



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2013

No. 47

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, take from us anything that doesn't honor You. Remove covetousness, pride, anger, or anything that is unlike You. Replace our negatives with positives, making us lowly, peaceable, patient, and kind.

Lord, fill our lawmakers with faith, a firm hope, and a charity, that they love nothing that displeases You. Raise them up to be seated with You in heavenly realms, as they strive to be instruments of Your purposes.

Thank You for being rich in mercy and for Your grace that never gives up on us.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 10, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,

President pro tempore.

Mr. COWAN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the gun safety legislation. The first hour will be equally divided with the Republicans. They will control the first half, and we will control the final half. Last evening I filed cloture on a motion to proceed to that legislation. Hopefully, today we can reach an agreement to begin debate on this bill—even today.

We also hope to formalize an agreement for the confirmation of Sarah Jewell to be Interior Secretary.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 680 AND S. 691

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told—and I believe this is right—there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for a second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 680) to rescind amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2013 for the Department of Defense for the Medium Extended Air Defense System, and for other purposes.

A bill (S. 691) to regulate large capacity ammunition feeding devices.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these two bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

IMPACTS OF SEQUESTER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for many months now my Republican friends have promised the impacts of the sequester's arbitrary cuts would be minimal—don't worry about them. When they voiced any concern at all about the sequester cuts, it was over the potential impact on the U.S. military. The impact on middle-class families and the national economy wouldn't be that drastic, they promised in February and in March.

Well, now it is April and contrary to Republican promises, Americans in communities from Massachusetts to Nevada, from coast to coast, in red States and in blue States, are beginning to feel the pinch of those across-the-board cuts.

In the District of Columbia, tourists traveling from home to here for the National Cherry Blossom Festival experienced long lines to go through airport security because of these furloughs. Coming home from Nevada on Sunday there were mobs of people. When anyone sits down to talk to any of them, they will speak about how miserable it is getting through security checks at airports all over the country.

In Murray, UT, a food pantry that feeds more than 1,000 people every month has closed because of these cuts. In Durham, NC, scores of employees at a medical research facility will get pink slips. In central Maine fewer senior citizens will be able to participate with Meals on Wheels. In Bethlehem, PA, more than 100 children are going to be kicked off Head Start.

Now, maybe my Republican friends don't feel this, but I guarantee my colleagues the parents of these little children in Bethlehem, PA, feel it. People waiting in these airport lines feel it.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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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—life-saving 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 ever-more 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, common-sense 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 forgot-

ten, 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. HETKAMP). 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 manda-

tory 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 ORGANIZATIONS

- 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 amend-

ment. 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 awoken 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 non-profit 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 Thanks-

giving. 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 quali-

ties. 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. Porsche 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. Porsche 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 Porsche'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. Porsche'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 com-

pleted 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 infec-

tious 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 Ket-

tering, 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 up 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, church-going, 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 bi-

partisan 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 INOUE,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BARBARA MIKULSKI,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies,
Senate Committee on Appropriations, Wash-
ington, 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. Long-standing 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 KAINÉ 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. KAINÉ. 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. KAINÉ. I thank the Chair.

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

Mr. KAINÉ. 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 that 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 amendment. 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 government 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.

Let's look at a few of the areas where she is going to be involved. Natural gas is just one. This resource has been a huge, positive development for our country. We have it, the world wants it, our prices are lower, and we are seeing a significant interest among American manufacturers in bringing jobs back home. I know this has been of great interest to the Presiding Officer today. A lot of these manufacturers are saying they want to come back from overseas because America has a price advantage in terms of clean natural gas.

There are significant environmental questions associated with natural gas. We have already talked about them in our committee. We are going to have to deal with fracking issues and methane emissions and underground aquifers. Based on some of the discussions we have had—and we had a very good dialog between Frances Beinecke of the Natural Resources Defense Council and Senator HOEVEN from North Dakota where they have a significant interest in natural gas—I believe that under Sally Jewell, when it comes to our public lands, we are going to be able to strike the kind of responsible balance that will make sense for the Senate in a bipartisan way.

I see my friend and colleague Senator MURKOWSKI is here. She has more than met me halfway as we have tried to look at the issues associated with these questions, such as natural gas.

I will only say that with someone with the brains and energy and the willingness to reach out that Sally Jewell has—and she certainly did that based on the number of visits she made to Senators—we may be able to have a natural gas policy where we can have it all, where we can have modest prices for our businesses and consumers that make for a significant economic advantage, we can bring back some of those industries from overseas to Oregon and Ohio and other parts of the country, and we can do it by using, for example, best practices on our public lands as it relates to managing these resources. But we will only have a chance to accomplish those kinds of things if we have someone with Sally Jewell's talents and professional track record of actually bringing people together on these kinds of issues.

I do not believe you can run a multi-billion-dollar company, such as REI, which has been Ms. Jewell's current position, without showing the ability to manage, to bring people together, and in particular to anticipate some of the exciting trends in the days ahead in terms of outdoor recreation, where we all have enjoyed the American tradition of the great outdoors. I think few thought it would be a \$646 billion contributor to the American economy. But that happens because individuals like Ms. Jewell are willing to step up to take these positions. Because she is from our part of the world in the Pacific Northwest, we are particularly pleased to see her secure this position.

But, again, you do not run—and run well—a nearly \$2 billion outdoor equipment company, as Ms. Jewell has, by osmosis but because you are a good manager, you are good with people, and in particular you understand what the challenges are all about.

At this point, I would like to give some time to my friend and colleague. I know that Washington Senators are very interested in being part of this debate, and before we wrap up this afternoon, I also would like to talk about the wonderful track record of Ms. Jewell's predecessor, our current Secretary, Secretary Salazar, who is Senator MURKOWSKI's and my personal friend.

For purposes of this part of the discussion, I would only like to say to the Senate that in Sally Jewell we will have an individual with the experience and with the expertise and the drive to lead the Department of the Interior. I believe she will listen to Senators who have concerns, listen to Senators who want, as Senator MURKOWSKI and so many in our committee have tried to do, to find common ground. So I strongly urge the Senate today, when we vote a little bit later on, to join me in voting to approve Sally Jewell's nomination for the Department of the Interior.

I will now be happy to yield to my friend and colleague from Alaska.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I follow my colleague from Oregon, the chairman of the Energy Committee, here in discussing the qualifications of the nominee for Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. We recognize as westerners that this is an appointment, this is a position that has great significance, great meaning to our States, so we pay attention to these nominees, we pay attention to who is the Secretary of the Interior.

I have taken the position that our constitutional responsibility for advice and consent should begin with very thoughtful questions on our part, and then, absent any seriously disqualifying factors, we should conclude with the confirmation of the President's nominees. Our obligation to get answers to our questions is always a serious one, and the duty weighs most heavily when the interests of our constituents are directly at stake.

I mention the impact the Department of the Interior has particularly on our Western States—our States that have so much in public lands, our States where we have national forests, where we have BLM lands, rangelands, refuge lands. In Alaska and really in many parts across the West, the Federal Government's biggest and most prominent role is really that of a landlord. Sometimes you have a good relationship with your landlord, and other times it feels as if the landlord won't even let you put a nail in the wall to hang a picture. So, again, we look very critically and very carefully at this position.

In several States, the Federal Government controls the majority of the land. In Alaska, 64 percent of the State is controlled from here in Washington, DC. So that means an individual who may have an inholding in some Federal land basically has to get permission to get to his or her inholding within a park. It is almost hard for many of my colleagues to believe that so much of what it is we do has to go through this process of approval, but that is our reality.

In Alaska, with the Federal ownership, there are more than 230 million acres that are held in Federal ownership. That is an area which is larger than the State of Texas. We always like to compare ourselves—Alaska to Texas—but the fact is that the Federal public lands in Alaska are larger than the size of the State of Texas. We have over 57 million acres of wilderness. That is about the size of the State of Minnesota. And that is just sitting in my State.

The proportion of Federal land in Alaska is exceeded only by that of our colleagues from Nevada. The majority leader and Senator HELLER remind us quite frequently the Federal lands held in their State are at about 85 percent.

So when you think about what this does, the Federal land classifications that we have to deal with, oftentimes it not only severely restricts the usage of Federal lands by our people, but as a practical matter they restrict the use of State and private lands too.

So, again, the Secretary of the Interior is important to the future of a State such as Alaska and the West, but really, as it relates to other Cabinet members, this is one to which we are going to pay serious attention.

I had occasion to come to this floor several months ago to discuss a decision that came out of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In that decision, they somehow found cause to oppose a single-lane gravel road, 10 miles, that would connect the community of King Cove—near the Aleutians—connect it to the smaller community of less than 100 people of Cold Bay. The reason for the need to connect these two communities is Cold Bay has the second longest runway in the State of Alaska. King Cove, on the other hand, where most of the people live—about 900-some-odd Native Alaskans—has an airport that is dicey at best. We have seen accidents, we have seen lives lost as folks have tried to leave King Cove for medical services.

It was an issue that, for me and for the people of King Cove, was far beyond a discussion about what happens when you put a small road through a refuge. For the people of King Cove, this was about safety, this was about life and safety, and they felt they were not being heard by their Federal landlord. The agencies had not heard the people. In fact, the Department had not heard the people. Now, they had listened to the biologists and they had gotten that message, but the people had not been heard.

So through a series of very lengthy discussions with Secretary Salazar, through a series of conversations with the nominee Sally Jewell, and through the impassioned words of many of the people of King Cove, who traveled over 4,000 miles to come here to Washington, DC, to knock on the door of the Secretary and say: Please hear our voices, there has been an accommodation, there has been an agreement reached. And I appreciate my colleague, the chairman, helping us with this. The Department of the Interior has agreed to have the new Secretary as well as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs review the public health and safety impacts of the decision to build this road.

But I think it is important that folks understand this wasn't a parochial issue I was raising here on the floor. I kept referring to it as the King Cove issue, but it is not one single issue, and it is not parochial. It is obvious to the people of Alaska why this was such a considerable deal, why it was so important the people of King Cove be heard. For them, it was not just about a road, it was an issue of overreach. It was a symbol of Federal overreach on way too many policies we see come out of the Department and the harm that causes across our Nation.

The reality is so many of us, particularly those in the Western States, have our own King Cove. We all have those instances when issues have come up, where the people from the States we represent have to go knocking on the door of some Federal agency for permission, have to try to navigate a morass of regulations, and they do not feel as though they are being heard. Every day we have Federal restrictions making it harder for local people to live and to prosper.

I made a big effort to make sure the incoming Secretary of the Interior not only understood the particulars of King Cove—and I welcome the opportunity to travel with her when she comes to Alaska and flies out to King Cove hopefully at the end of the summer—for her not only to understand this issue but for her to understand the bigger role she will assume as Secretary of the Interior and how important it is for her to listen to all sides and to listen to the people she represents. As Secretary of the Interior, she is the one to implement that special trust responsibility the Federal Government has to our first people, to our Native people, so she needs to see and hear for herself.

She also needs to fully understand what she has in front of her—as Senator WYDEN mentioned, the massive public lands that will be under her jurisdiction as Secretary, understanding that that means to ranchers and farmers and those who are the recreators in our national parks, to those who will harvest timber, to those who will use our lands in the manner in which they are intended—multiple use—for her to fully understand what it means to be the custodian, the landlord of our

amazing public lands in this country. We all need to be working with her.

I have no question about Ms. Jewell's intelligence and her competence as a manager. I have been very impressed with what I have seen as her level of sincerity with her very distinguished private sector career. It has been noted that she has probably spent more time in Alaska prior to coming to the Department of Interior than any other nominee outside of Walter Hickel, who was our former Governor and served as Secretary of the Interior. So she gives me comfort with that, knowing that she understands much of what we have to deal with in Alaska.

These are all important qualities as we think about her competence as a manager, as we think about her intelligence. But dealing with an agency the size, the scope, and the complexity of the Department of Interior really requires the ability to focus not only on the debates and conflicts that we are facing today, but it is going to require an understanding of how we got here, the fact that the debates and conflicts of today often are based on years, decades, perhaps even centuries of history. Those who are steeped in this history raise the importance of the Secretary understanding the context for the many difficult decisions that will be made.

I had an opportunity to ask a lot of questions of Sally Jewell not only in our private meeting but before the committee and then also in writing. I asked questions about my questions. I wanted to be thorough. And I do concede that Ms. Jewell will be on a learning curve as she assumes the position of Secretary. But in her answers to questions at the hearing and in her written submissions, she has pointed out her experience and her skill at bringing diverse groups of people together to solve difficult problems on which they have been divided historically, and I do take her at her word there. I will certainly commit to participating in that dialog and to bringing all of my fellow western constituents with me, whether it is literally or figuratively. I believe that is important.

Ms. Jewell has used the word “convener” when describing herself, and I think this will be a very important task and role that she will assume. There are conflicting groups and conflicting interests, and Ms. Jewell has spoken to how she has reconciled that in the past with her previous work experience, not only at REI but at other places, and I do believe she has the skill sets to accomplish just that.

So with this commitment she has made to me and to others on the committee, I will certainly take the view that the fact that Ms. Jewell has perhaps not been through the full gamut of the conflicts that surround so much of what happens within Interior, perhaps that is a good thing because perhaps she is able to look at some of these issues through a fresh perspec-

tive, a different lens. Perhaps because she is not so embedded in the history, she will be able to look at this anew. And I think that is good. I think that is a positive. I certainly will look forward to engaging substantively with her as we complete this process—and beyond—on these issues, on how she can really bring her problem-solving skills to bear in a way that will serve all Americans.

I think it is telling—and it was noted in the Energy Committee hearing by one of our colleagues—that Ms. Jewell brings to the table as the nominee for the Secretary of Interior a business background that is quite considerable. She is a petroleum engineer who has actually fracked a well, so she has experience there. She has experience in Alaska and worked on the beginning portion of how we built out the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. She did it from the Seattle area but has that skill set as well.

It was asked somewhat tongue-in-cheek by one of my colleagues on the Republican side: Well, you have all these great characteristics. Why would President Obama select you?

So I think it is important to recognize that we have before us a nominee who brings a unique set of skill sets and experiences to us that I am hopeful will be beneficial. This is important to me as an Alaskan, to know we have someone who will be a listener, who will be a convener, who will work to solve problems. I am looking forward to the opportunity to spend time in Alaska with her as she visits with the people up north to better understand some of the challenges we face and hopefully work with us on these issues that are so critically important.

I appreciate the good work of my colleague and the chairman of the committee in getting us to this point so that we can move Ms. Jewell's nomination forward. I look forward to supporting her and working with her during her tenure as Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Washington State is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues and urge them to vote in support of Sally Jewell, who has been nominated to serve as Interior Secretary. I thank Senator WYDEN for all of his work in moving her through this process to today. I was thrilled when President Obama nominated Sally for this position, and I couldn't be more excited to support her confirmation.

Sally is going to come to the Department of the Interior at a difficult time for our country. As a nation, we are working very hard to protect our environment and invest in new technologies to meet our energy demands. And on the local level, including in my home State of Washington, Sally is going to face some complex issues, such as protecting tribal lands and

treaty rights. But I can think of no one better prepared for this task than Sally.

After she studied at the University of Washington to become an engineer, Sally left the Northwest for the oilfields of Oklahoma and Colorado, where she learned about the energy sector from the inside out. She moved from the outdoors—as you can see from this picture—to the boardroom and spent nearly two decades in finance helping businesses grow and learning what it takes to succeed in the marketplace.

Time and again, Sally has broken the mold to take on tough tasks—often in male-dominated industries. When she joined Recreational Equipment, Incorporated, the Seattle-based outdoor retailer, it was struggling. But after 8 years with Sally as CEO, REI is now thriving, topping \$1 billion in sales, while leading the charge to protect our environment. And finding that balance—navigating the business world while keeping REI's commitment to the outdoors—is what will make Sally great as our next Interior Secretary. Perhaps better than anyone, Sally knows that businesses and the environment both benefit when we are committed to protecting our national parks and promoting our national treasures. At REI, Sally has proven that sustainability and responsibility make sense for the environment and the company's bottom line.

In Washington State, she has worked closely with me to help create the Wild Sky Wilderness area and expand our other important environmental protections throughout our State. She has worked with industry and environmentalists to expand recreational opportunities throughout the Northwest and has helped us work toward permanently protecting BLM lands in the San Juan Islands, where my colleague Senator MARIA CANTWELL was at the forefront. That is truly a gem of Washington State and has recently been declared a national monument.

Sally has backed crucial public-private partnerships that create jobs through recreation, and she has supported groundbreaking programs to get young people involved in the outdoors.

So whether it is our forest lands in the Northwest or mineral deposits in the Southwest or oil reserves along our coastlines, Sally is going to lead an Interior Department where economic growth and long-term sustainability go hand in hand.

I am here today to urge my colleagues to vote in support of Sally Jewell, and I am really pleased she has been nominated. Again, I thank Senator WYDEN for all of his work in getting her to this point in this process.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington State is recognized.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I join my colleagues from the Northwest who have come to the floor this after-

noon to speak in support of the nomination of Sally Jewell as Secretary of the Interior. Like my colleagues from the Northwest, I wish to express how much we appreciate her willingness to serve and how proud we are of her legacy and interests in a variety of issues so far.

Obviously, the Department of the Interior is so important to us, with its broad range of services, including everything from our national parks, to wildlife refuge, to offshore drilling lease management, to the important science done by the USGS Service, and many other things. In fact, I read somewhere kind of humorously that the Department of the Interior was called the Department of Everything Else.

As a nominee, Ms. Jewell came before our committee. I thank her family for their willingness to support her in her efforts to come to Washington, DC, because Sally is the exact type of leadership we need at the Department of the Interior. She represents a balanced person who not only knows how to help a growing business, as she did, she has served on the university board of regents and also worked on the non-partisan National Conservation Parks Association. She has done everything in business, from dealing with oilfields in Oklahoma to commercial banking to, of late, running REI, one of our most successful companies in the Pacific Northwest. I know she has the kind of leadership it takes to figure out these issues about best use of public lands or the vigorous challenges the Department faces when it comes to modernizing the bureaucracy or thinking about climate change at the same time you are talking about deepwater drilling. There are a myriad of things we have to forge through, and Sally Jewell is the right person with the right balance to get that done.

Having grown up in Washington, where over 40 percent of our lands is in public land, I know Sally understands these western issues, whether it is water rights or salmon recovery or understanding the impact on water levels, the fire season, wildlife on BLM lands, or the importance of access to hunting and fishing. I guarantee, because she grew up there, Sally Jewell understands these issues. I know she has been involved in many organizations to express that, and that has been a good training ground for her.

I am confident, because she is a trained engineer, she is going to bring a very pragmatic, can-do attitude to the Interior Department's management and problem-solving efforts.

I know science will be her compass, and I know she is not going to have an ideological bent, but she is going to have a "get it done" mentality.

Given the importance of the Interior Department's agencies and very challenging mission, I am excited we are going to have somebody with a business background and a science background at the Department of the Interior.

I hope our colleagues will vote today to move Ms. Jewell out of the Senate so we can get her into the Department of the Interior so she can begin this important job and continue to move our Nation's agenda forward.

As the chairwoman of the Indian Affairs Committee I look forward to working with Ms. Jewell on all the issues related to Indian Country as well. There is much to accomplish and much to address. I think her background is exactly what we need in the Department. I hope my colleagues will move quickly on this issue.

I thank the chairman, Senator WYDEN, for his leadership in moving her nomination through the process.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before she leaves I want to thank Senator CANTWELL for all her good work. As northwesterners know, and I hope the rest of the country knows, Senator CANTWELL is one of those who understands the opportunity in the great outdoors. I know she is climbing a mountain this summer and is always in shape. She is always fit and ready for a mountain.

To have the opportunity to work with folks in the Pacific Northwest, particularly with Sally Jewell's background, as the Senator has eloquently outlined, I think it is going to be an advantage not just for our region but for the rest of our country.

I see our colleague from New Mexico is here. If he would like to make some remarks at this point, we welcome him. I have some additional remarks as well.

Would my colleague from New Mexico like to make any remarks at this time?

All right.

Let me, then, talk for just a few more minutes about Ms. Jewell and some of the challenges ahead of her, particularly in natural resources. Obviously, with authorities, as my colleagues have outlined, that range from managing national parks, to offshore oil and gas development, to protecting fish and wildlife, serving as Secretary of the Interior, it is almost like an extreme sport for multitaskers. You are going to have to juggle. Ms. Jewell knows a little bit about multitasking, as we have outlined, from being a petroleum engineer, a CEO, a conservationist, and a banker.

Particularly in my part of the world, Oregon, there are some especially important challenges. The Federal Government owns most of our land. Particularly in forestry, we need to find a way to bring together all sides—timber owners, environmentalists, scientists—and we need to go in there and clean out millions and millions of acres of overstocked timber stands. We can get that material to the mills. It is an ideal source of biomass, a clean source of energy.

Because we are working to build relationships with the environmental community, we can also find a way to protect old growth as we get to harvest

timber. But it is, again, not going to happen just by osmosis or because somebody waves a wand in Washington, DC. It is going to happen because we have responsible administrators like Sally Jewell who are going to take the time to learn the checker-board pattern of O&C lands and our local communities, and particularly understand some of our traditions that have worked particularly well in the past and I think can be of great benefit as we look to future solutions.

Back in 2000 I had the honor of writing the secure rural schools bill and the timber payments bill with our former colleague, Senator Larry Craig. What we included in that legislation is the kind of model for collaborative forestry that we are going to see Sally Jewell pick up on. We established something called resource advisory councils where, in effect, on the local level people from the timber industry, people from the environmental community, scientists, and a whole host of others—frankly, some people who as a general rule had not done much talking to each other, probably done a lot of litigating against each other—they would use these resource advisory councils to come together and try to find some common ground.

It worked. Regarding these resource advisory councils, when I meet people from the timber industry, from any of the extractive industries, and environmental folks, they say: Use that model. Use that collaborative model that we are seeing used in timberlands in southwestern Oregon as a way that we can build on the opportunity to bring people together.

We have been able to do that with Forest Service lands in eastern Oregon to some extent. I think we can do it also in western Oregon and in the communities that are affected by the Bureau of Land Management lands. Probably to do it we are going to have to extend the timber payments law for another year to give us the time to come up with a long-term solution. I have talked about this with Sally Jewell in the past and about her willingness to see that this is an issue that now finally has to be addressed, addressed in a way that will get the timber harvest up in O&C lands but also protect our treasures. Our old growth is some of the very pristine treasures of America. If we do not figure out a way to promote forest health and go in there and thin out these overstocked stands, these fires that we are seeing—they are not natural fires, they are really magnets for infernos because of years and years of neglect—are going to continue.

I think Sally Jewell is up to the challenge of coming up with the kind of policies for the O&C lands, for the lands in eastern Oregon and those my colleagues talked about in Montana and Colorado and Idaho, and I think she is up to that challenge.

Before we wrap up today I want to take a few minutes and talk about—I

know the Presiding Officer has great affection for him as well—our former colleague, Ken Salazar. Ken Salazar has been Secretary of the Interior throughout the Obama administration to date. It is my view he has done an exceptional job. I think we all understand in the Senate that when Ken Salazar is involved, get ready for a great smile, an enormous amount of energy, enormous amount of intelligence, and someone who, in a very persistent way, is interested in solving problems. Ken Salazar has sure done that in a number of important areas.

For example, before Ken Salazar took office—I am looking at a headline from when there was a huge scandal at the Department of the Interior. I am looking at an article from the fall of 2008 headlined, “Sex, Drug Use and Graft Cited In The Interior Department.”

Basically, what it talks about is an investigation, a number of reports delivered by the inspector general, that basically document, at the Department of the Interior, a culture of lax ethics. It basically describes something like a dozen current and former employees of the Minerals Management Service, an agency that collected at that time billions of dollars of royalties annually—you basically had an “anything goes” kind of environment, and the reports go on and on. It feels more like a litany for a late-night television show.

The reports focused on a culture of substance abuse and promiscuity in what was the Service’s royalty and in-kind program—essentially, officials who seemed to be exempt from expense accounts limits, one ethical lapse after another, as documented in these reports. I remember at the hearing, the confirmation hearing, Senator Salazar—it was unusual because he had been my seatmate over the years at the Senate Energy Committee—I said: Senator Salazar, you have to go in there and drain the swamp at the Minerals Management Service.

In fact, he certainly did that. Essentially, the successor agency has been free of scandal. I think that is representative of both the integrity and professionalism that Secretary Salazar has brought to the agency.

Also, I note after the gulf spill he overhauled the offshore drilling practices, ensured that they were beefed up in terms of safety while at the same time allowing for the drilling that is so important to the industry.

I am also going to reflect on Secretary Salazar’s accomplishments, mention that he has done yeoman work in terms of promoting green and renewable energy. I note in one of the comments about his departure that Christy Goldfuss, Public Lands Director at the Center for American Progress, stated Secretary Salazar championed “a new model of conservation which focused on partnerships with private land owners and States” and “that approach has paid off with cooperatives in the Everglades in Florida, the Prairie Potholes region of the Dakotas, and other areas.”

I would like to note something else as well about Secretary Salazar. I know Senators on both sides of the aisle would call him when they had those kinds of resource questions. I know Senator MURKOWSKI brought up one of Secretary Salazar’s final acts in office today. Under his leadership the State of Idaho and the Fish and Wildlife Service entered into an arrangement so that the State of Idaho’s plan for addressing the sage grouse could be implemented. I know this is a critical issue for Senator RISCH. He and I talked about it often. I am going to work with him on these issues, and what Secretary Salazar did today is an example of the new kind of partnership that we all are looking to the Interior Department and the states for, and certainly something I want to promote, and I know Senator MURKOWSKI shares that view.

I think it is fair to say that Sally Jewell has very large boots to fill. We all remember Secretary Salazar’s wonderful western boots and the anecdotes about them. She has certainly got a challenge to try to step in after a Secretary who has accomplished so much. But as I and Senator MURKOWSKI and the Washington Senators have outlined today, we believe strongly that Sally Jewell is up to this challenge. I hope she will receive a resounding vote in the Senate. I believe we are close to the point where we will be able to vote on Ms. Jewell.

For all the reasons that I and my colleagues have outlined this afternoon, I hope there will be very strong bipartisan support for Ms. Jewell when we vote.

With that I yield the floor. 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. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for a quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent all remaining time on the Jewell nomination be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. All time is yielded back.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sarah Jewell, of Washington, to be Secretary of the Interior?

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 87, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 94 Ex.]

YEAS—87

Alexander	Franken	Moran
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Graham	Murphy
Baucus	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Nelson
Bennet	Harkin	Paul
Blumenthal	Hatch	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Pryor
Boozman	Heitkamp	Reed
Boxer	Heller	Reid
Brown	Hirono	Risch
Burr	Hoeben	Roberts
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sanders
Cardin	Isakson	Schatz
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Coats	Kaine	Shaheen
Cochran	King	Shelby
Collins	Kirk	Stabenow
Coons	Klobuchar	Tester
Corker	Landrieu	Thune
Cornyn	Leahy	Toomey
Cowan	Levin	Udall (CO)
Crapo	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cruz	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—11

Barrasso	Fischer	Rubio
Chambliss	Johanns	Scott
Coburn	Lee	Vitter
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—2

Lautenberg	Rockefeller
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, tomorrow at 11 o'clock we are going to vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the gun legislation that is now before this body.

This morning and throughout the day, our friend from Connecticut spoke, a freshman Senator who was brought to the Senate with this tragedy having taken place shortly after he arrived. My friend the Presiding Officer, a longtime attorney general, the chief law enforcement officer of the State of Connecticut, has lived with this tragedy that happened at Sandy Hook like nothing that ever happened in his career. And, of course, for Senator HEINRICH, a new Senator, this was something he never appreciated he would be faced with.

I saw the pictures today of those little babies who were murdered, some of

them shot multiple times—little tiny kids shot multiple times. The shooting was on December 14, about 4 months ago—120 days. So the time has come—it has arrived—when we have to debate this issue. We have to have a response to this tragedy.

When this incident took place on December 14, it struck me, as it did everyone in America—virtually everyone in America; we had been through Aurora, CO—that vicious, brutal machine-gunning of people going to watch a movie, and then little kids getting killed in an elementary school, kindergartners, first-graders—so we need to respond, this great deliberative body, to what the American people want. So we are going to vote. It is time to vote. I hope we get cloture on this matter. We certainly should. After that, there is no reason not to start legislating immediately. I hope we do not have to go through this procedural mishmash—30 hours; somebody on the floor all the time; if people are not, there are dilatory tactics; only one quorum call—and all this. Let's get past that. If somebody has something to say, come and say it. But this week we are going to start legislating. We are going to start legislating whether there is cloture or not. One will be a little longer process. But we are going to start legislating on this bill this week. I hope we can get to it tomorrow.

I do not think it is any secret, if we are on this bill, I am going to—the first amendment in order will be the amendment to change the background checks that has been worked on for weeks by Senator MANCHIN, Senator KIRK, and Senator TOOMEY, and then we will decide where we go from there.

To all my friends, we are going to have amendments. Some of them are going to take a little bit of time. We are not going to finish the bill this week. I do not know if we will finish it next week. But that really does not matter. Are we going to legislate the right way? Are we going to legislate? I have in my mind these little children who were murdered. What we do here is not going to prevent all gun violence in America, but if we stop a few, isn't that remarkably important for us to do? I think we can do a lot more than saving the lives of just a few people.

But let's work on this bill. We are going to start. If we have to use up the 30 hours, we will use up the 30 hours. I think there are ways around that procedurally. I hope we do not have to test that. There are a number of amendments. We all know. We have been reading about them. There are lots of amendments; people have been waiting a long time for this legislation.

One of my Republican colleagues yesterday said: I have a number of germane amendments I want to offer.

I said: Fine. Good. Do it.

We know we have to do background checks, assault weapons, the ammunition capacity of clips or magazines, mental health. That is just to name a few of the things. And I repeat, we are

going to begin this process before we leave here this week.

I so appreciate the work done by Senators MANCHIN, TOOMEY, KIRK, and many others. My friend Senator SCHUMER has been working on this issue. My friend DICK DURBIN, who has been involved in guns for a long time, has been involved. I appreciate the work of everyone. As the press has indicated, we are likely going to get cloture on this tomorrow. I hope so. But, as I have told individual Senators, if we do not get cloture, we are going to have a vote in the Senate on capacity clips, assault weapons, background checks, and some mental health items or item. That we are going to do. I hope we can do it in the regular process.

We have had people for a long time now—my friends on the other side of the aisle—saying: We want regular order. We want to be able to offer amendments. Well, I do too. And I hope people will not see how many amendments they can offer, not see if they can set a record for how many amendments can be laid down, because we should have this as a civil process and culminating in a better set of laws for our people in this great country in which we live.

For those of us who have the opportunity to try to address this issue, I hope we all understand that the world is watching what we do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

NOMINATION OF SRI SRINIVASAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, earlier this afternoon I had the opportunity, the honor, to chair a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which we both serve, to consider the President's nomination of a highly qualified lawyer, Sri Srinivasan, to serve on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

I am encouraged by what the majority leader has just said about the very real possibility that we will get a vote on the floor of this Senate on vital and important issues affecting guns, immigration, and other issues, but what I speak to today is the absolutely essential role this Senate must fill of voting on qualified judges who have been nominated to the circuit courts of the United States.

Earlier today at this hearing, 10 of our colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, asked thoughtful questions, and Mr. Srinivasan gave thorough and thoughtful answers. I came away convinced that he has the background, the education, the skills, and, most importantly, the temperament to serve as a circuit court judge. And I was encouraged by comments of my colleagues, both Republican and Democratic, that they too were inclined to support this nomination.

Under normal historical circumstances, today's hearing would be the beginning of a deliberate, timely, orderly process—a process required of this body by article II, section 2 of our Constitution by which we advise and consent to the President's nominations.

We should, of course, carefully consider the qualifications of candidates and not serve as some rubberstamp, but neither should we be a firewall blocking qualified nominees from serving. Unfortunately, for some number of years, this Senate has, in some vital instances, served more as a firewall than as an advise and consent body. Instead of doing our due diligence with appropriate speed, we have seen delays, stalling tactics, and in some instances filibusters of highly qualified nominees.

Five years into President Obama's administration, the courts are still nearly 10 percent vacant. In my view, our courts should be above politics. When the President of either party submits a highly qualified candidate of good character and sound legal mind, absent exceptional circumstances, that candidate is entitled to a vote.

The actions or in this case inaction of the Senate with regard to the DC Circuit Court have consequences. The DC Circuit Court of Appeals has a series of vacancies, the result of which, in my view, are to delay and deny justice for Americans far beyond the boundaries of this District of Columbia.

The DC Circuit Court is often called the second most important in the Nation, because, like the Supreme Court, it handles cases that impact Americans all over our country. Regularly, it hears cases on issues ranging from terrorism and detention to the scope of Federal agency power. Yet it is critically understaffed. This circuit court has not seen a nominee confirmed since President George W. Bush's fourth nominee to that court was confirmed in 2006. Today, more than 1,500 days after President Obama has taken office, 4 of the 11 seats on the DC Circuit are open, making it more than one-third vacant and putting the remaining judges under undue strain to decide the complex and important cases before this court.

Contrary to the previous administration, this administration was recently recognized by the New York Times Editorial Board as putting forward nominees who are decidedly moderate. President Obama first nominated for this vacancy on this court the exceptionally qualified Caitlin Halligan, who waited more than 900 days for a simple up-or-down vote on the floor of this Chamber. She came with the American Bar Association's highest rating, glowing recommendations from bipartisan supporters, and a diverse legal career marked by distinctive service as New York's solicitor general. Nevertheless, sadly, Republican Senators successfully filibustered her nomination, and last month President Obama reluctantly withdrew Ms. Halligan from consideration.

We have today a chance for a fresh start with Mr. Srinivasan, who would serve equally well and ably on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. As he demonstrated in today's hearing, he has a sharp and capable legal mind. He has

served in the Solicitor General's office for both Republican and Democratic administrations. He has served in the private sector and the public sector and has earned bipartisan support from those who have worked with him.

In fact, he has been endorsed publicly in a letter from 12 former Solicitors General and Principal Deputy Solicitors General, six Democrats, six Republicans, for those who have served in Democratic and Republican administrations.

The letter, signed by conservative legal luminaries such as Paul Clement and Ted Olson, notes Mr. Srinivasan is "one of the best appellate lawyers in the country," with an "unsurpassed" work ethic who is "extremely well prepared to take on the intellectual rigors of serving on the D.C. Circuit."

At the same time, throughout the course of his career in private practice and as a public servant, he has represented clients with causes diverse enough that any individual policymaker or elected official is likely to disagree with some of them, including me. I disagree with a position he argued in *Rumsfeld v. Padilla* in support of the idea that the government has a right to detain U.S. citizens indefinitely, but I do not ascribe that position to him.

One of the most foundational principles of our legal system is that we do not ascribe to the attorney the position which he successfully and vigorously advocates on behalf of his client. I will not block his nomination simply because I might disagree with the position he took on behalf of a client in one case.

Sri, in my view, is a highly capable attorney, with the character and demeanor to serve on the bench. I will strongly support his nomination. I am following in this instance the wisdom of Chief Justice Roberts, who has said: "It's a tradition of the American Bar that goes back before the founding of our nation that lawyers are not identified with the positions of their clients."

So I say to my colleagues, let's move forward in that spirit. Let's return to our historic constitutionally mandated role. Let's give Mr. Srinivasan a speedy up-or-down vote, which I believe he has earned with decades of public service and public sector experience.

To be honest, if this nomination cannot move forward, if this nomination is filibustered for what can only be political reasons, I cannot imagine what nomination could move forward to this court. A filibuster of this nomination would sadly prove to me, just as it did to those of the other party in 2005, that the judicial nomination standards and procedures at work are unworkable, the system is broken, and it would lead to a reconsideration.

There was a crisis of this sort when the parties were of opposite configuration in 2005 that led the majority to threaten the so-called nuclear option to end judicial filibusters by the party

in which I serve, a result that was avoided only at the last moment for the good of the Senate and the Nation. I urge my colleagues to come together to give this good man a vote and avoid another such crisis today.

Let's do our job so the judges of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals can do theirs for the people of our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

GAO DUPLICATION REPORT

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I would note to my colleague from the State of Delaware, if I heard him correctly, we just now have had a hearing on a nominee for the DC Circuit Court. He is not even on the Executive Calendar because he has not even been voted out of the Judiciary Committee. So the Senator makes a lot of great points. But I think the fact we are talking about a potential judge who has not even cleared the Judiciary Committee yet may be a bit premature.

He will get a fair hearing. I think we have noted that more judicial nominees were approved in the last two Congresses than the two Congresses before under the last 4 years of the Bush administration.

I rise to say this evening there has been a lot in the news. One thing that has not been in the news very much is the third and final report of the Government Accountability Office in terms of looking at duplication within the Federal Government.

I hope as the American people listen to this, they will take a couple things away. No. 1, we have a great organization called the Government Accountability Office. They have done a wonderful job. We mandated this 4 years ago. They have been on time with their reports. What they have shown us has been tremendously revealing. The first thing I want Americans to note is Congress has failed to act on the first two reports—no substantive action whatsoever.

One significant thing in the Senate was the elimination of the ethanol mandate. With this report today comes an estimated \$98 billion a year in savings. What we take by looking at this report could potentially yield us \$98 billion in savings by eliminating duplication in what they just found in this one report.

Let me go through it for 1 minute. They found 679 different renewable energy programs across 23 agencies—not across the Energy Department. If we are going to have renewable programs, that is where we should have it. Across 23 different agencies of which we spend \$15 billion a year, they found instances where we are giving grants from different agencies to the same projects for the same thing, spending three times as much money as we should be spending on the one project even if we did not have that.

So the potential for us to work our way out of the consequences of the sequester is at our fingertips. Here, drug

abuse prevention and treatment, 76 separate programs, not run through the Department of Health and Human Services, run through 10 different departments with overlap that shows no metrics but multiple agencies having programs doing exactly the same thing: \$4.5 billion a year. That is half the size of my Oklahoma State budget a year.

Catfish inspection. I saw in the President's budget today three different agencies where one has to meet the requirements before they can have their catfish inspected. The only thing they did not recommend in the budget today is getting rid of the Agriculture Department. They approve your cheese pizza. But the FDA approves your pepperoni pizza. So if you are a pizza maker, you have to comply with one agency on one type of pizza and another agency on a different type of pizza.

Defense foreign language support. Those are people who come in and help us learn other languages, interpret for us other languages so we can have an effective response and not have a communication error. We have 159 different programs in the Pentagon alone. What they are estimating is that we could save tons of money. We do not know exactly how much it costs because the Pentagon does not know how much they are spending on it, which is another one of the problems.

The GAO report said this week one of the reasons they cannot estimate the savings more accurately is because the majority of the agencies have no idea what they are spending on these programs. The question I have had is, why not? If they do not know what they are spending, why are we not doing something about it?

Higher education assistance: 21 different programs, four different agencies—not all in the Education Department, which is from where I think we would do education assistance, \$174.7 billion a year. That includes Pell grants. That includes student loans, the cost associated with student loans.

Veterans employment training. We have six programs, not all of them run by the Veterans Affairs Department but run by the Veterans Affairs Department and other agencies. We are spending \$1.2 billion. Here is what we know. We are running these programs, and veterans unemployment, even though they have a skill when they come out of the military, is higher than what the average is in the country. So it is obviously not working.

Also, in the report is something that is very important to me. Let me find it, if I might for a moment. GAO's report exposes a government office that does some good things. It is called the National Technical Information Service. It was established in 1950 and tasked with collecting and distributing certain reports. Despite the fact—here is what GAO found: 75 percent of the information that NTIS supplies, all you have to do is Google it. You do not

have to go to NTIS. All you have to do is Google it. So 75 percent of their budget is spent providing reports to other government agencies and other people that you can get with the touch of your iPhone. Why would we continue to do that?

This is just one example that I bring up. We are continuing to fund an agency where three-quarters of what they do has no bearing on it. If it went away, it would not affect us at all. The other thing is they charge other Federal agencies a fee for this information that the other Federal agencies, at a touch of their computer, can get for free.

It is another case of inefficiency. What else did the GAO report show? What the GAO report showed is that we have done nothing of significance in the last 2 years based on what they have recommended we do given their first two reports. Our office calculates, based on the three reports that GAO has given us, that we could save in excess of \$250 billion a year if we would follow the recommendations of the Government Accountability Office.

If you are sitting out there wondering why we are having tax proposals increased in the President's budget and that we are having such a hard time with the sequester, you only have to look at one place; that is, Congress. Congress refuses to follow and do the oversight. We have had GAO do a lot of it. We refuse to pass amendments that eliminate duplication. We refuse to make the tough choices. So, consequently, we are spending \$250 billion a year—that is \$2.5 trillion over 10 years—that we should not be spending.

Where does the money come from to pay for that? It comes from our kids. It doesn't just come in dollars, it comes from a reduced standard of living and limited opportunities in the future because we don't have the courage or the work ethic to address the very real issues which are in front us, on the tips of our fingers, where the money is, where we could actually save money.

We have had almost 1,000 days since the first report came out. We have done one significant thing in the Senate; we have eliminated the ethanol tax credit and saved \$6 billion the first year and about \$4 to \$5 billion afterward. This is the one thing we did. We fought tooth and nail while we did it, but we did it.

This is one bill to save \$6 billion in 3 years out of \$250 billion. No wonder the confidence level in the Congress is at 13 percent. What we are actually doing is throwing away our kids' future as we fail to address these issues.

When we are spending money we don't have on things we don't absolutely need, and we are borrowing money against our children's future, I can't think of a greater immoral act of the Congress. It is not red hot lit up as some of the more controversial issues such as the gun bill we are doing or immigration; however, I will state it will have a profound effect if we were to address it in terms of the future of our

country, the health of our country, and the job-creating capacity for our country.

Yet what is it about your Senator or your Congressman which keeps them from having the courage to challenge the status quo? I know what it is. It is the desire to get reelected by not offending anybody.

We don't have tough oversight hearings. We will not allow bills through committees which actually eliminate waste. There is a bill that has passed the House sitting on the docket right now called the SKILLS Act. It takes 47 job-training programs and puts them into 6. It saves billions of dollars a year and puts metrics on the outcome. We will not even bring it to the floor even though it saves \$5 to \$6 billion a year in addition to markedly improving the outcome of our job-training programs. It is not here.

It passed the House. The House is doing oversight in every committee right now. The Senate is not.

The House is reading the GAO reports and acting on them. They are not right 100 percent of the time, they are right about 95 percent of the time. Nothing is going to be done about it unless we have an oversight hearing to actually discover information. Nothing actually happens unless we write a bill to change things.

Yet this is not the emphasis in the Senate. There can be no greater emphasis than for us to get out of the financial troubles we are in. There can be no greater emphasis than for us to create an environment which produces jobs in the country when we stop wasting money at the Federal Government level.

Our answer is more government—not less, more. Our answer, according to the President's budget, is more taxes, not less.

I commend the President. He has \$25 billion worth of programs he wishes to eliminate in his budget, \$25.8 billion. He could send over what the GAO said and eliminate \$250 billion a year.

The problems are not really with the President, it is with us: our intransigence to do our job and keep in our focal point what is most important. What is most important is our future and the capability for us to create opportunity in the future for our children and our grandchildren.

I have been fighting this for 8 years. There is a lot of oversight which has been done, tons of reports. The American people are going to eventually learn everything that is in this report because there is an app coming out which will be on people's cell phones very soon, and they may find out anything about everything where the government is wasting money. They will be able to look at an address in their own city and see how much money a company, business, or that farmer received from their Federal tax dollars. They will be able to see that in about 3 months.

When the American people discover our incompetence, it will not matter

that we didn't offend somebody. They are going to see we didn't do our job. We are not doing our job because we are not addressing the things we actually have some control over.

What do we do now? Here is what GAO explains: Although Congress had made some limited progress in addressing the issues we have previously identified, additional steps are needed to address the remaining areas to achieve associated benefits. A number of the issues are difficult but not impossible. Implementing many of the actions will take time and sustained leadership.

The key word there is "leadership." Who is going to lead in the Senate to solve our problems? It is not party identified. Real leadership about solving the real problem is in front of us.

It is time for each congressional committee in the Senate to undertake the waste and overlap identified by GAO within their jurisdiction, begin writing bills to consolidate and eliminate these programs, and put metrics as far as performance on every one of them. It is also time for the White House to put real muscle into their proposal coming in through OMB.

I am thankful we will have a new OMB Director. She will be terrific. She has the skills, dedication, and qualifications. I praise the President for nominating her. She will fly through the Senate because she is superqualified for the job. Also, she knows what she is doing. But it will not matter what she does if we don't respond, if we don't do our work.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. President, I would like to take the time now just to spend a moment or two on the guns issue.

I spent a lot of time over the last few months thinking about Sandy Hook. I actually met with a large number of those people today. I am an A-plus-rated member, a lifetime member of the NRA. I firmly believe in the second amendment, and I firmly believe in the tenth amendment.

We are hearing a lot of politics about the gun situation. What we are not hearing is how do we really keep guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them. This is what we need to be addressing.

Whether this would prevent a Sandy Hook, nobody knows. There are some things we do know. What we do know is the vast majority of people who are convicted the first time of a gun crime didn't steal their gun, and they didn't buy it from a federally licensed firearm dealer. They bought it from one of us.

The very fact we are going to have a piece of legislation go through here which will not solve the real problem of keeping guns out of the hands of the mentally impaired and felons is a shame. There are ways we can do that.

I haven't spoken to one owner I know who hasn't agreed with the fact that they would like to know if they sold their gun—they don't want it to go into the hands of a felon or somebody mentally impaired. Yet we are hung up

on records. The proposal which comes from Senator TOOMEY, Senator MANCHIN, and Senator KIRK is a step forward. I will not deny it. However, tell me how a record which will only be looked at after a crime is committed is going to help anybody who is a victim of a crime. It is not.

If we really wish to solve this problem, what we need to do is put into the hands of Americans who are law abiding the ability to know they didn't sell their gun to somebody who is on the NTIS list. Give me the ability to know when I sell my gun to a stranger that they are not on that NTIS list.

This has been rejected out of hand because there is no record with it. The reason there doesn't need to be a record is because we are putting an onus on responsible citizens doing the right thing. Also, the government has no right to have a record of when I transfer a gun. They do have a right to expect me to be a responsible citizen when I sell my gun.

The question is, Are we as a body going to take something which is far less than appropriate to actually keep guns out of the hands of felons and mentally impaired and call it a day? This is what is getting ready to happen. Are we going to make a difference and not impair second amendment rights at all and not impair tenth amendment rights because we give States supremacy on that? If they want to give us something more or different, they may.

We are going to go through a great deal of debate and have all these amendments. I thank Senator REID for making it an open amendment process. I called and spoke to him last night. I said I was happy to support going to this bill provided we use the regular Senate procedures and we actually are able to offer amendments which are germane to this bill in any number of ways. He is going to allow this process. I take him at his word he will allow this.

When it is all said and done, will we have made a difference to those families who are wanting us to make a difference? Would we have made a difference?

If we don't allow responsible citizens the ability to know whether they are selling their gun to a felon or a mentally impaired person, we haven't made any difference. We have made a lot of noise, but we haven't made a difference.

Let me tell you why the Toomey-Manchin proposal will not work. The largest gun show in America is in Tulsa, OK. It is called the Wanenmacher Gun Show. Tens of thousands of people come to it twice, maybe three times a year. The sale will be impeded by requiring an FFL license, which is to say a gun dealer at the show will be required to do a background search against the NTIS list for somebody who purchases a gun at the show whether they are buying from that dealer or not.

The first thing which will happen is the Federal firearms licensed dealer will say: I want a fee for transferring this gun, for doing the work—and rightly so. I don't blame him. What is the option?

The option which will happen is the people who are going to make the deal buy the gun. Subsequently, 2 or 3 days after the gun show, they will buy the gun because they will not be at the gun show anymore.

Look at the opposite side of that. If we had a portal or we could get a certificate which says someone is not on the NTIS list and are able to buy a gun anytime, anywhere, somebody selling a gun would have a pin code to make sure their identity is correct and see their ID. Whether a person is in a gun show or outside a gun show, the responsible gun seller will know they didn't sell a gun to somebody mentally impaired or a felon.

We will have all sorts of statements, but what we are going to do isn't going to decrease guns in the hands of felons and the mentally impaired. We can say we need to win. If we want a bill to get through the Senate and get through the House which will actually make a difference in people's lives, that felons and the mentally impaired aren't empowered to buy guns, we need to do something different.

My friends in the second amendment community don't even like my proposal. I understand this. But there is no impairment when all you need to do is go to your cell phone to receive a clearance to know somebody is not on the NTIS list.

We get to decide. Are we going to do it in a way which smells good, looks good, but doesn't do anything? Are we going to fight to do something which actually makes a difference? I hope we choose the latter. I am not convinced we will. The reason Senator MANCHIN couldn't get me to agree to what he had agreed to with Senator TOOMEY is because I don't think it is going to work. I think the vast majority of gun purchasers at gun shows are going to wait to buy them later from the very same people who were going to sell them at a gun show so they do not have to pay a fee and wait 3 or 4 days on a background check. If that happens, what good have we done? How have we made a difference? We haven't.

It is a sad fact, as a practicing physician, and having done training and surgery, I have had to operate on a lot of people who ended up with the consequences of a weapon being used on them.

Oklahoma has a gun culture, and I own multiple guns. I cherish my second amendment right. But with that right comes some responsibility to do the right thing. Liberty without responsibility isn't liberty, and it will not last unless we attach responsibility to it. So if we really believe in the second amendment, and if we really believe in the tenth amendment, we will relook at what we are going to do in terms of

gun transfers. There is a way to do it that will actually make a big difference in people's lives in this country, and it may actually get through the House.

What we are proposing, what we are seeing proposed right now, is never going to pass the House. Consequently, we will have done something in the Senate with no long-term consequences and actually making a difference for the American people.

Mr. President, I thank the Presiding Officer for the time. I yield the floor, and I 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. GRASSLEY. 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. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET THATCHER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who passed away Monday.

In the 1970s, Britain was mired in debt and even had to go to the IMF for a bailout. Britain was known then as "The Sick Man of Europe"—how we think of Greece today.

Governments of both political parties had tried to stimulate the economy through Keynesian spending policies and government intervention into the economy was widespread.

Britain faced massive strikes in the winter of 1978–1979, known as the Winter of Discontent. There was talk that Britain had become ungovernable.

Then Margaret Thatcher came on the scene. Her policies of fiscal responsibility and promotion of "free enterprise" completely reversed Britain's economic decline. Her foreign policy achievements were no less impressive. This was the era of détente.

Most people accepted that the Soviet Union was strong and successful and was here to stay so we had to learn to live with it. It was fashionable for political leaders to talk as though the Soviet system was just different, but no better or worse than our own.

Margaret Thatcher had no hesitation in pointing out the truth that the Soviet Union and its satellites held their citizens in bondage and she encouraged dissidents who sought freedom. In fact, it was a speech in 1976 when she was still just leader of the opposition in which she warned about the Soviet military buildup that caused a Soviet army newspaper to coin her nickname the "Iron Lady."

Together with President Reagan, she sought every opportunity to undermine the Soviet system until it collapsed. If this doesn't sound like a bold position

today, it is only because Reagan and Thatcher were proven so profoundly right that everyone now claims to have always agreed.

I should also note that there is a temptation for many people remembering Mrs. Thatcher's legacy to note that she was the first female prime minister of the United Kingdom. While this is a significant historical fact, to mention it as though it was one of her most important accomplishments comes off as patronizing.

Margaret Thatcher rejected the identity politics that is so popular today. She said:

I've always believed that what matters in politics, as in the rest of life, isn't who you are or where you come from, but what you believe and what you want to do with your life. What matters are your convictions.

Because of her convictions and because she acted on those convictions, she restored Britain's economy, national spirit, and international reputation. Millions of people around the world now live in peace and freedom thanks in large part to her efforts. As a result, Margaret Thatcher is unquestionably one of the most significant leaders of the 20th century.

Mrs. Thatcher's legacy shouldn't simply be relegated to history though. We have a lot to learn from her today. As the President submits his overdue budget this week, I would ask my colleagues to ponder this quote by Margaret Thatcher:

If spending money like water was the answer to our country's problems, we would have no problems now. If ever a nation has spent, spent, spent and spent again, ours has. Today that dream is over. All of that money has got us nowhere but it still has to come from somewhere.

Those who urge us to relax the squeeze, to spend yet more money indiscriminately in the belief that it will help the unemployed and the small businessman, are not being kind—or compassionate—or caring. They are not the friends of the unemployed or the small business. They are asking us to do again the very thing that caused the problems in the first place.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, are we in a period of morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is on the motion to proceed at this point.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I thought so. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

INAUGURATION OF JOE BERTOLINO

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont is a special place. In a State that abounds in natural beauty, the Kingdom, as many Vermonters affectionately call the State's northeast corner, is heralded for its rural splendor. While the

rural character and unspoiled landscape is what defines the Kingdom to many, it is also home to an academic institution that has educated Vermonters for more than 100 years.

Since its founding in 1911, Lyndon State College has served as an economic engine for the region, educating students in a diverse range of academic pursuits. Lyndon has distinguished itself by developing academic programs that mirror the emerging economic needs of the community, such as its first-of-its-kind Mountain Recreation Management program. At the same time, Lyndon remains committed to a liberal arts education and educating students to be well-rounded professionals.

On Friday, April 19, Lyndon State will inaugurate its fifteenth president, Joe Bertolino. Joe comes to Vermont from Hunter College in New York, where he served as vice president for enrollment management and academic affairs. Joe's passion for working with students is evident in his easygoing manner and in how he has engaged students since arriving on campus last summer. At a college of only 1,400 students, Joe's personal touch sets the clear tone that under his leadership Lyndon will be a student-centered institution. Joe has undertaken a number of creative initiatives to build community spirit among Lyndon students and alumni, including an informal policy called "Go Green, Go Gold," that encourages the Lyndon State community to wear the school colors on Wednesdays.

Beyond this personal approach, Joe has laid out an ambitious plan for the college's future. I have had the opportunity to meet Joe during a recent visit to Washington and am encouraged to welcome his energy and creative thinking to Vermont. Lyndon State College is a vital part of Vermont's higher education community, and I wish Joe the best as he is officially inaugurated as the college's next president.

I request unanimous consent that an article from Lyndon State about President Bertolino be printed in the RECORD.

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

LOVING LYNDON

(By Leon Thompson)

[From the Lyndon State College Twin Tower Topics]

To the director of YMCA Camp Ockanickon, Joe Bertolino—an accordion-playing member of his high school debate team in New Jersey—didn't seem so suited for counseling other geeks. Not at first.

"Do you hike?" the director asked. "No," Joe said. "Swim?" "No." "Boat?" "No." "Arts and crafts?" "Maybe."

The director wondered, "Is there anything you do?" "I get along with people," Joe said. "That's when my life began," Dr. Joseph Bertolino said this fall, a week after delivering Lyndon State College's State of the College Address, as the fifteenth president. "To me, the meaning of life is relationships, and leadership is all about relationships."

Joe, 49, officially succeeded Interim President Steve Gold on July 1; LSC offered Joe the position in February. For months, Joe traveled between Queens College, in New York City, where he was vice president for enrollment management and student affairs, and LSC, as part of his transition. Joe began his LSC tenure with a 100-day listening tour that involved the College and Northeast Kingdom communities. He has represented LSC twice in the nation's capital, and during his October 4 State of the College Address—preceded by a short, Chaplin-esque silent film about him—he rode into Academic & Student Activity Center, room 100 on his bike, donning a suit, and conveyed a clear message to 200 students, faculty, and staff.

"At Lyndon State College, students come first." Joe called the state of the college "excellent." Enrollment is up, the budget is balanced—with a surplus—and LSC has five new faculty and 15 new staff members and administrators this year.

"Every student has said to me, without fail, 'Joe, I love it here,'" he told his audience. Joe aims to bolster internal and external communications at LSC. His lengthy to-do list contains a new public relations campaign, with a focus on social media, and he wants to erase the off-campus community's perception of LSC as "Harvard on the hill" by continuing to build strong partnerships in the Northeast Kingdom.

He said LSC is a key stakeholder in Jay Peak Resort's plans to invest \$500 million in the region over the next decade—a plan that could mean more internships for LSC students and jobs for graduates.

"Lyndon State College is the college of the Northeast Kingdom," Joe said. Joe has also started an electronic suggestion box—"Joe Wants to Know"—where anyone can post anonymous concerns and comments. During his one-hour speech, Joe posed challenges to alums: \$1 million for an all-weather athletic field, and \$1 million for a new version of the old Vail towers. "The response from our alumni has been great," he said.

Joe also asked faculty and staff to increase their in-house contributions, and he imposed a lighthearted, non-mandatory policy called "Go Green, Go Gold," where he asks the campus community to wear LSC colors each Wednesday. "If you haven't figured it out by now," he said, after dismounting his bike, before his speech, "I like to have fun. Life is too short, and the world is complicated enough."

"I believe I am where I'm supposed to be, and I believe I'll be where I'm supposed to be," he said. "It's been a long time since I've been in a place where I felt I haven't belonged."

Days later, while in his office—"a beautiful corner of the world," he said—Joe called himself a motivated, goal oriented Type A personality that leads by surrounding himself with the talent to implement his vision. He is a foodie, a Lion King fan, and textbook introvert who usually recharges alone.

"As soon as I hit the front of a group, or a stage, I'm on," he said. "I am representing and selling LSC. That's what I am doing. But I'm perfectly comfortable being by myself in the house at the end of a long day."

Joe's social circle was small during 16 years of Catholic School in Glendora, N.J. His Italian father, also a Joe, worked for AT&T. His Irish mother, Eileen, was a nurse. He played accordion competitively for 10 years (and still plays a little). When Joe entered the University of Scranton, Pa., in 1982, "There was a group for everyone," he said. "In high school, there are popular groups. In college, there aren't popular groups. There are different groups."

While earning his bachelor's degree in psychology/sociology in Scranton, Joe spent

some time in seminary school and his summers at Camp Ockanickon, where he surprisingly became "the go-to guy." He worked there for eight years, went on to become a board member and president, and will celebrate his 30-year relationship with Camp Ockanickon in the summer of 2013.

"Somehow, I became this listener, this counselor," he said of camp. "It just happened." That inherent and well-honed skill helped Joe build an impressive, 10-page curriculum vitae filled with publications, workshops, consulting, honors, awards, and practically every facet of education, from teaching to administration. He earned his doctorate from Columbia University's Teachers College in 2003.

After eight years at Queens College, Joe left this year with responsibility for 22 departments and more than 200 employees. He also created veterans' services and a wellness center on campus. "Joe stands out as a president who will attempt to engage, in an extremely supportive way, every single student we have," said Jonathan Davis, LSC Class of '97 and dean of students. "I've already witnessed that in the form of students walking into his office to ask a question or simply to chat."

Student recruitment and retention is also part of Joe's mission at LSC. He has charged Davis with co-chairing a team that would use data and strategies to increase the College's retention rates. Davis was an LSC student when Peggy Williams was president, in the 1990s. Williams was already one of Joe's mentors when he learned about the president's vacancy at LSC last December.

Joe was considering other job offers for higher salaries at larger schools, "but I just kept coming back to Lyndon," he said. Enamored after his first trip to campus, and he went with no expectations, he called his partner, Bil, in New Jersey and said, "The good news is I think I interviewed well, and I liked it. The bad news is I think I interviewed well, and I liked it."

He elaborated further in his office more recently: "Initially, I underestimated Lyndon in so many ways. Then, when I got here, it was nothing like I thought it would be. The people are passionate. The College is in great shape. I fell in love." Bil is in New Jersey for now, working at Rutgers University and living in the house he and Joe shared before Joe moved to Lyndonville. Joe converted the lower level of the LSC president's house—"our house," he calls it—to all-purpose meeting space. He lives upstairs.

"I believe I am where I'm supposed to be, and I believe I'll be where I'm supposed to be," he said. "It's been a long time since I've been in a place where I felt I haven't belonged."

TRIBUTE TO THE SOMERSET POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mr. McCONNELL, Madam President, I stand here to pay tribute to the honorable men and women, past and present, of the Somerset Police Department in Pulaski County, KY, for 125 years of faithful service and tireless dedication.

Founded on March 13, 1888, the Somerset Police Department has admirably served the city and surrounding area and to this day represents the best of our State's citizens. One example of their thorough care for and involvement in the community is their annual charity basketball game. Typically, the officers challenge a local high-school team to an exhibition match—

this year they took on the local fire department, with the proceeds from the event going to support a local girl who suffers from Type I diabetes. Their reputation for "coming to the rescue" was displayed in a different way than their daily work, but displayed nonetheless, and their efforts certainly are appreciated by those in need who benefit from the support raised by their charity.

I rise not only to celebrate those who serve, but also those we have lost in service. We are grateful for dedicated officers of the Somerset Police Department who risk their very lives to protect and bring order to their city.

At this time, I would like to applaud the Somerset Police Department on the 125th anniversary of its founding, and I request that an article recognizing this occasion from a Pulaski County, KY, newspaper be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Commonwealth Journal, March 16, 2013]

125 YEARS OF SERVICE: SOMERSET POLICE DEPARTMENT FOUNDED MARCH 13, 1888—STAFF REPORT, COMMONWEALTH JOURNAL

SOMERSET.—The Somerset Police Department recently celebrated 125 years of service in the community.

The history of SPD dates all the way back to March 13, 1888, when Mayor A. Wolf appointed John B. Ingram as the first chief of police for the newly formed City of Somerset.

The police department would grow along with the city's population and physical boundaries over the next 125 years.

Still, some have lost their lives in the line of duty.

"As the department gets a year older, it is important to remember those officers who lost their lives serving the citizens of our city," stated Lt. Shannon Smith, with SPD.

Somerset Chief of Police Silas West was shot and killed in 1928 while attempting to arrest a drunk person on the square. Patrolman Walter McKinley Massingale was shot and killed on Halloween night in 1929 while investigating a bootlegger on South Maple Street. And in 1957, Police Chief Harold Catron was shot on his porch on Jasper Street, and he would later die from those wounds in 1964.

"Our 125th anniversary is a milestone to our department," said SPD Acting Police Chief Major Doug Nelson. "Through hard work, rigorous training, and an established level of professionalism, the men and women of the Somerset Police Department will continue to serve our community to make it a safe place to live and work."

61ST NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. President, on behalf of Senator PRYOR and myself, I ask unanimous consent that the transcript of the 61th Annual National Prayer Breakfast be printed in the RECORD.

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

61ST NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013, WASHINGTON, DC, CO-CHAIRS: SENATOR JEFF SESSIONS, SENATOR MARK PRYOR

Senator MARK PRYOR: Let me open by saying, "Good morning fellow sinners." My name is MARK PRYOR, from Arkansas, and this is my brother, JEFF SESSIONS, from Alabama. Together, Jeff and I chair the weekly Senate breakfast group, which means we get to chair this "slightly larger" event this morning.

Senator JEFF SESSIONS: Thank you all for taking on the adventure of getting here this morning. We have a challenging experience planned for you this morning. We call this the Prayer Breakfast, not only because we come together to pray, but because so much prayer goes into this event, and hopefully, so much prayer comes out of it.

Senator PRYOR: Everything that happens over the next 90 minutes has really come about through prayer. As a matter of fact, one of the hundreds of volunteers that make this morning possible, literally came in very early this morning and prayed over each place setting here—prayed over each of you.

Senator SESSIONS: Prayer is not a spectator sport. We hope this experience enriches your own life of prayer, for the good of the nation, for the world and for your family.

Senator PRYOR: Let us join our hearts in prayer. God of the universe, who we individually worship in many different ways and languages, bring us together this morning in a shared experience of praise, understanding and commitment. Our world and our lives fall short of what you created them to be. Use this time to bless us, to bless our leaders, and especially our President, with a sense of who you are and how we all need to change. We are thankful for the food we are enjoying and friendships old and new. Be present in each of our hearts today, in your Holy, precious and matchless name, Amen.

Senator SESSIONS: Enjoy (what's left of) your breakfast.

Good morning. We've had a wonderful time together to discuss issues and have a joyful noise. We thank you for your attention.

Senator PRYOR: It's overwhelming to think of the pathways that each person took to get to this event today. Some from little villages halfway around the world and some from just 12 blocks away, so thank you all for coming.

Senator SESSIONS: This huge event, which has taken place for 61 years now, began with a group of people who happened to be leaders wanting to get together for breakfast and for prayer. One thing I know for sure is that life is complicated and is likely to get more complicated tomorrow than yesterday. But as members of the weekly Senate prayer breakfast group, we've learned that taking time each week to meet, to take off the disguises that we wear and pray and share our lives together, makes life better.

Senator PRYOR: In the modern world and especially in a city like this, there are thousands of things that drive us apart—politics, ideology and even religion. Today, though, we come together in the Spirit of Jesus who taught us to love one another, treat others as we want to be treated and to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It would be a whole lot better world if we just listened to Him.

Senator SESSIONS: As you look around the room, understand that you're sharing this meal with people from more than 140 countries, all 50 states, heads of government, and leaders of all kinds. Through prayer, we believe God has brought us together for a reason. As you listen closely to the program, try to figure out what God is saying to you. And as you've heard, this event is hosted by

members of the House and Senate and I would like to ask all the members of the House and Senate who are present, to stand at this time. We're also honored to be joined by two prime ministers, the Prime Minister of Serbia, His Excellency Ivica Dacic, and the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo. Thank you so much for being with us.

Senator PRYOR: I would like to introduce the head table that will lead us through this experience. I'll start on my right. Today you could say that you ate breakfast with the President and a gold medalist. At the end of our program, our closing prayer will be offered by Olympic champion, Gabrielle Douglas, whose new book is appropriately subtitled "My Leap of Faith." Next to her is former U.S. Senator, Cabinet member and President of the Red Cross, Elizabeth Dole. Elizabeth, believe it or not, was our breakfast speaker 26 years ago. She will give a reading from the Holy Scriptures. Next to her is California Representative, JANICE HAHN, one of two co-chairs of the House prayer breakfast group, and next year she'll be standing in my place here. Then we have Admiral and Mrs. Jonathan Greenert. He is the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, which puts him in charge of about 300,000 sailors, 300 ships and 3,500 aircraft. He will offer a prayer for our national leaders. Next, we have the spouse of my co-chair, Mary Sessions. And please join me in welcoming the passionate, principled and inspirational First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama.

Senator SESSIONS: Continuing down the table, we have our friend and former colleague, the good Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN. On the other side of our speaker is my colleague and friend, CHUCK SCHUMER. He's the pride of P.S. 197 in Brooklyn, New York and a dedicated member of Congress for amazingly 30 years, and a key member of the Democratic leadership. Chuck will be offering a reading from the Holy Scripture. Next to him is another good friend and former colleague of ours, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar. In his day job, Ken is responsible for more than 500 million acres of United States land. He is a former chair of this Senate prayer breakfast and will be offering a prayer for world leaders. Next to him is JANICE HAHN's sidekick for the next year, co-chair of the House breakfast group, LOUIE GOHMERT. He is a member of the House for 8 years and is from East Texas. And finally, visiting from Italy, Mr. Andrea Primicerio, and our soloist, Andrea Bocelli. Mr. Bocelli has gone from a small farming village near Pisa, Italy to selling more than 80 million records worldwide. I read that, at last count, in addition to song writing, he plays 9 instruments. This morning, he will play the most beautiful instrument God has created, the human voice. Join me in welcoming our soloist, Andrea Bocelli. [Song.]

Senator CHARLES SCHUMER: Good morning. In the Jewish tradition, we are given not only an English name but a Hebrew name and my Hebrew name is Yesha'yahu—Isaiah. So I was particularly honored when Mark asked me to read from the Book of Isaiah. This is Isaiah 55:6-13,

"Seek the Lord, while He may be found, call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on them; and to our God, for He will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain

and the snow come down from the heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song before you and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renowned for an everlasting sign that will endure forever."

Representative LOUIE GOHMERT: It is such a pleasure to be here and it's such a pleasure to share our Thursday morning prayer breakfast with you. My co-chair in the House is JANICE HAHN. It's a surprise for some people, after they see the way we go back and forth and debate, to see that the Prayer Breakfast is truly bipartisan. We work together. We pray together. And there's something that really brings people together when you pray together. It's the belief in the power of prayer that brings us together.

My wife and I have tried to teach that to our three girls. When they were old enough to pray, Cathy and I and our three girls would gather around one of the girls' beds and we would pray each night. One night we had some nose spray that a doctor prescribed for our middle daughter, Caroline—she'd been having real serious sinus problems. She didn't want it up her nose—but I was bigger than her. It was going to be good for her according to the doctor, so we got it up the nose. But there was a lot of crying, wailing and gnashing of teeth. But once the nose spray had been administered and the tears subsided, the crying stopped, we gathered for prayers. Katie prayed first and then Caroline and Caroline finished her prayer by saying "And please God, help Sarah (the little one), mind her own business and quit being such a pest. And help her to just leave me and Katie alone." Little Sarah had the last prayer, and in her little angelic voice she said, "Please God, help Daddy stick some more medicine up Caroline's nose." We had taught them how to pray but not necessarily what it was for.

So on Thursday mornings we gather, not to pray that God will help us to stick something up our opponent's nose, but we pray; and God grants mending and healing and blessing and leadership, and it's a beautiful thing to see those come together. It does make us better. It makes us stronger. And it makes the government work better. Which is why Benjamin Franklin, in his own words—his own handwriting—said, "In the beginning contest with Great Britain when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room. Our prayers are heard and they were graciously answered." Janice and I and our other colleagues have seen those prayers answered and it's what brings us together. Thanks for joining with us today.

Representative JANICE HAHN: Good morning. Mr. President, Madam First Lady, Mr. Vice President, Senators, distinguished guests; I'm so delighted to be here this morning with all of you. It's such an honor to co-chair the House Congressional prayer breakfast with my friend and colleague, Congressman LOUIE GOHMERT. His colleagues have said, "This is the only chairmanship that Speaker BOEHNER can't remove him from for bad behavior." Only God can do that.

Today's Prayer Breakfast offers an opportunity for us to set aside political labels and come together to be inspired and pray for the critical issues that are facing our nation and the world. I was elected to Congress in the middle of one of the most bitter, rancorous

and divided periods in our nation's history. But in the midst of that discord, there was one place that I found that we could set aside our partisan bickering and our differences and come together—a place where once a week, we could be there for each other with our God. That place was the weekly Congressional prayer breakfast. I've found some unlikely friends in that breakfast. But they have helped me to be a better member of Congress and to better serve my God and my constituents.

Faith has always been a strong part of my life and my story. I grew up in the church. My grandparents on my mother's side were missionaries to Japan. And my grandmother on my father's side, in a moment of deep despair and helplessness, turned to God for help in raising her seven little boys under the age of 10 when her husband died suddenly. That decision that my grandmother Hattie made, helped me find my journey of faith. Every week when a member of Congress comes to our prayer breakfast and tells their own journey of faith, it gives us a bond that can't be broken. We believe in the power of prayer and every week, we give thanks when God has answered our prayers. Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I have nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day." May we all continue to believe that our own wisdom is insufficient. God bless you all.

Admiral Jonathan Greenert: Good Morning, Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President, Senators, Congressmen, distinguished guests. Many times many of you have said, even today, to those of us that wear the cloth of the nation, "thank you for your service." And on behalf of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen, may I say thank you for your service and your support to your armed forces. Please join me in a prayer for our national leaders.

Oh Lord, we come before you today, thankful for the many blessings you have bestowed upon our nation. And we humbly ask for your continued guidance and strength. On this day, we are reminded to give thanks for the extraordinary freedoms that we enjoy, made possible by the efforts of past generations of men and women who have served this great nation. Your word tells us of King David whose willingness to place his faith in you during difficult times serves as an example for us all. Like David, there are many in this nation who have answered the call to serve, both in and out of uniform. Lord, we are thankful for their dedication, their passion, their perseverance and for the families that support their every effort. When it comes to our search for inspiration, Scripture clearly speaks about where we should begin charting our course—we begin with prayer. We ask that you continue to guide our leaders with wisdom and understanding as they weather the storms that confront our nation. Provide them, God, with the vision necessary to see the way ahead. The strength required to act on difficult decisions and the compassion to care for the wellbeing of those that they lead. Fortify the resolve of the men and women who lead our great nation and provide us with bold, confident and accountable leaders capable of carrying out those actions that your wisdom directs. In your Holy Name we pray, amen.

The Honorable Elizabeth Dole: Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. It's my privilege today to read selected portions of Hebrews 11, which has been called the Hall of Faith. And I'll end with Hebrews 12 versus 1–3 and verse 14.

"Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. By

faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By faith, Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren was unable to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. By faith, Abraham when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son even though God had said to him "it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. By faith, Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw he was no ordinary child and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith, he left Egypt not fearing the king's anger. He persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the people had marched around them for seven days. By faith, the prostitute Rahab because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barack, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets who through faith, conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised. Who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames and escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength. Others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced years of flogging while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were put to death by the sword. These were all commended for their faith. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance, the race that is set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him, who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, for without holiness no one will see the Lord."

The Honorable Ken Salazar: Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Vice President BIDEN, members of the United States Senate, fellow Cabinet members, members of the House of Representatives and distinguished guests. The following prayer was written by Cesar Chavez, the great leader of the United States Farm Workers of America. Last year, President Obama visited the gravesite of Cesar Chavez and his office at a place in La Paz, California; and there, he made this place a national monument so that we can honor the work of a true hero and a follower of Christ and a follower of Gandhi. It was a moving time for the President and all of us who were there that day.

Chavez was a servant leader who followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. He followed the teachings of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King. He was ever prayerful to Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). Today as the world, in many different places, rages in a debate about the peopling of our nations and immigration, and as our nation does the same thing, let us pray that all of our world leaders and all of our leaders here in the United States, will be inspired by the true story of the peopling of our nations and give voice to those who now live in the fear of the shadows of our society. And so, inspired by the teachings and life of Saint Francis and Jesus Christ, let us pray as Cesar Chavez prayed, as he fasted for those who have no voice, who are the most vulnerable in our society.

He prayed: "Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so that I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others, because you are present in every person. Help me to take responsibility for my own life, so that I can be free at last. Grant me the courage to serve others, for in service there is true life. Give me honesty and patience, so that I can work with others. Bring forth song and celebration, so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice, for they have given us life. Help us love even those who hate us, so we can change the world." God bless you, God bless the United States of America, God bless all of our leaders.

Senator SESSIONS: Of all of the complex things in the world, perhaps the most complex is the human brain. How come I can remember the words of the preamble of the Constitution but can't find my glasses? We've invited as our guest speaker this morning a gentleman for three reasons: he loves Jesus, he has a compelling life story and he is a distinguished man of science and healing. We hope that he can help us sort some things out. May I introduce, the director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at one of the world's great hospitals, Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr.

Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, Sr.: Thank you so much, Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Mrs. Obama, distinguished guests—which includes everybody. Thank you so much for this wonderful honor to be at this stage again. I was here 16 years ago and the fact that they've invited me back means that I didn't offend too many people—so that was great. I want to start by reading four texts, which will put into context what I'm going to say.

Proverbs 11:9, "With his mouth, the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape."

Proverbs 11:12, "A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue."

Proverbs 11:25, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

2nd Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land."

I have an opportunity to speak in a lot of venues—this is my fourth speech this week—and to talk to a lot of people. And I've been asking people—what concerns you? What are you most concerned about in the terms of the spirituality and the direction of our nation and our world? I've talked to very prominent Democrats, and very prominent Republicans and I was surprised by the uniformity of their answers. And those have informed my comments this morning.

It's not my intention to offend anyone. I have discovered, however, in recent years that it's very difficult to speak to a large group of people these days and not offend someone. And I know people walk around with their feelings on their shoulders waiting for you to say something—"Ah, did you hear that?" And they can't hear anything else you say. The PC police are out in force at all times. I remember once I was talking to a group about the difference between a human brain and a dog's brain. And a man got offended—he said, "You can't talk about dogs like that." But people just focus in on that and completely miss the point of what you're saying. We've reached the point where people are afraid to actually talk about what they want to say—because somebody might be offended. People are afraid to say, "Merry Christmas" at Christmastime. It doesn't matter whether the person you're talking to is Jewish or whether they're any religion—that's a salutation of greeting, of good will. We've got to get over this sensitivity. It keeps people from saying what they really believe.

I'm reminded of a very successful young businessman who loved to buy his mother these exotic gifts for Mother's Day. And he ran out of ideas, and then he ran across these birds. These birds were cool. They cost 5,000 dollars apiece—they could dance, they could sing, they could talk. He was so excited, he bought two of them; sent them to his mother; couldn't wait to call her up on Mother's Day, "Mother, mother, what did you think of those birds?" And she said, "They was good." He said, "No, no, no, mother, you didn't eat those birds; those birds cost 5,000 dollars apiece—they could dance, they could sing, they could talk." And she said, "Well, they should have said something." And that's where we end up too if we don't speak up for what we believe. What we need to do in this PC world is forget about unanimity of speech and unanimity of thought and we need to concentrate on being respectful to those people with whom we disagree—that's when I think we begin to make real progress.

One last thing about political correctness—which I think is a horrible thing, by the way. I'm very, very compassionate and I'm not ever out to offend anyone, but PC is dangerous because in this country, one of the founding principles was freedom of thought and freedom of expression and it muffles people, it puts a muzzle on them. And at the same time, keeps people from discussing important issues while the fabric of their society is being changed. And we cannot fall for that trick. What we need to do is start talking about things, talking about things that are important, things that were important in the development of our nation. One of those things was education. I'm very passionate about education because it made such a big difference in my life. But here we are at a time in the world, the information age, the age of technology, and yet 30 per cent of people who enter high school in this country do not graduate. 44 percent of the people who start a four year college program do not finish it in four years. What is that about?

Think back to a darker time in our history. 200 years ago when slavery was going on, it was illegal to educate a slave, particularly to teach him to read. Why do you think that was? Because when you educate a man, you liberate the man. And there I was as a youngster placing myself in the same situation that a horrible institution did because I wasn't taking advantage of the education, because I was a horrible student. Most of my classmates thought I was the stupidest person in the world. They called me "dummy." I was the butt of all the jokes. Admittedly, it was a bad environment—a single parent home—my mother and father had gotten di-

vorced early on. My mother got married when she was 13. She was one of 24 children; had a horrible life, discovered that her husband was a bigamist, had another family, and she only had a third grade education. She had to take care of us, in dire poverty. I had a horrible temper, poor self-esteem; all of the things that you think would preclude success. But I had something very important, I had a mother who believed in me. And I had a mother who would never allow herself to be a victim, no matter what happened. She never made excuses and she never accepted an excuse from us. And if we ever came up with an excuse, she always said, "Do you have a brain?" And if the answer was "Yes," then she said, "Then you could of thought your way out of it; it doesn't matter what John or Susan or Mary or anybody else did or said." And it was the most important thing she did for my brother and myself because if you don't accept excuses, pretty soon people stop giving them and they start looking for solutions and that is a critical issue when it comes to success.

We did live in dire poverty and one of the things that I hated was poverty. Some people hate spiders, some people hate snakes—I hated poverty. I couldn't stand it. But my mother couldn't stand the fact that we were doing poorly in school. She prayed, she asked God to give her wisdom, what could she do to get her young sons to understand the importance of developing their minds, so that they could control their own lives? And you know what? God gave her the wisdom, at least in her opinion. My brother and I didn't think it was that wise because it was to turn off the TV. She let us only watch two or three TV programs during the week. And with all that spare time, read two books apiece from the Detroit public libraries and submit to her written book reports, which she couldn't read but we didn't know that—she'd put checkmarks and highlights and stuff. But you know, I just hated this, and my friends were out having a good time. Her friends would criticize her, they would say, "You can't make boys stay in the house reading books, they'll grow up, they'll hate you." I would overhear them and I would say, "You know, mother, they're right." But she didn't care. But after a while, I actually began to enjoy reading those books. Even though we were very poor, between the covers of those books, I could go anywhere, I could be anybody, I could do anything. I began to read about people of great accomplishment. And as I read those stories, I began to see a connecting thread. I began to see that the person that has the most to do with you and what happens to you in life is you. You make decisions. You decide how much energy you want to put behind that decision. And I came to understand that I had control of my own destiny. At that point, I didn't hate poverty anymore because I knew it was only temporary. I knew I could change that. It was incredibly liberating for me, it made all the difference.

And to continue on that theme of education, in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study this country. The Europeans were fascinated—how could a fledgling nation barely 50 years old already be competing with them on virtually every level. This is impossible—de Tocqueville was going to sort it out. And he looked at our government and he was duly impressed by the three branches of government—four now because now of special interest groups, but it was only three back in those days. And he said, "Wow, this is really something." And then he said, "Let me look at their educational system," and he was blown away. Anybody finishing second grade was completely literate. He could find a mountain man on the outskirts of society—the man could read a

newspaper, could have a political discussion, could tell him how the government worked.

If you really want to be impressed, take a look at the chapter on education in my latest book, "America the Beautiful," which I wrote with my wife; it came out last year. And in that education chapter, you will see questions extracted from a sixth grade Exit Exam from the 1800's—a test you had to pass to get your sixth grade certificate. I doubt most college graduates today could pass that test. We have dumbed things down to that level. And the reason that that is so dangerous is because the people who founded this nation said that our system of government was designed for a well informed and educated populous. And when they become less informed, they become vulnerable. Think about that, our system of government, and that's why the education is so vitally important.

Now some people say "Ah, you're overblowing it, things aren't that bad, and you're a doctor, a neurosurgeon, why are you concerned about these things?" I've got news for you. Five doctors signed the Declaration of Independence. Doctors were involved in the framing of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and a whole bunch of things. It's only been in recent decades that we've extracted ourselves—which I think is a big mistake. We need doctors and we need scientists, engineers, we need all of those people involved in government, not just lawyers. I don't have anything against lawyers, but here's the thing about lawyers—and I'm sorry but I got to be truthful—what do lawyers learn in law school? To win, by hook or by crook, you got to win. So you've got all these Democrat lawyers and you've got all these Republican lawyers and their side wants to win. We need to get rid of that. What we need to start thinking about is: how do we solve problems?

Now, before I get shot, let me finish here. I don't like to bring up problems without coming up with solutions. My wife and I started the Carson Scholars Fund 16 years ago after we heard about an international survey looking at the ability of eighth graders in 22 countries to solve math and science problems; and we came out number 21 out of 22, barely beat out number 22, very concerning. And we'd go into schools and we'd see all these trophies, All State basketball, All State wrestling, All State this, that and the other. The quarterback was the big man on campus, What about the intellectual superstar? What did they get? A National Honor Society pin, a pat on the head, "there, there little nerd"—nobody cared about them. And is it any wonder that sometimes the smart kids try to hide; they don't want anybody to know that they're smart? This is not helping us as a nation. So we started giving out scholarships to students from all backgrounds for superior academic performance and demonstration of humanitarian qualities. Unless you cared about other people, it didn't matter how smart you were. We've got plenty of people like that, we don't need those. We need smart people who care about other people. We will give them money, the money would go into a trust, they would get interest on it and then when they went to college, they get the money. But also, the school gets a trophy, every bit as impressive as the sports trophies. It goes right out there with the others. They get a medal. They get to go to a banquet. And we try to put them on the same kind of pedestal as we do the All State athletes.

Now, I have nothing against athletics or entertainment, please believe me. I'm from Baltimore, the Ravens won, this is great, okay. But what will maintain our position in the world, the ability to shoot a 25 foot jump

shot or the ability to solve a quadratic equation? We need to put things into proper perspective. Many teachers have told us that when we put a Carson Scholar in their class room, the GPA of the whole class goes up over the next year. And it's been very gratifying. We started 16 years ago with 25 scholarships in Maryland; now we've given out more than 5,000 and we're in all 50 states. But we also put in reading rooms. These are fascinating places that no little kid could possibly pass up. They get points for the amount of time they spend in their reading, the number of books that they read, and they can trade them in for prizes. In the beginning, they do it for the prizes, but it doesn't take long before their academic performance begins to improve. We particularly target Title 1 schools where kids come from homes with no books and they go to schools with no libraries. Those are the ones who drop out and we need to truncate that process early on because we can't afford to waste any of those young people. For every one of those people that we keep from going down that path, that path of self-destruction and mediocrity, that's one less person you have to protect yourself and your family from. One less person you have to pay for in the penal or the welfare system. One more tax paying productive member of society who may invent a new energy source or come up with a cure for cancer. They're all important to us and we need every single one of them, it makes a difference. When you go home tonight, please read about it, Carson Scholar Fund, Carsonscolars.org.

But, why is it so important that we educate our people? Because we don't want to go down the same pathway as many other pinnacle nations have who have preceded us. I think particularly about ancient Rome—very powerful, nobody could even challenge them militarily. But what happened to them? They destroyed themselves from within—moral decay, fiscal irresponsibility—they destroyed themselves. And if you don't think that can happen to America, you get out your books and you start reading. But you know we can fix it. Why can we fix it? Because we're smart; we have some of the most intellectually gifted people leading our nation. All we need to do is remember what our real responsibilities are so we can solve the problems. I think about these problems all the time and my role model was Jesus and he used parables to help people understand things.

One of our big problems right now—and like I said, I'm not politically correct so, I'm sorry—our deficit is a big problem. Think about it. Our national debt, 16½ trillion dollars, you think that's not a lot of money. I tell you what, count one number per second, which you can't even do because when you get to a thousand, you can't, it'll take you longer than a second, but one number per second. You know how long that'll take you to count to 16 trillion? 507,000 years—more than a half a million years to get there. We have to deal with this. Here's the parable. A family falls on hard times—dad loses his job or is demoted, gets part time work, has five children. He comes to the five children and he says "We're going to have to reduce your allowance." Well, they're not happy about it; but he says, "Except for John and Susan, they're special. They can keep their allowance; in fact, I may give them more." How do you think that's going to go down? Not too well. Same thing happens, enough said.

What about our taxation system? So complex there is no one who can possibly comply with every jot and tittle of our tax system. If I wanted to get you, I could get you on a tax issue. That doesn't make any sense. What we need to do is come up with something that is simple. When I pick up my

Bible, you know what I see? I see the fairest individual in the universe, God. And he's given us a system, it's called, tithe. Now, we don't necessarily have to do it 10 per cent, but it's the principle. He didn't say, "If your crops fail, don't give me any tithes." He didn't say, "If you have a bumper crop, give me triple tithes." So there must be something inherently fair about proportionality. You make 10 billion dollars, you put in a billion. You make 10 dollars, you put in one. Of course, you've got to get rid of the loopholes. But now some people say, "Well that's not fair because it doesn't hurt the guy who made 10 billion dollars as much as the guy who made 10." Where does it say you have to hurt the guy? He just put a billion dollars in the pot; you know we don't need to hurt him. It's that kind of thinking that has resulted in 602 banks in the Cayman Islands. That money needs to be back here building our infrastructure and creating jobs. And we're smart enough to figure out how to do that.

We've already started down the path of solving one of the other big problems, health care. We need to have good health care for everybody. It's the most important thing that a person can have. Money means nothing, titles means nothing, when you don't have your health. But, we've got to figure out efficient ways to do it. We spend a lot of money on health care, twice as much per capita as anybody else in the world and yet we're not very efficient. What can we do? Here's my solution. When a person is born, give them a birth certificate, an electronic medical record and a health saving's account to which money can be contributed pre-tax from the time you're born to the time you die. When you die, you can pass it on to your family members so that when you're 85 years old and you've got six diseases, you're not trying to spend up everything, you're happy to pass it on and there's nobody talking about death panels. That's number one. And also, for the people who are indigent, who don't have any money; we can make contributions to their HSA each month because we already have this huge pot of money. Instead of sending it to some bureaucracy, let's put it in their HSA's. Now they have some control over their own health care. And what do you think they're going to do? They're going to learn very quickly how to be responsible. When Mr. JONES gets that diabetic foot ulcer, he's not going to the emergency room and blowing a big chunk of it. He's going to go to the clinic. He learns that very quickly. He gets the same treatment in the emergency room they send him out to the clinic and say "Now let's get your diabetes under control so you're not back here in three weeks with another problem. That's how we begin to solve these kinds of problems. It's much more complex than that and I don't have time to go into it all but we can do all of these things because we're smart people.

And let me just begin to close here by another parable. A sea captain is out on the sea, near to the area where the Titanic went down. He looks ahead and there's a bright light right there, another ship he figures. He tells his signaler; signal that ship, "Deviate 10 degrees to the south." Back comes the message "No, you deviate 10 degrees to the north." Well he's a little bit incensed, he says, "Send a message, This is Captain Johnson, deviate 10 degrees to the north." Back comes the message, "This is Ensign 4th Class Riley, deviate 10 degrees to the south." Now he's really upset. He says, "Send them a message, this is a naval destroyer." Back comes the message, "This is a light house." Enough said.

What about the symbol of our nation, the eagle, the bald eagle. It's an interesting story how we chose that but a lot of people

think we call it the bald eagle because it looks like it has a bald head. That's not the reason. It comes from the Old English word, piebald, which means crowned with white; and we just shortened it to bald. Now use that the next time you see somebody who thinks they know everything—you get them with that one. But, why is that eagle able to fly high, to fly forward? Because it has two wings, a left wing and a right wing. Enough said.

And I want to close with this story. 200 years ago this nation was involved in a war, the War of 1812. The British, who are now our good friends, thought that we were young whippersnappers; it was time for us to become a colony again. They were winning that war, marching up the Eastern Seaboard, destroying city after city, destroyed Washington D.C., burned down the White House; next stop, Baltimore. As they came into the Chesapeake Bay, that armada of ships—war ships as far as the eye could see—it was looking grim; Fort McHenry standing right there. General Armistead, who was in charge of Fort McHenry, had a large American flag commissioned to fly in front of the fort. The admiral in charge of the British fleet was offended and said, "Take that flag down. You have until dusk to take that flag down. If you don't take it down, we will reduce you to ashes." There was a young amateur poet on board by the name of Francis Scott Key, sent by President Madison to try to obtain the release of an American physician who was being held captive. He overheard the British plans; they were not going to let him off the ship. He mourned as dusk approached. He mourned for his fledgling young nation. And as the sun fell, the bombardment started, bombs bursting in air, missiles, so much debris. He strained trying to see—was the flag still there? Couldn't see a thing. All night long it continued. At the crack of dawn he ran out to the banister, he looked, straining his eyes, but all he could see was dust and debris. And then there was a clearing and he beheld the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen—the torn and tattered stars and stripes still waving. And many historians say that was the turning point in the War of 1812. We went on to win that war and to retain our freedom. And if you had gone onto the grounds of Fort McHenry that day, you would have seen at the base of that flag the bodies of soldiers who took turns propping up that flag. They would not let that flag go down because they believed in what that flag symbolized. And what did it symbolize? One nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Thank you, God bless.

Senator PRYOR: Thank you Dr. Carson. It is now my great honor to introduce our President. One of the striking measures of the passage of time since you first were with us Mr. President is the comparison photographs of your daughters at your first Inauguration and you're second. You have a beautiful and wonderful family. And they remind us of the core American values of faith, family and optimism in the future. Mr. President, we want to express our love and our respect for you this morning. You carry burdens none of us in this room can imagine. Thank you for keeping the unbroken commitment of ten former presidents to join us for breakfast and prayer. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

President Barack Obama: Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Mark, thank you for that introduction. I thought he was going to talk about my gray hair. It is true that my daughters are gorgeous. That's because my wife is gorgeous. And my goal is to improve my gene pool. To Mark and Jeff, thank you for your wonderful work on behalf of

this breakfast. To all of those who worked so hard to put this together; to the heads of state, members of Congress, and my Cabinet, religious leaders and distinguished guests. To our outstanding speaker. To all the faithful who've journeyed to our capital, Michelle and I are truly honored to be with you this morning.

Before I begin, I hope people don't mind me taking a moment of personal privilege. I want to say a quick word about a close friend of mine and yours, Joshua Dubois. Now, some of you may not know Joshua, but Joshua has been at my side—in work and in prayer—for years now. He is a young reverend, but wise in years. He's worked on my staff. He's done an outstanding job as the head of our Faith-Based office. Every morning he sends me via email a daily meditation—a snippet of Scripture for me to reflect on. And it has meant the world to me. And despite my pleas, tomorrow will be his last day in the White House. So this morning I want to publically thank Joshua for all that he's done, and I know that everybody joins me in wishing him all the best in his future endeavors—including getting married.

It says something about us—as a nation and as a people—that every year, for 61 years now, this great prayerful tradition has endured. It says something about us that every year, in times of triumph and in tragedy, in calm and in crisis, we come together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as brothers and sisters, and as children of God. Every year, in the midst of all our busy and noisy lives, we set aside one morning to gather as one community, united in prayer. We do so because we're a nation ever humbled by our history, and we're ever attentive to our imperfections—particularly the imperfections of our President. We come together because we're a people of faith. We know that faith is something that must be cultivated. Faith is not a possession. Faith is a process.

I was struck by the passage that was read earlier from the Book of Hebrews: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and He rewards those who diligently seek Him." He rewards those who diligently seek Him—not just for one moment, or one day, but for every moment, and every day. As Christians, we place our faith in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus Christ. But so many other Americans also know the close embrace of faith—Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. And all Americans—whether religious or secular—have a deep and abiding faith in this nation.

Recently I had occasion to reflect on the power of faith. A few weeks ago, during the inauguration, I was blessed to place my hand on the Bibles of two great Americans, two men whose faith still echoes today. One was the Bible owned by President Abraham Lincoln, and the other, the Bible owned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As I prepared to take the sacred oath, I thought about these two men, and I thought of how, in times of joy and pain and uncertainty, they turned to their Bibles to seek the wisdom of God's word—and thought of how, for as long as we've been a nation, so many of our leaders, our Presidents, and our preachers, our legislators and our jurists have done the same. Each one faced their own challenges; each one finding in Scripture their own lessons from the Lord. And as I was looking out on the crowd during the inauguration I thought of Dr. King. We often think of him standing tall in front of the endless crowds, stirring the nation's conscience with a bellowing voice and a mighty dream. But I also thought of his doubts and his fears, for those moments came as well—the lonely moments when he was left to confront the presence of long-festered injustice and undisguised

hate; imagined the darkness and the doubt that must have surrounded him when he was in that Birmingham jail, and the anger that surely rose up in him the night his house was bombed with his wife and child inside, and the grief that shook him as he eulogized those four precious girls taken from this Earth as they gathered in a house of God. And I was reminded that, yes, Dr. King was a man of audacious hope and a man of relentless optimism. But he was also a man occasionally brought to his knees in fear and in doubt and in helplessness. And in those moments, we know that he retreated alone to a quiet space so he could reflect and he could pray and he could grow his faith. And I imagine he turned to certain verses that we now read. I imagine him reflecting on Isaiah, that we wait upon the Lord; that the Lord shall renew those who wait; that they shall mount up with wings as eagles, and they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. We know that in Scripture, Dr. King found strength; in the Bible, he found conviction. In the words of God, he found a truth about the dignity of man that, once realized, he never relinquished.

We know Lincoln had such moments as well. To see this country torn apart, to see his fellow citizens waging a ferocious war that pitted brother against brother, family against family—that was as heavy a burden as any President will ever have to bear. We know Lincoln constantly met with troops and visited the wounded and honored the dead. And the toll mounted day after day, week after week. And you can see in the lines of his face the toll that the war cost him. But he did not break. Even as he buried a beloved son, he did not break. Even as he struggled to overcome melancholy, despair, grief, he did not break. And we know that he surely found solace in Scripture; that he could acknowledge his own doubts, that he was humbled in the face of the Lord. And that, I think, allowed him to become a better leader. It's what allowed him in what may be one of the greatest speeches ever written, in his second Inaugural, to describe the Union and the Confederate soldier alike—both reading the same Bible, both prayed to the same God, but "the prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes." In Lincoln's eyes, the power of faith was humbling, allowing us to embrace our limits in knowing God's will. And as a consequence, he was able to see God in those who vehemently opposed him.

Today, the divisions in this country are, thankfully, not as deep or destructive as when Lincoln led, but they are real. The differences in how we hope to move our nation forward are less pronounced than when King marched, but they do exist. And as we debate what is right and what is just, what is the surest way to create a more hopeful—for our children—how we're going to reduce our deficit, what kind of tax plans we're going to have, how we're going to make sure that every child is getting a great education—and, Doctor, it is very encouraging to me that you turned out so well by your mom not letting you watch TV. I'm going to tell my daughters that when they complain. In the midst of all these debates, we must keep that same humility that Dr. King and Lincoln and Washington and all our great leaders understood is at the core of true leadership. In a democracy as big and as diverse as ours, we will encounter every opinion. And our task as citizens—whether we are leaders in government or business or spreading the word—is to spend our days with open hearts and open minds; to seek out the truth that exists in an opposing view and to find the common ground that allows for us as a nation, as a people, to take real and meaningful action.

And we have to do that humbly, for no one can know the full and encompassing mind of God. And we have to do it every day, not just at a prayer breakfast. I have to say this is now our fifth prayer breakfast and it is always just a wonderful event. But I do worry sometimes that as soon as we leave the prayer breakfast, everything we've been talking about the whole time at the prayer breakfast seems to be forgotten—on the same day of the prayer breakfast. I mean, you'd like to think that the shelf life wasn't so short. But I go back to the Oval Office and I start watching the cable news networks and it's like we didn't pray.

And so my hope is that that humility carries over every day, every moment. While God may reveal His plan to us in portions, the expanse of His plan is for God, and God alone, to understand. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Until that moment, until we know, and are fully known, all we can do is live our lives in a Godly way and assume that those we deal with every day, including those in an opposing party, they're groping their way, doing their best, going through the same struggles we're going through. And in that pursuit, we are blessed with guidance. God has told us how He wishes for us to spend our days. His Commandments are there to be followed. Jesus is there to guide us; the Holy Spirit, to help us. Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. See in everyone, even in those with whom you disagree most vehemently, the face of God. For we are all His children. That's what I thought of as I took the oath of office a few weeks ago and touched those Bibles—the comfort that Scripture gave Lincoln and King and so many leaders throughout our history; the verses they cherished, and how those words of God are there for us as well, waiting to be read any day that we choose. I thought about how their faith gave them the strength to meet the challenges of their time, just as our faith can give us the strength to meet the challenges of ours. And most of all, I thought about their humility, and how we don't seem to live that out the way we should, every day, even when we give lip service to it.

As President, sometimes I have to search for the words to console the inconsolable. Sometimes I search Scripture to determine how best to balance life as a President and as a husband and as a father. I often search for Scripture to figure out how I can be a better man as well as a better President. And I believe that we are united in these struggles. But I also believe that we are united in the knowledge of a redeeming Savior, whose grace is sufficient for the multitude of our sins, and whose love is never failing. And most of all, I know that all Americans—men and women of different faiths and, yes, those of no faith that they can name—are, nevertheless, joined together in common purpose, believing in something that is bigger than ourselves, and the ideals that lie at the heart of our nation's founding—that as a people we are bound together.

And so this morning, let us summon the common resolve that comes from our faith. Let us pray to God that we may be worthy of the many blessings He has bestowed upon our nation. Let us retain that humility not just during this hour but for every hour. And let me suggest that those of us with the most power and influence need to be the most humble. And let us promise Him and to each other, every day as the sun rises over America that it will rise over a people who are striving to make this a more perfect union. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

Senator SESSIONS: Thank you. Thank you Mr. President. We're not of the same political party, sometimes we disagree, but speaking as an American, we are one nation and we have one President who serves us all. Thank you for being my President, thank you for being our President.

So let's all enjoy now a final selection from Andrea Bocelli.

[Song]

Mr. Andrea Bocelli: Thank you very much. I'm very ashamed of my English because I would like to tell you many, many things but I can't because my English is very poor. But I live this moment like a dream, because very often my country has been in trouble, just because the left and the right never are able to speak with each other. And in this country where I received a lot, a big, big affection, incredible affection, today I received also a big teaching. I will try going back to my country, Italy, to transmit this will that for me is the most important thing—the will to pray together. Thank you very much.

Senator PRYOR: Thank you Andrea. Just like your songs that was very beautiful. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Let's be wise people in the important roles that we're about to step back into in a few minutes and put what we've heard and learned here into practice.

Senator SESSIONS: Love God. Love your neighbor. Let's make that simple rule our guide and make our complex world a better one today. And to offer our closing prayer, please welcome Olympic gold medalist, Gabrielle Douglas.

Ms. Gabrielle Douglas: Thank you. It's such an honor to be here today with so many distinguished leaders, especially Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Mr. Vice President and the Honorable MARK PRYOR and the Honorable JEFF SESSIONS. Now please, please join me as we bow our heads and pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the many continued blessings. We uplift every leader from every nation and ask that you continue to give them wisdom as they govern. Teach us to walk in humility, strengthen us as we strive to fulfill your plan, your purpose for our lives. And as we go from here, I pray we would all pursue your peace, your love and your grace, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Senator PRYOR: We're done, thank you, God bless you.

EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR A FEW

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article written by Ken Hamilton, Executive Vice President of the Wyoming Farm Bureau that was Published in the April 2013 edition of Wyoming Agriculture. The article's title is "Equal Access to Justice for a few."

Mr. President, while we continue to fight for increased transparency with regards to the Equal Access to Justice Act, one thing is already clear—the Federal Government is picking winners and losers. Mr. Hamilton calls this a "cozy appearance between the groups who sue the Federal Government and the desire by the government to help pay their way." He points out in one recent case of several environmental groups suing the Fish and Wildlife

Service over wolf delisting efforts where the Federal Government quickly approved their November 2012 claim for \$380,000 in attorney fees. That is \$380,000 dollars of hard-earned American taxpayer dollars this administration's Justice Department was more than happy to hand over to their political allies.

Ken continues to illustrate the apparent political fingerprints and favoritism in the Justice Department by stating, "Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Wyoming Wolf Coalition through its attorney Harriet Hageman, has asked the Federal Government for their fees under EAJA. These fees, one-tenth of the environmental claim, have been argued over by the same Federal Government since April of 2011." Let me repeat that. Since 2011, the Justice Department has been actively arguing over an EAJA claim of approximately \$36,000 to a group that supported wolf delisting when the same Justice Department agreed to send \$380,000 to environmental groups opposed to the delisting of wolves.

Based on these facts I would have to agree with Ken's conclusion that, "the Equal Access to Justice Act is being applied less than equally by the Federal Government. It appears that if they agree with you they will send you a check, but if they do not they will send you an attorney's response denying you your money."

This administration should not be in the business of playing favorites by rewarding their political friends with taxpayer dollars. I commend Ken for highlighting the apparent inequality and abuse of the so-called Equal Access to Justice Act. This is one of the reasons I plan to continue fighting for real transparency regarding which groups are receiving EAJA payments, why they are receiving it, and how much money—taxpayer money—is being given away. It is time the Equal Access to Justice Act truly live up to its name.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

[From the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Opinion Editorial, Mar. 26, 2013]
EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR A FEW
(By Ken Hamilton, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, Executive Vice President)

Many people are aware of the efforts to reform the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) in order to bring more transparency to the process of the federal government paying attorney fees. Based on information researched and brought to light through the Budd-Falen law offices we found out that monies were being awarded without the slightest effort by the government to keep track of who received them and why. Thus, the need for some transparency and oversight. We have also seen some of the recipients fight efforts to bring transparency and why wouldn't they? After all, this is something that helps off-set their cost of suing the federal government.

The other aspect of this that some have wondered about is the sometimes cozy appearance between these groups who sue the

federal government and the desire by the government to help pay their way.

Recently, several environmental groups settled with the federal government over their attorney fees for suing the Fish and Wildlife Service on wolf delisting efforts in Montana and Idaho. The settlement agreed to by the federal government will pay the groups \$380,000 for their attorney fees. This request for money was filed with the courts in November of 2012 and the government didn't object to this filing.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Wyoming Wolf Coalition through its attorney Harriet Hageman, has asked the federal government for their fees under EAJA. These fees, a tenth of the environmental claim, have been argued over by the same federal government since April of 2011.

Given this interesting development it certainly appears the federal government, through the Justice Department, does not apply justice uniformly. Perhaps the Justice Department is concerned that these multimillion dollar environmental groups should be paid because they have resources far beyond the troublesome rancher, sportsmen, outfitters and local governments and they could use the money but those other entities should be denied because they are poor.

Perhaps they feel that almost \$400,000 is not a big deal, but \$36,000 is a huge deal worthy of Justice Department attorney time to file objections.

Who knows, but one thing is apparent and that is the Equal Access to Justice Act is being applied less than equally by the federal government. It appears that if they agree with you they will send you a check, but if they do not they will send you an attorney's response denying you your money.

GRASSBAUGH VETERANS PROJECT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the commencement of the Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project. CPT Jonathan Grassbaugh and three other soldiers were killed in action in Iraq on April 7, 2007, when an insurgent detonated a 500-pound explosive beneath their truck. His wife, CPT Jenna C. Grassbaugh, has collaborated with the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law to create the Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project. The Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project will provide veterans returning from deployment with legal assistance, with the help of law students aided by professional lawyers.

CPT Jenna Grassbaugh donated \$250,000 of her husband's life insurance policy to the Moritz College of Law in order to honor her husband's legacy and assist returning veterans. The Grassbaugh Veterans Project will open in April and will be operational by fall 2014.

I would also like to pay tribute to Jonathan D. Grassbaugh and the rich legacy he leaves. His commitment to service is an inspiration to all of us and he will not be forgotten. I would also like to recognize CPT Jenna Grassbaugh for honoring the legacy of her husband in such a meaningful way.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL KENNETH W. McDONALD

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the accomplishments of LTC

Kenneth McDonald, who is retiring this month after a distinguished career of over 28 years of service to the United States Army and the Nation.

Lieutenant Colonel McDonald graduated from West Point in 1985 with a degree in Civil Engineering and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He subsequently served as a platoon leader, support platoon leader, and executive officer in the 299th Engineer Battalion (Corps Combat) at Fort Sill, OK. He later commanded Delta Company, 20th Engineer Battalion at Fort Campbell, KY and served as S3 and executive officer for the 577th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, MO.

Throughout his career, Lieutenant Colonel McDonald deployed to Iraq for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Kosovo, and Korea. In 2006, Kenny volunteered for service in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and served as deputy commander, Gulf Region Division South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Basrah. During his 2 year tour, he was responsible for over \$500 million worth of construction projects, including the Basrah Children's Hospital. In 2008, he and members of his team were severely wounded in an ambush while they were inspecting the hospital. He recovered from his wounds at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and later was assigned to the West Point Warrior Transition Unit. While still assigned to the WTU, he requested and was allowed to serve as the deputy commander, New York District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Lieutenant Colonel McDonald also served as an instructor and assistant professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering and the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering at West Point. In 2009, he was promoted to associate professor and served as engineering program director for the Department of Systems Engineering at West Point. During his tenure, the Engineering Management Program was recognized 3 years in a row as the top Engineering Management Program for undergraduate education in the Nation by the American Society for Engineering Management.

His military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star; Purple Heart; Meritorious Service Medal; Joint Service Commendation Medal; Army Commendation Medal; Army Achievement Medal; Joint Meritorious Unit Award; Meritorious Unit Commendation; Army Superior Unit Award; Air Assault; Airborne; Ranger Tab; and Combat Action Badge.

Kenny and his wife COL Debbie McDonald, who currently serves as the director of admissions at West Point, have two grown children. Their daughter Anna is a 1LT Quartermaster Officer and Company Commander and their son Joshua is a cadet at West Point. I congratulate Kenny on a job well done, and wish him and his family the very best in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO GORDON MOULTON

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Gordon Moulton in honor of his retirement after 46 years of service to the University of South Alabama. Gordon dedicated his life to the success of the university and its surrounding communities and served as university president for 16 years. I am honored to call this remarkable man my friend and fellow Alabamian.

Gordon received his B.S. in Industrial Management from the Georgia Institute of Technology and an M.B.A. from Emory University. He was also awarded an honorary doctorate from Spring Hill College in 2006.

He began his service at the University of South Alabama 3 years after its founding in 1966 as a business faculty member and went on to launch the School of Computer and Information Sciences as its first dean. He was named president of the university in 1998. Gordon's numerous successes at the university include increasing academic programs and scholarships, securing grants for cancer research, expanding student opportunities, development and renovation of various facilities, and the creation of the USA Research and Technology Park which has provided many jobs and opportunities for high-tech industry partnerships in south Alabama.

During his tenure as President, the University of South Alabama was able to launch "Campaign USA," a highly successful fundraising effort that has raised millions for the university. He also worked to form a critical partnership with Infirmity Health System which has been instrumental in making improvements in area health care. For his work in the area, Gordon was named "Mobilian of the Year" in 2002.

Over the years, Gordon and his wife Geri have donated generously to the University of South Alabama, most recently presenting the University with \$3 million in order to fund cancer research at the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute. Their generosity, compassion, and dedication to finding a cure for cancer is both admirable and humbling. In addition to funding for cancer research, they have given millions to fund Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, Geri Moulton Children's Park at the USA Children's and Women's Hospital, and various scholarships and athletic endeavors.

Today, it is rare to see an individual so invested in one institution for the larger part of his career, but the work that Gordon Moulton has done at and for the University of the South will forever be remembered by its students, faculty, board of trustees, and the communities in and around Mobile that have benefitted from the University.

I congratulate him on his retirement and thank him for his decades of service to one of Alabama's great educational institutions.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I rise in support of Friends of the Children, FOTC, a revolutionary organization founded and based in my hometown of Portland, OR, that provides intensive, long-term mentors to highly vulnerable kids in need. FOTC takes a preventive, early intervention approach that breaks the cycle of poverty and helps children grow up to be productive citizens.

The key to FOTC's success is its mentors, called Friends. Each Friend is full time, paid and professionally trained. The Friends are matched with the most severely at-risk children at an early age—selected in kindergarten—and make a 12½ year commitment to each child, guiding them through high school graduation.

Friends of the Children was founded in 1993 and is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. My friend Duncan Campbell, founder of FOTC, grew up in poverty himself, and his persistence, hard work and entrepreneurial spirit continue to be a driving force behind FOTC's success.

The goals for FOTC's children are both simple and profound: success in school with a minimum of a high school diploma or GED; avoid involvement in the juvenile justice system, and avoid early parenting. And independent research has shown that Friends of the Children is achieving those goals: 85 percent of FOTC graduates have completed high school, despite 54 percent having a parent who did not graduate; 97 percent of FOTC youth are not involved in the juvenile justice system despite 60 percent having a parent who has been incarcerated; and 98 percent of FOTC adolescents avoid early parenting despite 60 percent having been born to a teen mother.

Friends of the Children works because it treats every child as an individual facing a set of unique circumstances, and takes a committed, hands-on approach to improving those circumstances. It works because it focuses on one-on-one relationships using a rational, intelligent and proven system.

While headquartered in Portland, Friends of the Children now has chapters in four additional cities: Klamath Falls, Seattle, Boston and New York. Today, I am proud to congratulate this remarkable program on its 20th anniversary, and look forward to celebrating many more years of its continued success.●

BUDGET OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014—PM 7

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying

report; which was referred jointly, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975 as modified by the order of April 11, 1986; to the Committees on Appropriations; and the Budget:

THE BUDGET MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States:

Thanks to the hard work and determination of the American people, we have made significant progress over the last 4 years. After a decade of war, our brave men and women in uniform are coming home. After years of recession, our businesses have created over six million new jobs. We buy more American cars than we have in 5 years, and less foreign oil than we have in 20 years. Our housing market is healing, our stock market is rebounding, and consumers, patients, and homeowners enjoy stronger protections than ever before.

But we know that there are millions of Americans whose hard work and dedication have not yet been rewarded. Our economy is adding jobs—but too many people still cannot find full-time employment. Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs—but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged.

It is our generation's task to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth—a rising, thriving middle class. It is our unfinished task to restore the basic bargain that built this country—the idea that if you work hard and meet your responsibilities, you can get ahead, no matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, or whom you love.

It is our unfinished task to make sure that this Government works on behalf of the many, and not just the few; that it encourages free enterprise, rewards individual initiative, and opens the doors of opportunity to every child across this great Nation.

A growing economy that creates good, middle class jobs—this must be the North Star that guides our efforts. Every day, we should ask ourselves three questions as a Nation: How do we attract more jobs to our shores? How do we equip our people with the skills they need to get those jobs? And how do we make sure that hard work leads to a decent living?

This Budget seeks to answer each of these questions.

Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing. After shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added more than 500,000 jobs over the past 3 years. Companies large and small are increasingly deciding to bring jobs back to America.

To accelerate this trend, the Budget builds on the success of the manufacturing innovation institute we created in Youngstown, Ohio last year, and calls for the creation of a network of 15 of these hubs across the Nation. In these innovation hubs, businesses will partner with universities and Federal agencies to turn regions around our country into global centers of high-tech jobs.

The Budget also includes new initiatives to support manufacturing communities, including a new tax credit to strengthen their ability to attract investments and jobs. And it expands my Administration's SelectUSA initiative to help draw businesses and investment from around the world to our shores.

If we want to make the best products, we also have to invest in the best ideas. That is why the Budget maintains a world-class commitment to science and research, targeting resources to those areas most likely to contribute directly to the creation of transformational technologies that can create the businesses and jobs of the future.

No area holds more promise than our investments in American energy. The Budget continues to advance my "all-of-the-above" strategy on energy, investing in clean energy research and development; promoting energy efficiency in our cars, homes, and businesses; encouraging responsible domestic energy production; and launching new efforts to combat the threat of climate change.

Modeled after my successful Race to the Top education reform effort, the Budget includes a new Race to the Top energy efficiency challenge for States, rewarding those that implement the most effective policies to cut energy waste. And it establishes a new Energy Security Trust funded by royalty revenue from oil and gas leases to support initiatives to shift our cars and trucks off oil, cutting our Nation's reliance on foreign oil.

Over the last 4 years, we have begun the hard work of rebuilding our Nation's infrastructure. We have built or improved over 350,000 miles of road and more than 6,000 miles of rail. And we have repaired or replaced over 20,000 bridges. But to compete in the 21st Century economy and become a magnet for jobs, we must do more. We need to repair our existing infrastructure, and invest in the infrastructure of tomorrow, including high-speed rail, high-tech schools, and self-healing power grids. These investments will both lay the foundation for long-term economic growth and put workers back on the job now.

My Budget includes \$50 billion for up-front infrastructure investments, including a "Fix-it-First" program that makes an immediate investment to put people to work as soon as possible on our most urgent repairs, like the nearly 70,000 structurally-deficient bridges across the country. And to make sure taxpayers do not shoulder the whole burden, the Budget creates a Rebuild America Partnership to attract private capital to upgrade what our businesses need most: modern ports to move our goods; modern pipelines to withstand a storm; and modern schools worthy of our children.

The Budget also supports efforts I announced earlier this year to modernize and improve the efficiency of the Federal permitting process, cutting

through the red tape that has been holding back even some of the most carefully planned infrastructure projects. These efforts will help us to achieve the new goal I set to cut timelines in half for infrastructure projects, while creating new incentives for better outcomes for communities and the environment.

All of these initiatives in manufacturing, energy, and infrastructure will help entrepreneurs and small business owners expand and create new jobs. But none of it will matter unless we also equip our citizens with the skills and training to fill those jobs.

And that has to start at the earliest possible age. But today, fewer than 3 in 10 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program, and the high cost of private preschool puts too much of a financial burden on middle class families.

The Budget therefore includes a proposal that ensures 4-year-olds across the country have access to high-quality preschool education through a landmark new initiative in partnership with the States. And it increases the availability of early learning for our youngest children to help their growth and development during the formative early years of life.

Providing a year of free, public preschool education for 4-year-old children is an important investment in our future. It will give all our kids the best start in life, helping them perform better in elementary school and ultimately helping them, and the country, be better prepared for the demands of the global economy. Not only that, it could save hard-working families thousands of dollars each year in child care costs. This is an investment we need to make, and it is fully paid for in this Budget by imposing a new tax on every pack of cigarettes sold.

The Budget also builds on the historic reforms made during my first term to improve our elementary and secondary school system by rewarding excellence and promoting innovation. To help ensure that our high schools are putting our kids on a path to college and a good job, the Budget includes a new competitive fund that will help redesign America's high schools to prepare students with the real world skills they need to find a job right away or go to college. The fund rewards schools that develop new partnerships with colleges and employers, and create classes focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)—the skills today's employers seek to fill the jobs available right now and in the future.

Even with better high schools, most young people will still need some higher education. Through tax credits, grants, and better loans, we have made college more affordable for millions of students and families over the last 4 years. But skyrocketing costs are still pricing too many young people out of a higher education, or saddling them with unsustainable debt. And taxpayers cannot continue to subsidize

higher and higher costs for higher education.

To encourage colleges to do their part to keep costs down, the Budget includes reforms that will ensure affordability and value are considered in determining which colleges receive certain types of Federal aid. My Administration has also released a new "College Scorecard" that parents and students can use to compare schools.

To further ensure our educational system is preparing students for careers in the 21st Century economy, the Budget includes additional measures to promote STEM education, such as launching a new STEM Master Teacher Corps, to leverage the expertise of some of America's best and brightest teachers in science and mathematics, and to elevate the teaching of these subjects nationwide. It also includes a reorganization and consolidation of STEM education programs to improve the effectiveness of Federal investments in this area.

The Budget takes other critical steps to grow our economy, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class. It implements the Affordable Care Act, giving every American access to the high-quality, affordable health care coverage they deserve, and reducing the deficit by more than \$1 trillion over the next two decades. It implements Wall Street reform, ending too-big-to-fail and protecting consumers against the abuses and reckless behavior that contributed to the financial collapse in 2008. And it includes measures to strengthen our housing market and ensure that every responsible homeowner has the opportunity to refinance at today's rates, saving \$3,000 a year on average.

Our economy is stronger when we harness the talents and ingenuity of striving, hopeful immigrants. That is why I have proposed a plan to fix our broken immigration system that secures our borders, cracks down on employers who hire undocumented workers, attracts highly-skilled entrepreneurs and engineers to help create jobs and drive economic growth, and establishes a responsible pathway to earned citizenship—a path that includes passing a background check, paying taxes and a meaningful penalty, learning English, and going to the back of the line behind the folks trying to come here legally. The Budget makes investments that will make our immigration system more efficient and fair and lay a foundation for this permanent, common-sense reform.

The Budget also builds on the progress made over the last 4 years to expand opportunity for every American and every community willing to do the work to lift themselves up. It creates new ladders of opportunity to ensure that hard work leads to a decent living. It rewards hard work by increasing the minimum wage to \$9 an hour so an honest day's work pays more. It partners with communities by identifying Promise Zones to help rebuild from the

recession. It creates pathways to jobs for the long-term unemployed and youth who have been hardest hit by the downturn. And it strengthens families by removing financial deterrents to marriage and supporting the role of fathers.

We also know that economic growth can only be achieved and sustained if America is safe and secure, both at home and abroad. At home, the Budget supports my initiative to help protect our kids, reduce gun violence, and expand access to mental health services. We can protect our Second Amendment rights while coming together around reforms like eliminating background check loopholes to make it harder for criminals to get their hands on a gun—common-sense reforms that will help protect our kids from the scourge of gun violence that has plagued too many communities across the country.

To confront threats outside our borders, the Budget ensures our military remains the finest and best-equipped military force the world has ever known, even as we wind down more than a decade of war.

Already, we have brought home more than 30,000 of our brave servicemembers from Afghanistan. Our remaining forces are moving into a support role, with Afghan security forces taking the lead. And over the next year, another 34,000 American troops will come home. This drawdown will continue and, by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over. Beyond 2014, the Budget supports our continued commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan.

To maintain our national security, the Budget supports our ongoing fight against terrorists, like al Qaeda. The organization that attacked us on 9/11 is a shadow of its former self. But different al Qaeda affiliates and extremist groups have emerged—from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa. We will confront these emerging security challenges through the full range of U.S. capabilities and tools, including diplomatic, security, intelligence, and economic development.

The Budget also provides the resources we need to act on our commitment to and interests in global development, by promoting food security that reduces dependence and increases prosperity; by investing in the increasingly successful drive toward an AIDS-free generation; and by maintaining our leadership as a global provider of humanitarian assistance that saves lives and reflects American values.

We must also confront new dangers, like cyber attacks, that threaten our Nation's infrastructure, businesses, and people. The Budget supports the expansion of Government-wide efforts to counter the full scope of cyber threats, and strengthens our ability to collaborate with State and local governments, our partners overseas, and the private sector to improve our overall cybersecurity.

The Budget also focuses resources on the Asia-Pacific region, reasserting

American leadership and promoting security, stability, democracy, and economic growth.

Importantly, the Budget upholds our solemn obligation to take care of our servicemembers and veterans, and to protect our diplomats and civilians in the field. It keeps faith with our veterans, investing in world-class care, including mental health care for our wounded warriors, supporting our military families, and giving our veterans the benefits, education, and job opportunities that they have earned.

The Budget does all of these things as part of a comprehensive plan that reduces the deficit. All of these initiatives and ideas are fully paid for, to ensure they do not increase the deficit by a single dime.

By making investments in our people that we pay for responsibly, we will strengthen the middle class, make America a magnet for jobs and innovation, and grow our economy, which will in turn help us to reduce deficits. But economic growth alone will not solve our Nation's long-term fiscal challenges.

As we continue to grow our economy, we must take further action to cut our deficits. We do not have to choose between these two important priorities—we have to do both.

Over the last 4 years, both parties have worked together to reduce the deficit in a balanced way by more than \$2.5 trillion. That is more than halfway toward the goal of \$4 trillion in deficit reduction that economists say we need to stabilize our finances. As we wind down two wars, we have protected our military families and veterans while cutting defense spending on outdated military weapons systems. Domestic discretionary spending is approaching its lowest levels as a share of the economy since President Eisenhower was in office; and we have moved aggressively to cut waste, fraud, and abuse. And together, we have begun to ask the wealthy to do their fair share while keeping income taxes low for middle class families. Overall, we have cut the deficit in a balanced way that protects the investments in education, manufacturing, clean energy, and small businesses we need to grow the economy and strengthen the middle class. There is more work to do, and this Budget is designed to finish the job.

But we should not do it by making harsh and arbitrary cuts that jeopardize our military readiness, devalue priorities like education and energy, and cost jobs. That is not how to grow the economy. We should not ask middle class senior citizens and working families to pay down the rest of our deficit while the wealthiest are asked for nothing more. That does not grow our middle class.

The American people understand that we cannot just cut our way to prosperity. That is why I have repeatedly called for a balanced approach to deficit reduction. And that is why I have offered proposals on multiple occasions that cut wasteful spending,

strengthen entitlements, and eliminate special tax breaks and loopholes so the wealthiest pay their fair share.

In my negotiations with House Speaker BOEHNER in December over the so-called “fiscal cliff,” I again offered a compromise proposal that was balanced and comprehensive, and would achieve our \$4 trillion deficit reduction goal. That proposal is still on the table. I am including it in this Budget to demonstrate my commitment to making the kind of tough and balanced choices that are needed to put our Nation’s finances in order.

To be clear, the package I am offering includes some difficult cuts that I do not particularly like. But these measures will only become law if congressional Republicans agree to meet me in the middle by eliminating special tax breaks and loopholes so millionaires and billionaires do their fair share to cut the deficit. I will not agree to any deal that seeks to cut the deficit on the backs of middle class families. I am willing to make tough choices that may not be popular within my own party, because there can be no sacred cows for either party. And I look forward to working with any member of Congress who takes a similar, balanced approach. This plan is built on the kind of common ground that Democrats and Republicans should be able to reach.

In total, the Budget will cut the deficit by another \$1.8 trillion over the next 10 years, bringing the deficit below 2 percent of GDP by 2023 and putting our debt on a declining path. This is not an end in and of itself—the best way to grow the economy and cut the deficit is by creating good middle class jobs. But this plan to reduce the deficit in a balanced way is a critical step toward ensuring that we have a solid foundation on which to build a strong economy and a thriving middle class for years to come.

Finally, this Budget continues my commitment to reforming and streamlining our Government for the 21st Century. It builds on my Campaign to Cut Waste by further targeting and eliminating wasteful spending wherever we find it. It reorganizes and consolidates agencies and programs to make them leaner and more efficient. It increases the use of evidence and evaluation to ensure we are making smart investments with our scarce taxpayer dollars. And it harnesses new technologies to allow us to do more with less.

No single Budget can solve every challenge and every problem facing the country. But this Budget shows how we can live within our means while growing our economy, strengthening the middle class, and securing our Nation’s future. It is not a Democratic plan or a Republican plan. It is an American plan. And it is a plan that I hope can serve as an outline for us to write the next great chapter of the American story . . . together.

BARACK OBAMA,
THE WHITE HOUSE, April 10, 2013.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 1:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 254. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to facilitate the development of hydroelectric power on the Diamond Fork System of the Central Utah Project.

H.R. 1033. An act to authorize the acquisition and protection of nationally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 under the American Battlefield Protection Program.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1033. An act to authorize the acquisition and protection of nationally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 under the American Battlefield Protection Program; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-1060. A communication from the Chief of the Border Securities Regulations Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Definition of Form I-94 to Include Electronic Format” (RIN1651-AA96) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 22, 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1061. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Excepted Service—Appointment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, Severe Physical Disabilities, and Psychiatric Disabilities” (RIN3206-AM07) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 26, 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1062. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, “District of Columbia Agencies’ Compliance with Small Business Enterprise Expenditure Goals through the 1st Quarter of Fiscal Year 2013”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1063. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, “Audit of the Affordable Housing Mandates for Development Projects Formerly Managed by the Dissolved National Capital Revitalization Corporation and Anacostia Waterfront Corporation”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1064. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 19-670, “Pharmacy Technician Amendment Act of 2012”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1065. A communication from the Secretary to the Board, Railroad Retirement

Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Railroad Retirement Board’s fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1066. A communication from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission’s fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1067. A communication from the Deputy Associate Director for External Affairs, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Bureau’s fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1068. A communication from the Chief Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the District of Columbia Family Court Act; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1069. A joint communication from the Chairman and the Acting General Counsel, National Labor Relations Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board’s Buy American Act Report for fiscal year 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1070. A communication from the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration’s Annual Report on The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act for fiscal year 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1071. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “U.S. Department of Health and Human Services met Many Requirements of the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 but Was Not Fully Compliant”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1072. A communication from the Acting Administrator of the General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration’s fiscal year 2012 Agency Financial Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1073. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 20-29, “Medical Marijuana Cultivation Center and Dispensary Location Restriction Temporary Amendment Act of 2013”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1074. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 20-40, “Tax Revision Commission Report Extension and Procurement Streamlining Temporary Amendment Act of 2013”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1075. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 20-30, “Board of Ethics and Government Accountability Temporary Amendment Act of 2013”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1076. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report

on D.C. Act 20-31, "Prohibition on Government Employee Engagement in Political Activity Temporary Amendment Act of 2013"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1077. A communication from the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1078. A communication from the Acting Director of the Peace Corps, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Peace Corps' fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1079. A communication from the Equal Employment Opportunity Director, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Farm Credit Administration's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1080. A communication from the Executive Director, United States Access Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1081. A communication from the Chief Human Resources Officer, United States Postal Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Postal Service's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1082. A communication from the Chair of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1083. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1084. A communication from the Associate Commissioner, National Indian Gaming Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1085. A communication from the Senior Vice President, Diversity and Labor Relations, Tennessee Valley Authority, transmitting, pursuant to law, the fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1086. A communication from the Acting Administrator, General Service Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002;

to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1087. A communication from the Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1088. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1089. A communication from the Chairman, Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1090. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1091. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Authority's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1092. A communication from the Director, Equal Employment Opportunities and Diversity Programs, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1093. A communication from the Equal Employment Opportunity and Inclusion Director, Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1094. A communication from the Chairman, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1095. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-035, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1096. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-059, of

the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1097. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-030, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1098. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-017, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1099. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-015, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1100. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13-043); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1101. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13-044); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1102. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13-017); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1103. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to U.S. support for Taiwan's participation as an observer at the 66th World Health Assembly and in the work of the World Health Organization; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1104. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Implementation of the Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty Between the United States and Australia" (RIN1400-AD38) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 8, 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-1105. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the current and future military strategy of Iran (OSS 2013-0463); to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1106. A communication from the Board of Actuaries, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 2012 Report of the Department of Defense (DoD) Board of Actuaries; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1107. A communication from the Acting Director, Federal Housing Finance Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's annual report on the activities of its Office of Minority and Women Inclusion; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1108. A communication from the President and Chief Executive Officer, Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Bank's 2012 Statement on System of Internal Controls, audited financial statements, Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm, and Report of Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm on Compliance and Other Matters Based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with Government Auditing Standards; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1109. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to sequestration; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-1110. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to discretionary appropriations legislation; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-1111. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Reporting Procedure for Mathematical Models Selected to Predict Heated Effluent Dispersion in Natural Water Bodies" (Regulatory Guide 4.4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 8, 2013; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1112. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Final Integrated Construction Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Barataria Basin Barrier Shoreline (BBBS) Restoration Project, Lafourche, Jefferson and Plaquemines Parishes, Louisiana; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. HARKIN for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Jenny R. Yang, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2017.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. COATS, Mr. COBURN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. ENZI, Mr.

INHOFE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHANNES, Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. PAUL, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. VITTER):

S. 692. A bill to rescind certain Federal funds identified by States as unwanted and use the funds to reduce the Federal debt; to the Committee on Appropriations.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 693. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the City of Hermiston, Oregon, water recycling and reuse project, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND:

S. 694. A bill to remove the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Service to inspect apples; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 695. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans training or competing for the Paralympic Team and the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance to United States Paralympics, Inc., and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. REID (for Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. BAUCUS, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BENNET, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. COWAN, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. NELSON, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mr. KING)):

S. 696. A bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to ensure that risks from chemicals are adequately understood and managed, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BROWN:

S. 697. A bill to reform and improve the oversight of the performance of passenger and baggage security screening at domestic commercial airports by private screening companies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 698. A bill to protect prosecutors, judges, law enforcement officers, and their families; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. LEE, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 699. A bill to reallocate Federal judgeships for the courts of appeals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. CHAMBLISS, and Mr. BAUCUS):

S. 700. A bill to ensure that the education and training provided members of the Armed Forces and veterans better assists members and veterans in obtaining civilian certifications and licenses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. COLLINS:

S. 701. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the definition of full-time employee for purposes of the indi-

vidual mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. COWAN):

S. 702. A bill to designate the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor as "The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor"; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. Res. 95. A resolution recognizing linemen, the profession of linemen, the contributions of these brave men and women who protect the public safety, and expressing support for the designation of April 18, 2013, as National Lineman Appreciation Day; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mrs. HAGAN):

S. Con. Res. 12. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that our current tax incentives for retirement savings provide important benefits to Americans to help plan for a financially secure retirement; to the Committee on Finance.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 84

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 84, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

S. 123

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 123, a bill to modernize voter registration, promote access to voting for individuals with disabilities, protect the ability of individuals to exercise the right to vote in elections for Federal office, and for other purposes.

S. 155

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 155, a bill to designate a mountain in the State of Alaska as Denali.

S. 231

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 231, a bill to reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp.

S. 234

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 234, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who

have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 264

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 264, a bill to expand access to community mental health centers and improve the quality of mental health care for all Americans.

S. 316

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) were added as cosponsors of S. 316, a bill to recalculate and restore retirement annuity obligations of the United States Postal Service, to eliminate the requirement that the United States Postal Service prefund the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund, to place restrictions on the closure of postal facilities, to create incentives for innovation for the United States Postal Service, to maintain levels of postal service, and for other purposes.

S. 338

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 338, a bill to amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 to provide consistent and reliable authority for, and for the funding of, the land and water conservation fund to maximize the effectiveness of the fund for future generations, and for other purposes.

S. 381

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 381, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the World War II members of the "Doolittle Tokyo Raiders", for outstanding heroism, valor, skill, and service to the United States in conducting the bombings of Tokyo.

S. 450

At the request of Mr. SHELBY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 450, a bill to require enhanced economic analysis and justification of regulations proposed by certain Federal banking, housing, securities, and commodity regulators, and for other purposes.

S. 457

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 457, a bill to posthumously award a Congressional gold medal to Alice Paul, in recognition of her role in the women's suffrage movement and in advancing equal rights for women.

S. 462

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 462, a bill to enhance the strategic partnership between the United States and Israel.

S. 480

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 480, a bill to improve the effectiveness of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System by clarifying reporting requirements related to adjudications of mental incompetency, and for other purposes.

S. 557

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 557, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to medication therapy management under part D of the Medicare program.

S. 577

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 577, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the distribution of additional residency positions, and for other purposes.

S. 649

At the request of Mr. KAINE, his name was added as a cosponsor of 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.

S. 655

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. COWAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 655, a bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to authorize the Secretary of Labor to provide grants for Urban Jobs Programs, and for other purposes.

S. 687

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 687, a bill to prohibit the closing of air traffic control towers, and for other purposes.

S. 689

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) were added as cosponsors of S. 689, a bill to reauthorize and improve programs related to mental health and substance use disorders.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 693. A bill to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the City of Hermiston, Oregon, water recycling and reuse project, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I rise to reintroduce legislation that will authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to share in the cost of the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant for Hermiston, Oregon. This is the same bill that was passed by the House of Representatives, by voice vote, in the 111th Congress and reported by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee without opposition that Congress as well. I look forward to working with supporters of this bill to advance this important reclamation project.

The city of Hermiston will be responsible for the lion's share of this project. CBO has estimated that the Federal share of the \$26 million project would be \$7 million or just over ¼ of the cost. Once constructed, the plant will provide the Bureau of Reclamation-authorized West Extension Irrigation District with enough additional high-quality water per year to irrigate approximately 600 acres of high value crops. This will have a significant, long-term benefit to the farming industry in the Hermiston area.

The Hermiston project has gotten the sign-off at every level from the local irrigation district to Federal agencies. The city and the bureau have completed the required feasibility report and the bureau of reclamation has formally concluded that the project meets the requirements of the Title XVI cost-sharing program. The regional office of the National Marine Fisheries Service at NOAA has completed a biological opinion approving the project. The city and the West Extension Irrigation District have signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to develop the project. The bureau has concluded its environmental review of the authorization to transfer the water to they district and issued a finding of no significant impact, or FONSI.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have also recognized the benefits of the project and support it. These benefits include a significant improvement in the quality of water discharged to the Umatilla River in winter and protection of sensitive fish habitat during summer. These benefits have led the tribe to endorse construction of the Hermiston Water Recycling System Improvement Project and the city's effort to obtain Federal funding.

This project will increase agricultural production while improving the local economy, the environment and habitat for endangered fish. I intend to

work with colleagues to complete action on legislation that has advanced so far in previous Congresses.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 695. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans training or competing for the Paralympic Team and the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance to United States Paralympics, Inc., and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, physical activity offers injured members of the Armed Forces and veterans additional opportunities for rehabilitation for both physical and mental health. Using the expertise of the United States Olympic Committee to work with local programs is a great tool to help our veterans improve their quality of life. The U.S. Paralympic Integrated Adaptive Sports Program partners with local organizations to develop programs and skills that meet the needs of our wounded warriors. As a result of this legislation, the program has reached more than 5,000 participants in more than 150 communities in 46 States and has successfully collaborated with 85 VA Medical Centers in 39 States to provide adaptive sports programs to veterans in their local communities through outreach programs, training, practices, camps, clinics, and competitions. For this reason, Senator BEGICH and I are introducing Veterans Paralympic Act of 2013, which would extend the authorization for the U.S. Paralympic Integrated Adaptive Sports Program through 2018.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 695

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Paralympic Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR PAYMENT OF A MONTHLY ASSISTANCE ALLOWANCE TO DISABLED VETERANS TRAINING OR COMPETING FOR THE PARALYMPIC TEAM.

Section 322(d)(4) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "2013" and inserting "2018".

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE TO UNITED STATES PARALYMPICS, INC.

Section 521A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (g), by striking "2013" and inserting "2018"; and

(2) in subsection (l), by striking "2013" and inserting "2018".

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr.

GRAHAM, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. LEE, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 699. A bill to reallocate Federal judgeships for the courts of appeals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. President, today I am introducing the Court Efficiency Act, a bill that will help some of the nation's busiest courts. Hopefully, it will also ease some of the tension that arises during debates of D.C. Circuit Court nominees. I am pleased that Senators HATCH, SESSIONS, GRAHAM, CORNYN, LEE, CRUZ, and FLAKE are original co-sponsors.

It is no secret that the D.C. Circuit is the least-busy, least-worked appellate court in the nation. By nearly every measurement taken by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the D.C. Circuit comes in a distant last. Here are three of the most common measurements using the most recent data available for the 12 months ending September 30, 2012.

First, "Total Appeals Filed." Total Appeals Filed measures the amount of work coming into the court. Simply put, it is the total number of appeals that a circuit court received in the last 12 months. The D.C. Circuit has 108 appeals per authorized judgeship, the lowest in the nation. To put this in perspective, the Second Circuit is 4 times higher and the Eleventh Circuit, the busiest in the nation, is more than five times as high, with 583 appeals filed per authorized judge.

Next, "Total Appeals Terminated" measures the amount of work the court is accomplishing. Once again, the D.C. Circuit is by far the lowest in the nation with 108 total appeals terminated per authorized judgeship. By comparison, the Second Circuit is 4 times higher and the Eleventh Circuit is 5 times higher, at 540 appeals terminated per authorized judgeship.

Finally, "Total Appeals Pending" measures the amount of work before the court. In other words, it is the number of appeals the court hasn't yet addressed or the cases that are outstanding. The D.C. Circuit has 120 appeals pending per authorized judgeship, which means it is essentially tied for last with the Tenth Circuit that has 115. In contrast, the Second Circuit and the Eleventh Circuit have 343 and 323 appeals pending per authorized judgeship, respectively.

Back during President Bush's administration, my friends on the other side of the aisle cited the light work load of that court in order to block qualified, non-controversial nominees. Since that time, the D.C. Circuit Court workload has only continued to decrease.

Considering the imbalance between the workloads of the Circuits, my bill essentially reallocates those vacancies to other circuits that are much busier. The Court Efficiency Act does four things. First, it adds one seat to the Second Circuit. Second, it adds one seat to the Eleventh Circuit. Third, it reduces the number of authorized

judgeships for the D.C. Circuit from 11 to 8. Fourth, it would become effective upon enactment.

Adopting this bill would be a step towards rectifying the great workload disparities between the circuit courts. The Court Efficiency Act would ease some of the pressure on the Second and Eleventh circuits. By moving just one judgeship each to the Second and Eleventh circuits, we would lower each circuit's respective workload by approximately 7.5 percent. This reduction can be accomplished without jeopardizing the D.C. Circuit's status as the "least-busy Circuit." Even after the D.C. Circuit is reduced to 8 seats, it would still be roughly half as busy as the Circuit median in appeals filed, terminated, and pending per authorized judgeship.

I would also like to highlight several things that this bill will not do. First, it would not impact the President's current nominee to the D.C. Circuit, Mr. Srinivasan, whose hearing occurred earlier today. Instead, for the remaining three seats, it removes one and reallocates the other two.

Second, the bill would not affect the president's opportunity to nominate two of those Circuit court vacancies. It simply reassigns those vacancies to other circuits that are clearly busier.

Third, this legislation will be effective immediately, rather than postponing until the beginning of the next presidential term, as has been in the past. Immediate enactment will empower the President to quickly act to alleviate some of the heavy workloads of the Second and Eleventh Circuits.

The bill will also save the taxpayer a significant amount of money annually. Although the bill has not been scored yet by the CBO, this estimate is based on previous estimates offered by the CBO when it has scored judgeship bills.

The last time the D.C. Circuit had 11 nominees was the end of 1999. I want to move past the disagreements over the D.C. Circuit and shift these judges to circuits where there is a greater need to fill them.

This is a common sense bill. It moves judges to where they are needed, a significant step in addressing the severe imbalance in the workloads of some of these circuit courts. It saves the taxpayers money. It doesn't negatively impact the D.C. Circuit Court. It won't affect President Obama's current nominee, Mr. Srinivasan. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of this bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 699

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Court Efficiency Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. REALLOCATION OF FEDERAL JUDGESHIPS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate—

(1) 1 additional circuit judge for the second circuit court of appeals; and

(2) 1 additional circuit judge for the eleventh circuit court of appeals.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 44(a) of title 28, United States Code, is amended in the table—

(1) in the item relating to the District of Columbia circuit court of appeals, by striking “11” and inserting “8”;

(2) in the item relating to the second circuit court of appeals, by striking “13” and inserting “14”; and

(3) in the item relating to the eleventh circuit court of appeals, by striking “12” and inserting “13”.

By Ms. COLLINS:

S. 701. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the definition of full-time employee for purposes of the individual mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. CHAMBLISS, and Mr. BAUCUS):

S. 700. A bill to ensure that the education and training provided members of the Armed Forces and veterans better assists members and veterans in obtaining civilian certifications and licenses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce my first bill as a US Senator. It has been delivered to the desk. The bill is the Troop Talent Act of 2013. I am pleased to note it is cosponsored by Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS and Senator MAX BAUCUS.

The bill begins with a problem which I know concerns all Americans, the unemployment rate of our veterans. Currently, the national unemployment rate average is 7.6 percent, but the unemployment rate for veterans is 9.4 percent. That unemployment rate is particularly acute for veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We can't be comfortable if we see the statistic that our veterans have a higher unemployment rate than the national average. It should be otherwise.

In Virginia, where one in nine of our citizens, one in nine of our 8 million citizens from birth to death is a veteran, this is a particularly acute challenge. Frankly, it is only going to get worse as more and more people exit military service in the drawdown from Afghanistan.

What is the reason for the veterans' unemployment rate being higher than the national average? Some of the reasons have to do with medical challenges and issues which are in the province of the VA. I learned of another reason as I was campaigning across the State for 19 months. I heard stories from veterans, and they would say the following: I was in the military. I was a battlefield medic. I got out of the military and tried to get a job as a physician's assistant or a nurse, and I

was told I had no credit for all my military service as I tried to transition into the civilian world.

Another stated: I maintained Naval aviation engines for 20 years. Then when I finished and tried to do the same thing on the civilian side, I was told I had to go back and start as if I had no experience.

Another: I operated heavy equipment, but I was told I would need a commercial driver's license.

Many of the members of our military—all of them are gaining skills along the way, but they go into a civilian workforce where their skills and talents are not recognized. In some ways this is a feature of an all-volunteer military. When we had a draft and men were compelled to serve, someone departing military service would go into the workforce and say they were a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps or an E-5 in the Navy, and someone in the workforce would know what it was they had done.

Today only 1 percent of our adults serve in the military. We appreciate what our military members do, but we don't understand their technical skills or their leadership talent.

This is the genesis for the Troop Talent Act of 2013. It is to make sure military members, while they are active, are getting recognized, credentialled credit for the skills they obtain, which will help them get immediate traction back into the civilian workforce.

The True Talent Act has three pillars: The first is the credentialing of military members for the skills they have obtained and the sharing of information between the military branches about the skills they have with service-members, the private sector, and with agencies who would credential them with a civilian credential. This is the first pillar, credentialing people for the skills people obtain.

The second pillar is a bit of a policing function. Sometimes folks will prey upon people leaving the military and say: Pay me \$500, and I will administer a test which will give you a credential. Then it turns out their credential is worthless.

The VA had a working committee to police these credential-granting agencies to ensure no one was being ripped off. That committee no longer is in service. This bill would restart it.

Finally, the last thing this bill would do would be to take one particular industry sector, information technology, where there is a huge need to hire people and where our military members have significant skills, and this will accelerate credentialing traction for those members back into the military workforce.

There is a current pilot project DOD is working on with certain specialties but not IT. This would seek to expand the pilot programs to add IT to the list where people are credentialled.

In conclusion, this is about doing what the Nation should do for our servicemembers and making sure they re-

ceive the traction they deserve for the service they provided. It is not just about the members themselves, it is also about us. We have invested in our service men and women. They have skills, technical and leadership skills, which would help our society be more successful. To the extent we do not allow them traction back in the civilian life, we are not only depriving them, we are depriving ourselves of their strengths and talents.

I am pleased to introduce this bill and honored to have Senators BAUCUS and CHAMBLISS as cosponsors.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I am offering legislation correcting Obamacare's definition of a “full-time” employee to allow employees to work 40 hours a week without triggering penalties on the businesses that hire them. Currently, Obamacare defines an employee working just 30 hours a week as “full time.”

Because Obamacare uses an unreasonably low threshold of 30 hours a week to define “full time” employees, some businesses are restricting their employees to no more than 29 hours of work per week, to ensure that their workers are considered “part time” for purposes of Obamacare. This is a consequence of the substantial penalties Obamacare imposes on businesses that reach a threshold of 50 “full time” employees, unless they provide expensive health care coverage which many small businesses simply can't afford.

The penalties imposed by Obamacare begin at \$40,000 for businesses with 50 employees, plus \$2,000 for each additional “full-time equivalent” employee. These penalties serve as a huge disincentive for businesses to grow or add jobs, particularly for firms close to the 50-job trigger.

One Maine business I know has 47 employees, and it would like to hire more but won't because of these onerous penalties. If more businesses follow suit, millions of American workers could find their hours, and their earnings, cut back. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics nearly 10.5 million Americans work between 30 and 35 hours per week. Another 9.7 million work between 35 and 40 hours per week. My bill will help protect these Americans who may otherwise find their hours curtailed and their earnings cut as a result of Obamacare.

Obamacare's definition of a “full time” employee is completely out-of-keeping with standard employment practices in the U.S. today. According to the American Time of Use Survey published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American works 8.8 hours per day, which equates to 44 hours per week. Under Obamacare, working only 30 hours a week is considered “full-time”—nearly one-third lower than actual practice.

Likewise, the Obamacare definition of “full-time” employee is one-quarter lower than the 40 hours per week used by the GAO in its study of the budget and staffing required by the Internal

Revenue Service to implement Obamacare. In that report, the GAO described a “full time equivalent,” or “FTE,” as: “a measure of staff hours equal to those of an employee who works 2,080 hours per year, or 40 hours per week for 52 weeks.”

During consideration of the Budget resolution last month, the Senate adopted my amendment calling for legislation setting a more sensible definition of a “full time” employee for purposes of Obamacare penalties. That amendment was endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers, and the National Education Association. The fact that these two organizations—typically thought of as bookends on the political spectrum—would agree that Obamacare’s definition of a “full-time” employee is broken illustrates how out-of-step it truly is.

Under my bill, a “full time” employee would be someone who works a 40-hour week. This is a sensible definition in keeping with actual practice. I urge my colleagues to support it.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 95—RECOGNIZING LINEMEN, THE PROFESSION OF LINEMEN, THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THESE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO PROTECT THE PUBLIC SAFETY, AND EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 18, 2013, AS NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 95

Whereas the profession of linemen is steeped in personal, family, and professional tradition;

Whereas linemen are often first responders during storms and other catastrophic events, working to make the scene safe for other public safety heroes;

Whereas linemen work with thousands of volts of electricity high atop power lines 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to keep electricity flowing;

Whereas linemen must often work under dangerous conditions far from their families to construct and maintain the energy infrastructure of the United States;

Whereas linemen put their lives on the line every day with little recognition from the community regarding the danger of their work; and

Whereas April 18, 2013, would be an appropriate date to designate as National Lineman Appreciation Day: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the efforts of linemen in keeping the power on and protecting public safety; and

(2) supports the designation of April 18, 2013, as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 12—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE CONGRESS THAT OUR CURRENT TAX INCENTIVES FOR RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROVIDE IMPORTANT BENEFITS TO AMERICANS TO HELP PLAN FOR A FINANCIALLY SECURE RETIREMENT

Mr. ISAKSON (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mrs. HAGAN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. CON. RES. 12

Whereas private retirement plans in the United States paid out over \$3,824,000,000,000 in benefits from 2000 through 2009, while public sector retirement plans paid out \$2,651,000,000,000 during the same period, with both playing an essential role in providing retirement income for millions of our Nation’s senior citizens;

Whereas there are approximately 670,000 private-sector defined contribution plans that are currently covering 67,000,000 participants, and over 48,000 private-sector defined benefit plans covering 44,000,000 participants;

Whereas \$4,700,000,000,000 is held in 401(k), 403(b), 457 and similar defined contribution plans, \$2,300,000,000,000 is held in private defined benefit plans, and another \$4,900,000,000,000 is held in Individual Retirement Accounts, largely consisting of funds rolled over from employer-based retirement plans;

Whereas from 2000 through 2009, employers have contributed almost \$3,500,000,000,000 to public and private retirement plans;

Whereas tax incentives are an important impetus for individuals to save for retirement and for employers to offer plans under our voluntary system;

Whereas generally, the taxation of amounts contributed to pension and retirement plans is simply deferred, not lost;

Whereas more than 70 percent of American workers making between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year contribute to their own retirement when covered by a retirement plan at work;

Whereas under current law, if business owners and managers sponsor a retirement plan, they also must cover and provide benefits to lower-income and middle-income employees;

Whereas 401(k) and similar defined contribution plans have been enhanced over the years by Congress on a bipartisan basis;

Whereas the private retirement system in the United States is voluntary and is dependent on the willingness of business owners and corporations to adopt and maintain retirement plans; and

Whereas the United States system of employer-based retirement savings is designed to work together with other personal savings and the Social Security program to provide meaningful income replacement upon retirement: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) tax incentives for retirement savings play an important role in encouraging employers to sponsor and maintain retirement plans and encouraging participants to contribute to such plans;

(2) existing tax incentives have increased the number of Americans who are covered by a retirement plan; and

(3) a reformed and simplified Federal tax code should include properly structured tax incentives to maintain and contribute to

such plans and to strengthen retirement security for all Americans.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, at 2:30 p.m. in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building.

The Committee will hold a hearing entitled, “Expanding the Panama Canal: What Does it Mean for American Freight and Infrastructure?”

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, at 11 a.m., to hold a briefing entitled, “Intelligence Update on Syria”.

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, at 10 a.m. in SD-430.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, at 9:30 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “Border Security: Frontline Perspectives on Progress and Remaining Challenges.”

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, in room SD-628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:15 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Identifying Barriers to Indian Housing Development and Finding Solutions”.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on April 10, 2013, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled “Judicial Nominations.”

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 10, 2013, to conduct a hearing entitled "Tax-Related Identity Theft: An Epidemic Facing Seniors and Taxpayers."

The Committee will meet in Room 562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building beginning at 2 p.m.

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

NATIONAL LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to S. Res. 95.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 95) recognizing linemen, the profession of linemen, the contributions of these brave men and women who protect public safety, and expressing support for the designation of April 18, 2013, as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 95) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to. (The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2013

Mr. REID. I now ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow morning, Thursday, April 11, 2013; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 649, the gun safety legislation; further, that the time until 11 a.m. be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak therein

for up to 10 minutes, and upon use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 649.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, about 11 o'clock tomorrow, then, we will have a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the gun safety bill.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:45 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, April 11, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate April 10, 2013:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

SARAH JEWELL, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.