

the mentally ill” do not violate the second amendment.

The compromise these Senators have presented to us is focused on gun shows and commercial sales. It does not require background checks for sales between spouses or siblings or parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and cousins. It does not require background checks for a transfer between friends and neighbors who talk to each other and decide to sell or give each other a firearm.

The bill does not require background checks for temporary transfers of guns for hunting or target shooting. But it does require background checks for the kind of sales that can be easily exploited by people who intend to do harm: sales at gun shows and through online and print advertisement.

I would hope Senators would agree with 90 percent of the people in this country: We need a strong background check system in order to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals. Why not try to plug the loopholes in the law that allow dangerous criminals to buy guns without background checks? It is a matter of common sense. If we agree that the background check system makes sense, why not make it more effective? What responsible gun owner objects to improving the background check system?

I come from a State with a lot of gun owners, myself included. I have not heard a single gun owner say, we should not have a background check apply to everybody just as it applies to them.

At the first of our Judiciary Committee hearings of the year, the first of three hearings on gun violence proposals, I pointed out that Wayne LaPierre of the NRA testified in 1999 in favor of mandatory criminal background checks for every sale at every gun show. He emphasized at that time the NRA supported closing loopholes in the background system by saying, “No loopholes anywhere for anyone.”

It is common sense. That is what we voted to do in 1999 and we should again, and this time we should get it enacted. I have said over and over again, do not filibuster or sloganeer. Vote. Vote yes; vote no. Do not vote maybe. No one is going to take away our second amendment rights. They are not at risk. But lives are at risk where responsible people fail to stand up for laws that will keep guns out of the hands of those who use them to commit crimes of violence.

This is something we can come together and do to make America safer and more secure. Some have expressed frustration about the level of prosecutions under existing gun laws. And some have suggested that instead of making sensible changes to our public safety laws to prevent gun violence, Federal law enforcement officials should focus exclusively on existing laws. I share some of that frustration, but I do not agree it is a valid excuse for us to do nothing. Improvements in

the enforcement of existing laws and efforts to give law enforcement officials better tools to do their jobs are not mutually exclusive; those efforts complement each other. A recent article in the Washington Times, certainly not considered a liberal paper, documented the gun prosecutions were in decline beginning in the Bush administration. They suggested having a Senate-confirmed Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives would significantly help law enforcement. We need to get such a director. But let's not be distracted from what we can do to keep Americans safe by partisan attacks on this administration or the last administration.

I also want to thank Senator SCHUMER for all his efforts to bring us to this point. I worked with him to make sure the legislation considered and voted on in the Judiciary Committee included a provision to improve the background checks system. He introduced a number of background check proposals. He reached across the aisle to try very hard to come to an agreement with Senator COBURN. His efforts helped pave the way for the agreement that Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY were able to reach.

I have also been encouraging the junior Senator from West Virginia in his efforts. He has shown great leadership, sensitivity and perseverance. I commend Senator TOOMEY for his willingness to join in this legislative effort. Together they have done the Senate and the country a great service. At the outset of the Judiciary Committee's consideration of this issue, I encouraged Senators to bring forward their ideas, to debate that which they thought could make a difference, not just obstruct that which they opposed. I hope those who oppose the measure put forward by Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY will seek to be part of this debate rather than simply try to silence it.

Improving the background check system is a matter of common sense. Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY have shown that it can be accomplished in a way that better protects our communities and fully respects our Second Amendment rights. I am pleased to support this bipartisan solution.

Now, will everybody agree on this legislation? Perhaps not. But at least have the courage to vote yes or no. Vote yes or no. If you are going to vote maybe, that is voting for a filibuster. The American people want a little bit of courage on the part of 100 Senators.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5

p.m., with Senators permitted in speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, in Shakespeare's “Julius Caesar,” a soothsayer warned Caesar to “beware the Ides of March.” For most Americans, however, the Ides of March passes without incident. It is the Ides of April—April 15, tax day—that so many Americans dread. The last few days must have been a big bonanza for the headache medicine industry. Taxes are due tonight at midnight.

Millions of Americans spent their weekend struggling to use tax software that crashed, flailing about to locate receipts, and wading through hundreds of pages of tax instructions. Instead of enjoying the outdoors or spending time with family and friends, too many Americans spent this past weekend hunched over their kitchen tables or in front of their computers surrounded by a maze of receipts, canceled checks, forms, and other paperwork as they undertook the annual water torture ritual of preparing tax returns.

This is the tax instruction booklet for our personal taxes, our 1040 form. It goes on and on, well over 200 pages. The first 104 pages of instructions are the basic form 1040. The further 110 pages of instructions are for the most common schedules to the 1040. There has got to be a better way.

Some day I hope Democrats and Republicans can come to the floor of this body, ask unanimous consent that this goes into the trash, and instead we substitute a much simpler way for our people to do their taxes. The reality is the Tax Code is too complex, too costly, and simply takes too much time to comply with. It is a code that is hopelessly out of date, mind-numbingly complex, increasingly unfair, and extraordinarily inefficient.

As a result, one of our most consequential economic policies, our tax law, does far more to stifle economic growth than to encourage it. Our country needs a comprehensive overhaul of our system of raising revenue and a modern Tax Code that is simpler, fairer, and simply more efficient. In sum, what is needed is a pro-growth economic tax policy. If history is any guide, particularly when former President Reagan and a big group of Democrats got together, it can bolster American families and increase revenue without raising rates.

I have been something of a broken record on this issue for some time. But on a day such as this, particularly given what our people went through over the past weekend, I think it is time we spend a few minutes to talk