

The American people need confidence that the administration is not favoring or punishing the people it regulates based upon their support for the administration's pet causes.

When it comes to these disturbing allegations about Secretary Sebelius and all of the other recent scandals, the American people deserve to know what happened. Yesterday Secretary Sebelius had an opportunity to answer questions. She did not. Today, again Secretary Sebelius had an opportunity to answer questions. Again, according to press reports, she refused to do so.

The American people want answers. Members of the Congress want answers. There are many more questions to be asked.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO SARAH NEIMEYER

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, once in a while you are lucky enough to meet someone who is down to Earth but uncompromising in their idealism. I met someone just like that in the year 2007, and I hired her for my staff. It was a great decision.

For the better part of 6 years, Sarah Neimeyer has been a senior member of my staff, and this week she left my office for a new adventure which she started today, working with the new Secretary at the Department of the Interior. I am sorry to lose her, but I wish her well.

Sarah comes by her idealism honestly. She grew up in a family of progressives in rural Minnesota. Her dad practiced law and her mom raised honey bees and grew her own vegetables.

From her parents Sarah inherited progressive ideals, practical Midwestern values and a deep love of the land.

During college, she spent her summers leading canoe trips through the Boundary Waters Wilderness in northern Minnesota and Ontario, Canada.

Her first boss in the Senate was a dear friend and one of my personal heroes, Paul Wellstone. Sarah worked for Paul for 10 years. After he passed away, she left Capitol Hill and worked as an advocate for land conservation and wilderness preservation.

Illinois has benefited from Sarah's passion, her practicality and her incredibly hard work.

Lake Michigan is one of Illinois' most beloved treasures. As a member of my staff, Sarah has fought many battles to protect the Lake from threats from toxic dumping to invasive Asian carp.

She has worked alongside energy companies in Illinois that are cleaning up the way energy is produced.

Whenever safe water, clean air and healthy lands are at stake, you can be

pretty sure Sarah Neimeyer is close by. She is committed and tenacious. And she usually wins.

There is one cause which is even dearer to Sarah and that is her family—her husband, Joe Warren, and their teenage sons, Will and Harry. As accomplished as Sarah is in her professional life, if you ask her what she is proudest of, she will tell you in an instant: it's her boys.

Paul Wellstone had a great definition for politics. He used to say:

"In the last analysis, politics is not predictions and politics is not observations. Politics is what we do. Politics is what we do, politics is what we create, by what we work for, by what we hope for and what we dare to imagine."

Paul Wellstone was right. That is politics at its finest. That is the kind of public service Sarah Neimeyer has performed for me and for the people of Illinois for the last nearly 6 years and I am grateful to her.

I want to thank Joe, Will and Harry, first of all, for sharing Sarah with us. And I want to thank Sarah for helping to protect and preserve some of my State and our Nation's greatest natural treasures.

I wish her continued joy and success as she gets back on the "green bus" to begin her next professional challenge.

CONTINUING GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. I rise to talk about the continuing toll of gun violence on America and my home State of Illinois. For several months now, New York Times columnist Joe Nocera has published what he calls "The Gun Report." It is a daily compilation of stories about shootings across America. This report, posted online on the New York Times Web site, is startling.

It is one thing when you hear the dry numbers about 87 Americans killed, 200 wounded every day by gun violence, but Joe Nocera's report goes beyond the numbers. It shares some of the details from the news reports of these shootings.

For example, Mr. Nocera's report for Monday describes shootings that took place over this last weekend. The tally of shootings in America goes on to fill 19 paragraphs. Let me read just some of the descriptions of the shootings that took place over this last weekend right here in our beloved country:

A 12-year-old boy was accidentally shot in the face by his 11-year-old friend Friday morning in Camden, NJ.

Two Minneapolis, Minn. police officers were shot and wounded at a traffic stop in the Uptown district Friday afternoon.

Avery Williams, 22, and Jamario Troutman, 24, died and a third man is in serious condition after a Friday afternoon shooting in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Tamara Logan, 44, teacher's aide was shot multiple times in the head area outside McKinley Elementary School in east Erie, Pa., Friday morning.

46-Year-old Bruce Byrd shot and killed his wife, 44-year-old Stephanie Byrd, and then turned the gun on himself in a Lawrenceville, Pa. home Friday.

Those are just a few of the shootings that were reported on Friday. There are dozens more stories from Saturday and Sunday, including a fatal road rage shooting in Arkansas; a convicted felon who shot and killed his son in Missouri; four people found shot to death in a home in Waynesville, NC; and at least 19 people shot during a Mother's Day parade in New Orleans.

Sadly, there were multiple shootings from my home State of Illinois in Mr. Nocera's report, including a Saturday night shooting in Rockford and at least nine people shot over the weekend in the Chicago area, three of them fatally.

It is hard to read Mr. Nocera's report and not feel that something is terribly wrong with this level of gun violence. Have we heard it so often that we reach the point it has no impact? I think most Americans will look at this report and agree that we should take steps to reduce this massive toll of gun violence.

Several weeks ago, on April 17, on this floor of the Senate, we fell short of the 60 votes needed to break a Republican filibuster. It was a filibuster against commonsense gun reform and gun safety. We did not get 60 votes for commonsense steps such as closing gaps in the gun background check system and cracking down on straw purchasers who supply criminals and gangs with guns.

JOE MANCHIN is a Senator from West Virginia. He is a Democrat. He may be one of the most conservative Democrats on the floor of the Senate. PATRICK TOOMEY is a Republican from Pennsylvania, arguably the most conservative Republican on the floor of the Senate. JOE MANCHIN and PATRICK TOOMEY, a Democrat and Republican, sat down and said: Can we find some way to reduce gun violence in America in a bipartisan way? Two conservatives? Two gun owners? And they did.

They came up with a proposal that would call for universal background checks. Today up to 40 percent of the guns sold in America are sold to people not subject to a background check. How important is that? What if you got on an airplane and before it took off the flight attendant said: Welcome to this flight. We want you to know that 60 percent of you have gone through TSA screening to see if you are carrying a weapon or bomb; 40 percent we did not check. Would you get on the airplane? Would you want your family on that airplane?

That is the situation in America today when it comes to the sale of firearms. So JOE MANCHIN and PATRICK TOOMEY said let's close the problems we have, the gaps in the law, and make sure everyone, virtually everyone is subject to a background check, particularly those who buy guns through newspapers or over the Internet. Let's make sure those who go to gun shows to buy guns, that at least we check their background.

Why do we want to check? The law says you have a right under the Second