

that man who sold that gun said he sold guns to lots of people who were bad people, but he did it legally. He thinks the law should be changed. So the vast majority of the Senate agreed that should be the case. But we could not get to 60, the magic number here in the Senate.

Yesterday the families of gun violence victims watched as Republicans defeated a commonsense proposal to expand background checks that has the support of 90 percent of Americans.

But make no mistake, the debate is not over. This is not the end of the fight. Republicans are in an unsustainable position—crosswise with 9 out of 10 Americans.

In an event we did out this backdoor yesterday, Senator SCHUMER said—I think he summed it up about as well as you could when he said: America today on background checks is in about the same place America was a few years ago dealing with immigration, gay marriage, and things related to gender equality.

I believe Senator SCHUMER is right. This is the beginning, and it has to happen. Anytime in America, on those rare occasions when 90 percent of the American people agree something should be done, it should be done. And it will be done. It is only a question of time.

The brand of the Republicans is further tarnished by going against what 90 percent of the American people want. Democrats will continue to stand with the families from Newtown, Aurora, Tucson, Carson City, and I assure the 90 percent of Americans who support meaningful background check legislation that I personally will continue this fight.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate suffered a notable and stunning defeat of bipartisanship this week during the debate over background checks. They said a week ago we would never get on the bill, but the Senate joined together and we got on the bill. Then yesterday, as I have indicated earlier, we got a significant majority of the Senate voting to move forward on this background check. Ninety percent of the Democrats, which is in keeping with the American people, and four valiant Republicans joined to put us where we are today.

But the week did not bring only bad news from the legislative front. A bipartisan group of eight of my Senate colleagues—it would never have happened a few years ago, but it is going to happen now. As I indicated, quoting Senator SCHUMER, background checks is about where immigration was just a few years ago. A bipartisan group of my Senate colleagues—four Democrats and four Republicans—from all different political persuasions introduced a comprehensive plan to reform our broken immigration system. Senators SCHUMER, MCCAIN, DURBIN, MENENDEZ,

GRAHAM, BENNET, RUBIO, and FLAKE worked very hard on this legislation. All one needs to do is look at the legislative pedigree of these eight Senators. They are all over the book—liberal, conservative, moderate. And that is the way it should be.

I commend each of them for setting partisanship aside—both Democrats and Republicans setting partisanship aside—on an issue that is critical to our great Nation. The four Democrats did not get everything I wanted in that legislation they now have before the American people. They did not give me, they did not give Democrats everything they wanted in these negotiations. But, as I have said on this floor numerous times, that is what legislating is. It is the art of compromise. It is not the art of getting everything you want.

I have been in this body a long time, and I have been very fortunate to put my name on things that have passed here, and I have helped guide things through this Senate in the last many years. I have to on occasion swallow hard and say: Well, we are going to have to compromise here to get this done.

That is what we need to do. People have been in a situation where they have been unwilling to compromise. There are things that have happened in the great history of this body that have come by compromise. I have never ever gotten everything I wanted. Republicans in these negotiations dealing with immigration, I guarantee you, did not get everything they wanted, just as Democrats did not.

But I am satisfied with this legislation. It continues to secure our borders, the northern and southern borders. It improves our dysfunctional legal immigration system. Our immigration system is broken, and has been for quite some time, and needs to be fixed.

Another thing that is important, it requires 11 million people who are undocumented to pass a criminal background check, pay fines, start on a path to citizenship, and, yes, learn English. It does not put them at the head of the line; it puts them at the back of the line. It takes about 12 or 13 years to finally get up there. But at least the program is moving forward. I look forward to hearings on this measure that will be led by Senator LEAHY.

Mr. President, I want to take a minute to commend Chairman LEAHY. He is the most senior Member of the Senate, he is the President pro tempore of the Senate, but he also has an important responsibility as chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

The reason we were able to get the legislation on the floor that we have been working on this past few weeks is because of Senator LEAHY, because he had his committee—even though, as I have just indicated, Senator LEAHY did not agree with everything that came out of that committee of his; he comes from the State of Vermont which is

much different than other places people on that committee come from around the country, but he brought it forward, and everything we voted on as the base bill came out of that committee.

It is the same as is going to happen on immigration. Senators—these eight—a significant number of them want to do hearings. They want to have a markup. Other Senators said: Let's just move to the floor. Well, there are a number of Senators who believe it should come out of the committee first, so that is what is going to happen. So I commend Senator LEAHY for agreeing to do this.

He is going to have a hearing tomorrow and another one on Monday. He has estimated a time for the markup. So I commend him for his leadership with Judiciary.

I repeat, I look forward to hearings on this measure before the committee, and to a thoughtful debate on the Senate floor.

We are going to have ample time to discuss and consider this legislation. I am going to do what I can to get this bill across the finish line, which I think we are going to do. I think we are going to do it pretty soon.

MAIL SAFETY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we deal with a lot of controversial things. That is the way it has always been here. We deal with controversial issues that elicit passionate responses, including the immigration proposal I just outlined and the antiviolence legislation I talked about earlier. We try to deal with these issues thoughtfully and with respect. Those who serve and work in the Senate do so out of a sense of patriotism and a love of country.

I disagree with a number of my Republican Senators. JEFF SESSIONS and I—I do not think we have ever voted on anything the same way, but I have tremendous respect for him as a person. He does what he believes is right. His colleague from Alabama, RICHARD SHELBY, is one of my dear friends. He and I do not vote much alike, but our relationship is one of respect and admiration for each other. That is what we have to do in this body.

I never question the patriotism or love of country of any Senator because if I did, I would be wrong. So it was deeply disturbing that an anonymous individual would attempt to send deadly poison to Senate offices as well as the White House. It appears that with the swift action of the Capitol Police and Federal law enforcement officials, the suspect in these cowardly, anonymous attacks has been apprehended. I hope he will be brought to justice very soon.

We should all understand that incident does not appear in any way to be related to the tragedy in Boston. Nevertheless, it is a reminder to the Senate community and to all Americans to remain vigilant during these unsettling

times. It is also a reminder that Senate offices should continue to follow the mail policies that are in place for their safety in this investigation.

Fortunately, the system in place to protect the Senate community worked. Maybe people say: Well, it is not good enough. It is good. I remember what happened when we had anthrax with Senator Daschle and Senator LEAHY in previous years. So the system that is in place to protect the Senate community has worked. That is good. These suspicious letters were found and intercepted before they reached the Capitol.

I applaud the postal employees and law enforcement officials who detected and neutralized this threat. I commend the Senate Sergeant at Arms, Chief Gainer, and the Capitol Police for their diligent work to keep the Senate community safe. I rest easier knowing the safety of everyone who works and visits the Capitol is their first priority. I know that to be the case.

I apologize to my friend the Republican leader for talking longer than I usually do.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

TEXAS TRAGEDY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a brief word about last night's tragedy near Waco. From the media reports we have seen, there have clearly been a great many injuries and a terrible loss of life. We are all thinking of and praying for the victims and their families.

Given the horrendous event at the Boston Marathon on Monday, followed by the event near Waco last night, it has been a very difficult week for all of us. Our hearts are a little bit heavier. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

SAFE COMMUNITIES, SAFE SCHOOLS ACT OF 2013

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 649) to ensure that all individuals who should be prohibited from buying firearms are listed in the national criminal background check system and require a background check for every firearm sale, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Barrasso amendment No. 717, to withhold 5 percent of Community Oriented Policing

Services program Federal funding from States and local governments that release sensitive and confidential information on law-abiding gun owners and victims of domestic violence.

Harkin amendment No. 730, to reauthorize and improve programs related to mental health and substance use disorders.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest 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.

PRAYERS FOR WEST, TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is perhaps an understatement to say that it has been a difficult week for our country.

As Americans hold the city of Boston in their thoughts and prayers, I come to the floor to ask for another prayer for the small town of West, TX, in McLennan County, which is very close to Waco, TX.

I just got off the phone talking to the county judge, Scott Felton, and he described for me the terrible tragedy that occurred last night and the ongoing efforts to recover from that tragedy.

Apparently a fire started at an ammonia facility that then caught some tanks of anhydrous ammonia on fire and they literally exploded. And for those who aren't aware of the use of anhydrous ammonia, it is actually a source of nitrogen used in the cultivation of crops. You can imagine that at this time of year, springtime, when planting is starting, there is a lot of use for this essential fertilizer.

The fire started at about 7:30 last night, and the volunteer fire department/first responders were called. The problem was they showed up for a fire but ultimately ended up being victims of the explosions that ensued a short time thereafter when tanks of this anhydrous ammonia exploded. They don't yet know the number of fatalities.

I saw in press reports it could be between 5 and 15. Judge Felton tells me he fears it could be on the higher side of that number or even higher; they just don't know. They are continuing to try to find the victims and help those who need help.

We do know more than 100 people were wounded. An unknown number have lost their lives, as I said, but we do know that among the dead are a number of firefighters, volunteer firefighters, and other first responders. As typical, and as we actually saw in Boston, during a time of crisis in tight-knit communities such as West and cities such as Boston, we see some acts of

real heroism that are encouraging at a time when we could use a little encouragement. We are seeing the resilience of a tight-knit, self-sufficient community in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy.

Businesses have reportedly stayed open throughout the night and neighbors have opened their doors to help support the victims. As is so often the case, ordinary citizens ran toward danger as they offered assistance. One resident loaded his car with people and made three successive trips to the hospital. This morning, as I was waking up and watching the news, I saw one gentleman who said he made multiple trips into the nursing home for nursing home residents who were not able to walk out themselves, to bring them to safety.

As one police officer at the scene said, "The people of West will not let a person stand out in the rain."

We, of course, grieve for those who lost their lives and we pray for those who are injured and still missing. I ask all Americans to keep the people of West, TX, in their thoughts and prayers.

GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. President, on another note—and I say this more in sadness than in anger—I watched the President of the United States say it was a pretty shameful day for Washington—on the national news. That was yesterday. I agree, but for different reasons than the President himself articulated. When good and honest people have honest differences of opinion about what policies our country should pursue when it comes to the Second Amendment and gun rights and mass gun violence, the President of the United States should not accuse them of having no coherent arguments or caving to the pressure. The President could have taken the high road, could have said, ok, now that we have been unsuccessful in these measures, let's move on to the area where we know there is consensus and that has to do with the mental health element in so many of these mass gun tragedies.

Instead, he chose to take the low road. I agree with him it was a truly shameful day. I and many of my colleagues are not worried, as some of the press like to portray it, about the gun lobby who would spend a lot of money and paint us as anti-Second Amendment. I don't work for them. I don't listen for them. I work for 26 million Texans, and I am proud to represent them. The views I represented on the floor of the Senate are their views. If I do not represent their views, then I am accountable to them and no one else, and, no, those of us who did not agree with the President's proposals are not being intimidated, as he said yesterday. It is false, it is absolutely false to say it comes down to politics, as he said.

For me, it comes down to a meeting I had with the families who lost loved ones at Sandy Hook Elementary