

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Texas.

BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday afternoon we were reminded that America faces determined enemies willing to engage in barbaric acts against innocent civilians—men, women, and children. On Patriots' Day—a day that has always been a celebration of American heritage and American freedom—terrorist bombings took the lives of at least three people standing near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, including an 8-year-old boy. His name was Martin Richard. He was watching runners complete the race alongside his family. His mother and his sister also sustained injuries, along with more than 150 other people.

We still don't know who is responsible for this terrible atrocity, but we do know the people of Boston responded to this attack with courage and compassion. As the smoke rose, the American people saw their fellow citizens running toward—not away but toward—the scene of the blast. From the police officers and the first responders who secured the bomb site and loaded the injured into ambulances to the marathon participants who literally ran to hospitals to donate blood, to the doctors and other medical professionals who performed emergency lifesaving treatments on the victims, to the Boston area residents who opened their homes to those who had been left stranded, this attack brought out the very best in our country.

In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, so many people rushed to donate blood, the Red Cross literally had to turn them away. Dr. Richard Wolfe, the head of the emergency medicine department at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, called it "the smoothest sort of handling of mass casualty I've ever seen in my career"—something I hope none of us have to see again.

This Chamber has spent the last 4 months, and even years before that, debating issues such as taxes, spending, and health care. But the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government is to keep the American people safe and secure. Our response to this attack must be firm and unequivocal. We must send a clear message that we will never compromise our values or our freedom in the face of terrorist violence. We must stay on the offensive against the enemies of civilization and remain vigilant in our day-to-day lives. The victims of Boston deserve nothing less.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Iowa.

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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

SAFE COMMUNITIES, SAFE SCHOOLS ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 649, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 649) 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.

Pending:

Manchin amendment No. 715, to protect Second Amendment rights, ensure that all individuals who should be prohibited from buying a firearm are listed in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and provide a responsible and consistent background check process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be for debate only.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am glad we are proceeding on this very important legislation. The American people might be wondering why the Senate has not been voting on any amendments to the pending gun legislation.

The Senate voted on Thursday to proceed to the bill. This followed calls that the Senate should debate the bill, and that is why I said I am glad we are getting to it. There has been very little debate. The President has said various proposals deserve a vote. We, on this side of the aisle, don't intend to stand in the way of proceeding on those votes, particularly on the amendments. So I hope we are able to vote very soon.

Last week Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY unveiled an amendment on background checks. The media hailed the agreement as a way to pass gun control. The majority announced that the Manchin-Toomey amendment would be the first one we vote on. Since we are just starting the debate now, obviously we have not voted on the amendment.

We have not voted because despite claims from the other side, background checks are not and never have been the sweet spot of the gun control debate. We have not voted on it because supporters don't have the votes to pass it—at least at this point that is the way it appears to me—and I think they know it.

They don't have the votes even though published reports indicate that Vice President BIDEN, the President of the Senate, has been calling Senators and asking them to support the

Manchin-Toomey bill. They must not be telling him what he wants to hear. They don't have the votes for background checks even though the Vice President has reportedly stated that the opposition to the proposal comes only from the "black helicopter" crowd.

Well, it doesn't come from that point.

The Manchin-Toomey amendment would impose new obligations on law-abiding gun owners. It would do so even though expanding gun background checks would have done nothing to stop Newtown or other mass killings. It would do so even though expanding background checks would do nothing to prevent these killings in the future.

I often quote the Deputy Director of the National Institute of Justice, who recently wrote that background checks could work only if they were universal and were accompanied by gun registration. Of course, most Members of the Senate oppose gun registration. They know what has happened historically with gun registration. In other countries it has led to gun confiscation, and Members of the Senate—but more importantly, lots of people appearing at our town meetings—fear that could happen and don't want to go down that road.

Supporters of the background check amendment claim that it strengthens the rights of gun owners; but, in fact, it does not. The fact is the opposite is true. Opposition to the amendment does not come from the fringe elements of society. In fact, one of the reasons the Senate has not voted on the amendment is the widespread opposition to the amendment from many quarters. If only fringe elements had problems with it, we would be voting on this amendment. So keep watching. If we do not vote on the Manchin-Toomey amendment, it means the proponents of that idea know they don't have the votes to pass it. If we turn to assault weapons or magazines, then it is clear to all that the majority knows it is far from the number of votes they need. I think people are going to be waiting while they try to pick up the votes that will probably never be there.

Meanwhile, on this side of the aisle, our caucus hopes to have their amendments considered soon and to vote on those amendments. Our amendments, unlike the Manchin-Toomey amendment, will actually strengthen the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners and help thwart gun violence by criminals. In fact, there are reports that the other side of the aisle wants to block one of our amendments which would do exactly that.

So that is the situation. Maybe there are leaders around here who would dispute me, but that is the way I see it. The majority doesn't have the votes to pass their amendment, so we are not voting. The majority wants to block Republican amendments that they fear would pass, so we are not voting on the Republican amendments either.