store them safely at home away from kids. These are people who will follow the law. They understand we have to stop those who misuse guns from getting their hands on them. A majority of those gun owners across America, sportsmen, hunters, those who buy guns for self-defense support what we are doing in this bill.

The straw purchasing and school safety proposals passed in committee with strong bipartisan votes. I am hopeful we will be able to adopt the bipartisan floor amendment from Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY on background checks.

All these proposals are also supported by law enforcement. It was about 3 weeks ago. I went to the Chicago Police Department headquarters. Superintendent McCarthy invited me in. I sat down for about an hour with 10 beat cops from Chicago. They are ones who literally get up every morning and go, usually undercover, into neighborhoods and try to stop the murders and violence. I sat there. One of them had just gotten back from his 11th surgery. He got in a shootout with a 15-year-old who shattered his leg. He has had 11 surgeries trying to get back on his feet and get back on the force.

We talked about what life was like out there. They talked about 14- and 15-year-olds packing guns and firing away. They are not worth a darn as a shot. They, sadly, kill a lot of people they do not intend to kill. They are as irresponsible as they come, but it is the reality of the mean streets of many cities. So these people in law enforcement agree we need to do something about the straw purchasers, for example. So do the prosecutors, the medical community, the faith community, teachers, mayors, colleges, universities, and, most important, the family members of gun violence victims. Many of those family members from Newtown are here today. Senator MURPHY from Connecticut spoke earlier, as did Senator BLUMENTHAL, to note their persuasive lobbying as they walk the Halls of Congress, hoping the sad and awful tragedy they went through on December 14 will at least lead to a safer America.

I salute them. In their grief, they are standing up to make this a safer nation. Unfortunately, some parts of the gun lobby have had a long history of opposing even those commonsense ideas. They have raised objections to them. I want to respond to the main objections the gun lobby has raised. As it turns out, they just do not stand up to scrutiny.

First, the gun lobby claims that requiring FBI background checks for gun sales will lead to the creation of a national gun registry. That claim is absolutely totally false. Federal law prohibits the Federal Government from establishing a national gun registry. We could argue the merits of it, but we have to acknowledge the reality. It does not exist today. It will not exist as a result of this bill.

I have a copy of a letter signed by 30 Senators, including 26 Republicans. I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, November 3, 2011.

Hon. DANIEL INOUYE,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

Hon. BARBARA MIKULSKI,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

Hon. HAROLD ROGERS,
Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

Hon. FRANK WOLF,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Science, and Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN AND CHAIRWOMAN: As supporters of the Second Amendment and the rights of law-abiding gun owners, we are writing to urge the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to maintain several House-passed firearms provisions in the upcoming Conference Report on H.R. 2112, the legislative vehicle for the Fiscal Year 2012 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS), and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. While these provisions had broad, bipartisan support in the Senate, the amendments that would have reinstated these provisions in the Senate version of H.R. 2112 did not receive a vote.

Over the years, Congress has taken many actions to preserve Second Amendment rights and prevent undue encroachment on those rights on the part of the Executive Branch. One of the most common ways in which Congress has accomplished this goal has been through a number of general provisions in CJS Appropriations bills. Most of these protections have been in place for a number of years—some going back as far as three decades—and none of them have been the source of any significant controversy.

The House CJS Appropriations bill (H.R. 2596) made permanent nine separate Second Amendment protections. However, the Senate version of H.R. 2112 stripped the House language and extended these protections only through Fiscal Year 2012. We believe these protections should not be subject to yearly reinstatement, they should be permanently fixed in the law.

Specifically, the House-passed provisions would make permanent the following protections:

Firearms Database Prohibition. A prohibition on the use of funds to create, maintain or administer a database of firearms owners or their firearms. This prohibition has been in place since FY 1979 and prevents the federal government from establishing a national gun registry.

Curio and Relic Definition. A prohibition on the use of funds to change the definition of a ''curio or relic.'' This provision protects the status of collectible firearms for future generations of firearms collectors. This provision has been included since Fiscal Year 1997.

Physical Inventory Prohibition. Prohibition on a requirement to allow a physical inventory of Federal Firearms Licensees. The Clinton Administration proposed a rule in 2000 to require an annual inventory by all licensees, While the Bush Administration eventually withdrew the proposal, Congress has still passed this preventive provision every year, beginning in FY 2007.

Information Retrieval Prohibition. A prohibition on the use of funds to electronically retrieve personally identifying information gathered by federal firearms licensees. This provision prohibits the creation of a gun registry from dealers' records that are required by law to be surrendered to the federal government when a dealer goes out of business. This provision has been included since FY 1997.

Business Activity. A prohibition on the use of funds to deny a Federal Firearms License (FFL) or renewal of an FFL on the basis of business activity. This provision prohibits BATFE from denying federal firearms license applications or renewals based on a dealer's low business volume alone. Congress added this general provision in FY 2005.

Information Gathering Prohibition. A prohibition on the use of funds to maintain any information gathered as a part of an instant background check or to maintain information for more than 24 hours. This provision protects the privacy of law-abiding gun buyers by prohibiting information about legal gun purchases from being kept by government authorities. It has been included since FY 1999.

Firearms Trace Data Disclaimer. A requirement that any trace data released must include a disclaimer stating such trace data cannot be used to draw broad conclusion about firearms-related crime. This provision has been included since FY 2005.

Firearms Parts Export to Canada. A prohibition on the use of funds to require an export license for small firearms parts valued at less than $500 for export to Canada. This provision removed an unnecessary and burdensome requirement on U.S. gun manufacturers that was imposed under the Clinton Administration, It has been included since FY 2006.

Importation of Curios and Relics. A prohibition on the use of funds to arbitrarily deny importation of qualifying curio and relic firearms. This provision insures that collectible firearms that meet all legal requirements for importation into the United States are not prevented from import by Executive Branch fiat. This provision has been included since FY 2006.

Once again, these are non-controversial protective measures that have long had the support of members of both parties. Had a vote taken place, they most certainly would have been included in the Senate bill, Once again, we urge the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, particularly those who will serve on the upcoming Conference Committee on H.R. 2112, to work to ensure that the language making these protections permanent are included in the Conference Report.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Orrin G. Hatch; Johnny Isakson; Mark Begich; Jim DeMint; Michael B. Enzi; Lindsey Graham; Dean Heller; Rob Portman; John Barrasso; Mitch McConnell; Kelly Ayotte; Tom Coburn; Olympia Snowe; Ron Johnson; James M. Inhofe; Mike Johanns; Richard Burr; John Thune; Roger Wicker; Pat Roberts; John Boozman; Mike Lee; Jon Tester; Max Baucus; Saxby Chambliss; Chuck Grassley; Marco Rubio; Lisa Murkowski; David Vitter; Joe Manchin.

Mr. DURBIN. This letter, dated November 3, 2011, describes a number of longstanding prohibitions in Federal law. Let me quote the letter's description of two:

Firearms database prohibition. A prohibition on the use of funds to create, maintain or administer a database of firearm owners or their firearms. This prohibition has been in place since fiscal year 1979 and prevents the Federal Government from establishing a national gun registry.

Information gathering prohibition. A prohibition on the use of funds to maintain any information gathered as part of an instant background check or to maintain information for more than 24 hours. This provision protects the privacy of law-abiding gun buyers by providing information about legal gun purchases from being kept by government authorities, and has been included in the law since fiscal year 1999.

There you have it. This letter, signed by Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, Senators HATCH, INHOFE, GRASSLEY, DEMINT, and many others, showed that the claims about a national gun registry are baseless. There is no evidence of such a registry. Longstanding Federal laws prevent the creation of it. Anyone who continues to claim the FBI background check will lead to a national gun registry should be shown this letter signed by Republican Senators.

Second, the gun lobby claims these proposals would unduly burden law-abiding gun owners. What is the burden? In 2011, the FBI reported the background check system had an instant determination rate of 91.5 percent. That means 91 percent-plus of background checks were resolved in a matter of minutes. For those other background checks where the dealer is instructed to temporarily delay the sale to allow for a more thorough check, the FBI must give a response within 3 days or the sale will be allowed to go through. In other words, a background check is, at most, a minor temporary inconvenience to a small percentage of law-abiding Americans.

Meanwhile, the public safety and law enforcement benefits of background checks are enormous. Background checks have stopped unlawful users from buying guns over 1.5 million times. There is no reason for law-abiding Americans to worry about tougher penalties for straw purchases and gun trafficking. Those activities are already illegal and law-abiding Americans will not be engaged in them.

In short, the proposals before the Senate will not burden law-abiding gun owners. They will help to save lives, reduce crime, and keep guns from the hands of those who misuse them.

Third claim by the gun lobby. They claim we should not pass any new gun laws until there is more enforcement of the laws on the books. I am all for that. But it is blatantly hypocritical of the gun lobby to say we should just enforce the gun laws on the books when they constantly work to weaken those same laws.

For example, in the last few years, the gun lobby has gotten Congress to change the laws on the books to repeal the Reagan-era prohibition on loaded guns in national parks, to require Amtrak to allow guns to be transported on their trains, to give the gun industry unprecedented immunity from liability under civil law, and to pass appropriations riders which make it harder for law enforcement agencies to enforce gun laws, such as the ludicrous Tiahrt amendment that prevents information sharing about even traces of guns used in the commission of crimes.

Not only does the gun lobby try to get Congress to undo the gun laws on

the books, it has also supported court challenges to these same laws across the country.

Here is the best example: The gun lobby claims to be outraged that there are not more Federal prosecutions when a person tries to buy a gun but is denied by the FBI NICS background check. The Federal agency that reviews those NICS denial cases to see whether they merit prosecution is the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, or ATF. As we all know, the gun lobby has gone to great political lengths to make it harder for the ATF to do its job. The gun lobby has blocked ATF from getting a Senate-confirmed Director for six straight years. They have pushed appropriations riders that limit the ATF's authority, and they have sought to repeal ATF regulations in Court.

The best part is, at the same time the gun lobby tries to prevent ATF from carrying out its enforcement responsibilities, the gun lobby has pushed a rider into law that explicitly prevents Congress from transferring any of ATF's functions to any other agency, such as the FBI. So the gun lobby says that all we should do is enforce the gun laws on the books. Then they make it harder for the Federal Government to do that.

Here is the bottom line. We are going to have votes soon, starting tomorrow, to see where the Members of the Senate stand. Are they going to stand with the police officers, the legislatures, the teachers, the prosecutors, the doctors, the mayors, the victims and their families, and the strong majority of Americans who support proposals that will save lives, commonsense gun safety proposals? Or are they going to stand with the gun lobby that refuses to compromise even when lives could be saved?

I know where I am going to stand. I stand with Americans such as the family of Hadiya Pendleton, the promising, beautiful young teenage girl gunned down just weeks ago in a Chicago park. She had been out here for President Obama's inauguration. It was a thrilling day for her to be here with her high school friends and classmates. In a matter of days, she had been gunned down in a park after school.

I stand with Sandra Wortham, whose brother, Chicago police officer Thomas Wortham, IV, was shot and killed by gang members with a straw-purchased gun while he stood in the driveway of his father's home. The gun lobby would like us to forget about these victims. But there is no way we can.

Sandra Wortham testified at a hearing I chaired in February on gun violence. She talked about how her brother, a policeman in Chicago, was armed and shot back, but it did not save him. She told us there is nothing anti-gun about doing more to keep guns out of the hands of the people who will misuse them. It was pretty powerful testimony.

The NRA posted a summary of my hearing on their Web site describing the hearing as ''an attack on guns.'' They described the testimony given by five of our six witnesses, but they said nothing about Sandra Wortham, who lost her brother, the Chicago policeman. They pretended her testimony never happened. They did not want people to remember her story.

It is not the only time. A few weeks ago, the NRA proposed a set of redline changes to the gun trafficking bill that Senators LEAHY, KIRK, COLLINS, GILLIBRAND, and I are cosponsoring. The key section of that bill was named after Hadiya Pendleton of Chicago. That was Senator KIRK's idea and a darn good one. What was the first change the NRA proposed? Deleting Hadiya Pendleton's name from the bill. They did not want to be reminded of this young girl who lost her life to gun violence.

The gun lobby may hope we forget about Americans such as the Pendletons and the Worthams, but we will not. None of us should.

I urge my colleagues to join with the majority of Americans who support commonsense reforms that will reduce gun deaths and keep guns out of the hands of criminals. That is what we should do. I see my colleagues Senator KAINE and Senator LEE on the floor. Let me close by just reminding those who are following this debate what other countries have done when they have experienced tragic mass shootings.

They have acted to toughen the gun laws, often going far further than any proposal we have before the Senate. In Australia, on April 28, 1996, a gunman started shooting at tourists in Port Arthur. He killed 35 people. In response, that nation dramatically toughened their standards for gun ownership, banned assault weapons, and launched a buyback of hundreds of thousands of semiautomatic rifles. I might tell you, that is not included in this bill we are considering.

After these laws were passed, gun homicides and suicides decreased dramatically, and Australia has not had a single mass shooting since 1996.

In Finland, there were two mass school shootings in 2007 and 2008. The first involved a teenager who killed eight people at a high school, and the second involved a gunman who killed 10 at a culinary school.

In response, Finland raised the minimum age for gun ownership and toughened their background check requirements.

In Scotland, on March 13, 1996, a gunman entered a primary school in the town of Dunblane and killed 16 young children and their teacher. In response, the United Kingdom actually went so far as to ban virtually all handguns.

The measures we are working on in the Senate today are modest in comparison with steps other countries took in response to mass shootings. Even though we have over 300 million guns in America and a strong tradition of gun ownership, the measures we are considering have overwhelming support among the majority of Americans and gun owners. We should move forward with these measures.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be recognized for up to 5 minutes as if in morning business and then Senator LEE be recognized for up to 5 minutes following my remarks.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. KAINE. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. KAINE pertaining to the introduction of S. 700 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. KAINE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. LEE. I thank the Senator from Virginia for his cooperation in allowing me this time.

The President of the United States has spent the last several weeks evoking the tragedy of Sandy Hook and highlighting the voices of the victims in an effort to promote his gun control proposals. He has not explained to the American people how any of these new gun control measures would have prevented that or any other terrible tragedy or how any of these measures would reduce gun violence in any measurable way. Instead, his proposals would serve primarily to restrict the rights of law-abiding citizens.

Recently, I launched a project called Protect2A, which is an attempt to reach out to those who are reluctant to see changes to our Bill of Rights, our Bill of Rights eroded, and believe Members of Congress should be doing everything in their power to protect the second amendment rights of citizens. This is also as we should be protecting all the rights protected by our Constitution.

I am pleased to announce the response to Protect2A has been overwhelming. In less than 2 days, we have received well over 1,000 responses on my Web site. The vast majority of them recognized that the President's proposal will not make them safer but will, rather, result in limiting their rights as law-abiding citizens.

It is with this in mind I would now like to ensure their voices have become an important part of this debate. I have several quotes from Americans across the country who oppose these measures and wish Senators to stand up for them and their constitutional rights.

Roger, from my home State of Utah, writes as follows:

As a veteran, I've had too many ''brothers'' and ''sisters'' make sacrifices to uphold the Constitution of the United States. Their blood will not be in vain. While I believe our rights are not granted by government, I believe that documentation of these rights in

the United States Constitution has helped us maintain our freedoms. Why is the Second Amendment important to me? Because without it, the rest of our rights can simply be wiped away.

Jim from Louisiana writes as follows:

I lived through the Los Angeles riots. My wife and I were living in Silver Lake. For 5 days we watched the warm glow of businesses being burned on two sides. For 5 days we never saw a law enforcement officer. We were on our own. My wife and I were unarmed. The couple across the street had a pair of shotguns, and the elderly gentleman next to them had a .38 service revolver from his days in the LAPD. After it became clear that law enforcement had abandoned the citizens of Los Angeles, we took shifts watching the street and who was coming and going. Our neighbors brought us coffee in the middle of the night, a night that was lit with the flames of burning buildings. Twice cars came up our street, saw us armed, and turned around. I have no doubt that the drivers had things on their minds other than getting home to loved ones.

As soon as I could, I went out and bought my first handgun. I will not be disarmed. I will not be a victim. And I will not let my boys be victims. Legal or not, I am giving them my guns as they get mature enough to use them. If our government is so out of touch they will make law-abiding citizens criminals, it's just something my family will have to deal with. But we will not disarm.

David, from Missouri, wrote the following:

I am a handicapped 78-year-old male living alone. I have applied for and received a conceal-carry permit, which I feel is my Second Amendment right. I hope and pray that I never have to use my firearm, but will if challenged to do so.

Please don't treat the subject of the Second Amendment like you did with my health care, by passing legislation that you didn't even read.

Carolyn from New Jersey writes:

Protection of the 2A is necessary in order to preserve the integrity of our Constitution. The ''ruling elite'' cannot pick and choose which amendments they like, and which they don't. We, the people, are sovereign citizens, and we are protected by the Constitution.

Annie, from Georgia, writes the following:

Dear Senator, how I wish we as a civilized nation did not have to go through this in order to defend our 2nd Amendment that has been in place for all these years. It is very important that we the citizens keep our weapons to be able to defend ourselves from criminals as well as to send a message to the government that we are not under any dictatorship. We are a free country, and we are ready to defend our position against anyone who tries to take away what rights we have. To me, personally, my guns are my defense to protect my family, and I have had to make use of them for that reason in the past and will do it again since the police cannot be available fast enough . . . Please protect our rights, because once we lose this amendment, we are defenseless and others will follow. I do not want to live again in a country where citizens have no ''voice,'' where there is no democracy and the people live in fear of what they say. I am a legal citizen of the USA, by choice. I am an American, and I love this country like my own. Thanks so much for what you are doing. Let our voices be heard.

Mr. President these are just a few of the excerpts. I ask unanimous consent to have the rest of these statements printed in the RECORD.

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

Michael—Pennsylvania

Thank You for taking This stand . . . Not only is it the 2nd Amendment at stake here but the right to protect my family and my house . . . I have had 2 encounters since living in my current house of 28 years . . . with the last one . . . the police told me flat out that they couldn't stop a crime all they do . . .95% of the time is take a report on the crime now some want to take this right away from me . . . Guns have been a part of my family for at least 5 generations and never has there been a bad instance with any of our guns . . .

Richard—Pennsylvania

I am a law abiding citizen who deserves the right to protect my family from criminals and tyranny. I abhor violence as do most law abiding citizens but the individuals who commit gun crimes are by definition criminals. This current ''debate'' has not been about reducing violence and I am disappointed in Pro 2A politicians for allowing the conversation to be dictated by politicians who neither understand how guns work nor have the ability to use logic or reason and use emotions and rhetoric to expand control while putting law abiding citizens and freedom at risk. Gun control has not and will never work because it does not address the cause. When we as a country decided to reduce drunk driving deaths the drivers were and are prosecuted not cars or alcohol and it has been successful. Take guns away from law abiding citizens and neglect to enforce and prosecute gun crimes and the result is Chicago. We need to enforce current laws and have a zero tolerance policy for gun crimes while addressing mental illness and a culture that glorifies violence.

Please do everything in your power to protect our rights and change the focus of this conversation to the criminals.

Leslie—Minnesota

Because it a legal right as given by our founding fathers to protect our selves, family's, state and country from harm from any direction. Keep up the good work.

Holly—Florida

Years ago, I was robbed at gunpoint by 2 young gang bangers. A call to 911 received no response from the police—none. After that incident, my father gave me one of his small hand guns & took me to the range to teach me how to use it. I have no record of transfer, no background check paperwork, just a clear memory of having a gun held to my head & the knowledge that—if I ever had to—I could defend myself in my home. I fear that the knee jerk gun restrictions emanating from DC and state governments will expose me & others like me to harm. I also fear that the contents of these proposed bills are yet one more excuse for a governmental money grab. I pray you will meet with success in your efforts. Thank you.

Rick—Kentucky

Senator Lee, Thank you for taking a stand for our 2nd Amendment rights. The 2nd Amendment not only provides the American public an avenue to protect themselves and their loved ones when and if the need ever arises, a means of hunting to provide food for ones family, as a sport to compete and enjoy the company of others, but more importantly provides the American people with a means to protect itself from a tyrannical government. Our Founding Fathers and framers of our Constitution knew better than any of us today that government in any form can easily become the enemy of the inherent freedoms and rights of it's citizenry. The 2nd Amendment was put in place as the protectorate and armed guard for each and every other Amendment in the Bill of Rights. Over the last several decades, these rights and freedoms provided us through the Constitution have been slowly watered or otherwise whittled down by our government, and considering our current political and social climate, the 2nd Amendment is more important than ever. Unfortunately the opponents of individual freedom are now using an axe to chop away at this, our most important Amendment. I, like all Americans was horrified by the recent and senseless murders in Colorado & Connecticut, but in our grief, many Americans are failing to realize that the problems of our society cannot be washed away simply by removing the inanimate object from the equation. Was it the fault of the airplane or the Boeing Aircraft Company for the deaths of innocents in the 9/11 terrorist attack? No, it was the human beings, with evil in their hearts and minds that were the cause, utilizing an otherwise useful piece of machinery as the mechanism of death. It's times like these when an individual needs to take a stand, to be respectful of those who believe differently than himself, but be resolved to fight for what he believes in none the less. I believe strongly in the 2nd Amendment the same way I believe that it's purpose is just as strong today as it was in our Founding Father's day and I will be standing up for my rights. Thank you for standing with me.

Michael—Utah

More than ever we need to protect our God-given liberties and freedoms. While I mourn for the loss of life from whatever may be the cause, the further eroding of our liberties will make us neither safer nor freer. The overwhelming majority of gun owners are law abiding citizens. There will always be the few that choose to live by their own rules and norms.

I am the father of a 12 year old and an 8 year old and I want them to enjoy the freedoms that have been enjoyed by previous generations. Do I want them safe? Of course. Do I think further restrictions of firearms and/or ammunition will do this? No. A mentally ill individual will do harm with a 10 round magazine just as they would with a 30 round magazine. I would like to see us put more resources toward helping those with these life changing problems. How sad and difficult it must be for the loved ones.

Press forward with protecting the freedoms and responsibilities of our citizenry.

Jeffrey—Indiana

The Founders understood that control of weaponry, with respect to law abiding citizens, is not about gun control—it is about people control. When the people are no longer in control of their own destinies, then there is tyranny. The Founders also feared that once power left the people's hands, the only way to regain that power over their own lives would be with blood. The 2nd Amendment protects against the need for another revolution of blood.

Vitaliy—Colorado

My family and I immigrated here, legally, from Russia/soviet union to live free and to have opportunity sadly unavailable to most in the world.

These freedoms and liberties are coming under attack, starting with the 2nd amendment. There is a reason why it is 2nd and not 5th or 10th—it guarantees us the right to protect our freedoms if they are being threatened.

I served in the military and swore to protect the constitution of the United States.

The entire constitution, not just parts of it I like. I feel like our president is in violation of that oath.

I understand that there is a push to get hands of criminals and those mentally unstable away from weapons that can potentially be used against citizens and kids, but this plan that those on the Left want, do not guarantee our safety one bit, instead they take rights of those who are law abiding.

I'm also sick to my stomach that the president and those on the left use kids faces and their parents to stand in front of them like puppets while the politicians try to abnegate. I cannot believe a human being in such power can exploit a tragedy to advance his political views.

Walter—Florida

This story was recent . . . On Friday April 6th, 2013 my place of business received a phone call that ended with the individual threatening to kill my receptionist and everyone in the building. I immediately placed the building on lock down and called the police. While I was waiting for police to arrive, I retrieved my fire arm from my car and began to carry it in my person as I walked around and checked all entry points. The police finally arrived 15 minutes later and very calmly said that there was no crime committed and that they can't do anything. They then left. This really disturbed me as if I did not have a gun in my possession my employees and I would be nothing but sitting targets. The police are great and I respect them a great deal, but they are reactive not proactive. I equate this to if a fire breaks out, I want to put it out with an extinguisher and not only wait for the fire department. At the end of the day I escorted my employees out to their cars and waited until they drove off, all while I was armed. I am a very responsible gun owner who hopes to God that I never ever have to aim my gun at someone, let alone shoot and kill someone. I love my family, employees and friends too much than to not be armed and just stand around if God forbid something were to happen and I stand helpless watching them be injured or killed. Just because I follow the laws doesn't mean the person who made the death threat does. Please fight for my right to protect the ones I care about most. Thank you and God bless!

EddieJean—Utah

My family for generations have fought with their lives to protect the constitution of the United States. I remember as a child feeling pride in my country by saying the pledge of allegiance. I am still a very proud American and believe in the rights of all Americans. When my husband, daughter and I moved from Arkansas to Arizona (while my husband was in the military) it was a shocker to my system. Moving was exhausting, and like many new young couples with no money and moving ourselves, we were so excited to find an affordable home in a not so scary neighborhood. It was about 2 weeks when we woke (we slept in our living room, we did not have a bed) to someone trying to open our front door. Terrified, my husband told me to go get our young daughter, while he grabbed his revolver. I got our daughter, got behind my husband and called the police. The lady on the line was very concerned and talked to me the whole time. The person trying to get in was very persistent, and moved the window. I was so scared and asked where are the police, what is taking so long, she explained that they put calls in order of threat. I said this is important and the person or person's are trying to get in. She asked if we were armed I said yes, but we did not want to hurt anyone (a crazy statement), because I did not know the person on the other side, who would possibly kill me and my whole family for what $10.00 and no items of value. My husband finally yelled I have a gun and I know how to use it; I am not sure but the person on the other side must have decided not to take the chance, seeing our Arkansas plate that we probably did know how to use it, or to find a less threatening home. It took the officers over 45 minutes to arrive to our home and when I asked what took so long, one responded, if you had been shot or dying we would have been here sooner. I am a law abiding citizen and have the right to defend myself, that is why I believe in the 2nd amendement. Criminals do believe in the laws and they will find a gun with or without laws. So if you take away my rights, my death and many others will be on the heads of foolish goverment officials who do not know what they are doing. For Obama is out for power not the rights of Americans. I like many Americans was so saddened by the death of the children and adults by the hand of a madman, but I need to be armed and have done so legally, to protect my family. When are we going to hold people responsible and not the objects they use? Maybe we should ban cars, for they kill more people than guns, or how about a baseball bat, or a hammer, or my purse (now that is a deadly weapon). People are responsible for their actions, not objects. Thank you Senator Lee, Eddie Jean Mahurin, a proud American.

Maureen—New York

As a woman a firearm is an equalizer against those bigger and stronger than me. I have the right to protect myself!

Patricia—Nebraska

Living in the Midwest, it allows me self-protection of property and family. We live in the country and there are only limited law enforcement here with extremely long response times. We need the ability to defend ourselves against the ever increasing influx of crime.

We are also very much of the belief that the Constitution guarantees our right to bear arms to protect us from tyranny—politicians in power who seek to do our country harm.

It is your obligation to uphold our rights as per the Constitution, as all elected officials took an oath to do just that and We the People will not settle for less . . .

Melissa—Utah

Being a military wife, my husband is away most of the time. I don't believe the federal government should have the power to tell me what I need and don't need in order to keep myself and my family safe. They do not know my comfort level and ability with firearms, so how can they decide what would be best for me to use? That decision should be mine. Whether I decide a rifle or handgun or none at all, is of no concern to anyone else. Controlling me will not keep anyone else safe from criminals. It will only make me less safe.

Our constitutional liberties should never be up for a vote. This whole thing is quite disturbing.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SARAH JEWELL TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Sally Jewell, of Washington, to be Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 hours of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the nomination.

The senior Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this afternoon we will take up in the Senate the confirmation of Sally Jewell to head the Department of the Interior. The Department is one of America's biggest landowners and is the second largest source of revenue for the Treasury after the Internal Revenue Service. The Department of Interior has the unique mission of protecting America's treasures while pursuing balanced approaches to promote sustainable economic development.

The Department administers the Outer Continental Shelf Program, which is vital to the gulf coast, and Oregon's forest lands in southwestern Oregon where we are pushing hard to increase forest health because we know forest health equals a healthy economy.

The Department has significant trust responsibilities for Native Americans, and it manages water reclamation projects throughout the West. Public lands, which are administered by the Department, are a lifeline for our ranchers, and they are especially important given the recent droughts our country has experienced.

In addition to these traditional responsibilities, increasingly the Department of the Interior is responsible for providing recreational opportunities for millions of our citizens. Today millions of Americans use these lands to hunt, camp, fish, hike, and boat. Let's make no mistake about it. Outdoor recreation is now a major economic engine for our country, generating more than $645 billion of revenue each year.

This is why I am especially enthused today to be able to strongly recommend Sally Jewell to head the Department of the Interior. She has exceptional qualifications. Somehow she has managed to pack into just one lifetime two or three lifetimes of experiences. She has been a petroleum engineer, corporate CEO, a banker, and a citizen volunteer. Her qualifications clearly made an impression on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which I chair. Last month our members voted 19 to 3 to approve her nomination, and I believe she got that resounding vote because she is the right person to oversee the multitude of programs at the Department of the Interior, several of which I have just mentioned. She certainly made clear in her confirmation hearing that she understands there is an enormous responsibility to balance the dual roles of conserving and developing resources.

I think we all understand that jobs in our country come from the private sector, and if through this Department we can come up with innovative, fresh policies to set the climate for job growth while we protect our treasures, that is clearly going to be good for the United States of America.