

take their parent's military-style assault weapons, designed for no purpose other than murder, and commit an unspeakable atrocity, as happened that sad day in Newtown.

Our country is not a war zone. Our Founding Fathers did not set forth to create a nation where parents walk through school hallways wondering if the doors and windows are thick enough. Or where communities turn on their televisions to tragic news, day after day, and have the same thought: "That could be us next time."

It is long past time for Congress to live up to our responsibility to protect the American people. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass urgently needed, commonsense legislation to reduce gun violence in our society. The American people deserve nothing less.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, on June 7, 1776, Virginian Richard Henry Lee introduced a motion in the Second Continental Congress to declare the 13 American colonies' independence from Great Britain. Four days later, Congress established a committee—the Committee of Five—to draft a statement proclaiming and justifying American independence. The Committee consisted of John Adams (Massachusetts), Benjamin Franklin (Pennsylvania), Thomas Jefferson (Virginia), Robert Livingston (New York), and Roger Sherman (Connecticut) and assigned the duty of writing the first draft to Thomas Jefferson. The Committee left no minutes so we aren't sure how many iterations of the document were drafted before the Committee presented the final version to Congress on June 28, 1776—an action immortalized by the artist John Trumbull in a painting that hangs in the Capitol Rotunda.

On Monday, July 1, 1776, the Committee of the Whole debated the Lee Resolution. Jefferson wrote that they were "exhausted by a debate of nine hours, during which all the powers of the soul had been distended with the magnitude of the object." The Committee of the Whole voted 9-2 to adopt the Lee Resolution. The following day—July 2, 1776—Congress heard the report of the Committee of the Whole and declared the sovereign status of the American colonies. The Declaration of Independence was given its second reading before Congress adjourned for the day. On July 3, 1776, the Declaration received its third reading and final edits. The text's formal adoption was deferred until the following morning—July 4, 1776. That evening, the Committee of Five reconvened to prepare the final "fair copy" of the document, which was delivered to the 29-year-old Irish immigrant printer John Dunlap, with orders from John Hancock to print "broadside" copies. Dunlap worked into the night setting the type and running off 200 or so broadside sheets—now known as the

Dunlap broadsides—which became the first published copies of the Declaration of Independence. Twenty-six of the original Dunlap broadsides—or fragments of them—are extant. Here in Washington, the Library of Congress has two and the National Archives has one. In January 1777, Congress commissioned publisher Mary Katherine Goddard to produce a new broadside of the Declaration of Independence that listed the individuals who signed it.

And so, here we are 238 years later, preparing once again to celebrate the birth of our Nation and the document that proclaimed it. We will have appropriate celebrations from the National Mall to small towns across America. We will gather with families and friends in communities large and small to relax and refresh ourselves. And we will reflect on the blessings of liberty that have been bequeathed to us. We must never take those blessings for granted. Americans have fought and died to defend them and people around the world have fought and died to obtain them.

We cannot calculate what we owe to Thomas Jefferson and the Committee of Five. But, as Abraham Lincoln summoned all Americans in 1863 at Gettysburg, we can dedicate ourselves to the "great task remaining before us . . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." The stakes are high, for as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt remarked in his fireside chat on May 26, 1940, "We defend and build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind." That is our unique and solemn responsibility as Americans, and our cherished privilege.

I wish all of my colleagues, my fellow Marylanders, and all Americans a happy and safe Fourth of July.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM SUMMER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I wish to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and to talk for a few minutes about how Senators can work together to make this a more perfect Union and guarantee equal justice under the law to all Americans.

Freedom Summer was a campaign in Mississippi to register Black voters during the summer of 1964. In 1964, most Black voters were disenfranchised by law or practice in Mississippi, notwithstanding the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which was ratified in 1870. The 15th Amendment provides that "the rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by . . . any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

On January 23, 1964, the States ratified the 24th Amendment to the Constitution, which provides that "the

rights of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other [Federal] election . . . shall not be denied or abridged . . . by any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax."

The Freedom Summer voting rights initiative was led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, with the support of the Council of Federated Organizations, COFO, which included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality, referred to in this preamble as the CORE, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC.

Thousands of students and activists participated in 2-week orientation sessions in preparation for the voter registration drive in Mississippi. In 1962, at 6.7 percent of the State's Black population, Mississippi had one of the lowest percentages of Black registered voters in the country.

Tragically, three civil rights volunteers lost their lives in their attempts to secure voting rights for Blacks. Andrew Goodman was a White 20-year-old anthropology major from Queens College who volunteered for the Freedom Summer project. James Chaney was a 21-year-old Black man from Meridian, MS, who became a civil rights activist, joining the CORE in 1963 to work on voter registration and education. Michael "Mickey" Schwerner was a 24-year-old White man from Brooklyn, NY, who was a CORE field secretary in Mississippi and a veteran of the civil rights movement.

On the morning of June 21, 1964, the three men left the CORE office in Meridian, MS, and set out for Longdale, MS, where they were to investigate the recent burning of the Mount Zion Methodist Church, a Black church that had been functioning as a freedom school to promote education and voter registration. The three civil rights workers were beaten, shot, and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan, after being turned over by local police.

The national uproar in response to these brave men's deaths, which occurred shortly before enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, helped build the momentum and national consensus necessary to bring about passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

So as we celebrate the anniversaries of these landmarks pieces of civil rights legislation, we are reminded that there is more work to be done. As former Senator Ted Kennedy used to say, "Civil rights is the great unfinished business of America."

One year ago this week the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, which struck down section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, invalidating the coverage formula that determines which jurisdictions are subject to the preclearance provisions of the act.

Congress must act to reverse the erroneous decision by the Supreme Court which overturned several important