that clearly appears to have occurred or is well on its way to occurring.

We have had 43 straight months of private sector job growth in the economy. When Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers went down, we were in a financial death spiral. Little by little we are coming out of it. Of course, the news just announced last Friday on the jobs report gives another indication that the economy is beginning to take hold, and we see that in the confidence that is being expressed. We see that in the real estate market, and we certainly see that in the financial markets in New York.

Let me give you another piece of good news that most people would not think about. There has been the discovery of a former Martian lake. As we reach out into the cosmos to try to find any indication of life, scientists are now thinking that this Martian lake might have harbored life billions of years ago—about the time some of the scientists suggest that small microcosm of life might have started on this planet. If this proves out, we are going to Mars not just with robots. Eventually, in the 2030s, we will go with humans, and when we get there, we will find out if that is true. If it is true, was there life that developed? If there was life that developed, was it civilized? If it was civilized, what happened and what can we learn from that that might help us as a civilized life? So I see good signs.

I see the good signs of Senator Kerry as our Secretary of State and what he is doing in trying to bring the parties together in the Middle East. So instead of everything being doom and gloom, I see good things.

EXTENDING THE UNDETECTABLE FIREARMS ACT OF 1988

Mr. NELSON. Senator SCHUMER and I are here for another reason. We don't want to make a mistake. For some number of years, there has been on the books a law which will expire at midnight tonight that has protected us from weapons going through detectors that are not made of metal which the detectors can't detect. Of course, not only are we talking about government buildings and other secure facilities, but clearly we are talking about airports as well.

So now computer technology has advanced to the point, ever since we had that old law, that a person can actually, with a computer, through 3D processing, laying down plastic layer upon plastic layer, create a weapon that cannot be detected with most of the detectors we have today. That old law needs to be updated, but apparently there are those who do not want it updated. So, as a last gasp, we are appealing to the Senate, before the stroke of midnight tonight when this law will be erased, to continue the old law that will at least go after the plastic-type weapons, plastic guns, of which their manufacture—it is required that they have some part of metal in them in order to detect them. But the technology has surpassed that. They can now manufacture them with 3D printing to have no metal parts and they will still shoot a bullet. That is what we are going to have to update. So with the simple click of a mouse, things are changed and it makes it practically invisible to metal detectors and other screening devices.

I thank the senior Senator from New York, who has taken the lead on this issue. He has recognized this problem. He has asked me to join him.

The House of Representatives last week passed similar legislation to not do what we ought to do to update the law but to continue the current ban on such weapons for another 10 years. They obviously pose a very serious threat to our national security as well as to Americans' personal security, and we need to do everything we can to keep them out of the hands of people who want to do harm to others.

Mr. President, I am looking forward to the comments of the senior Senator from New York.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I would like to wait for Senator GRASSLEY—here he is. I will speak for a minute and then propound my unanimous consent request, and then Senator GRASSLEY will propound his request, I presume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I wish to thank my good colleague from Florida who has been a great partner on this very important issue. He outlined it well. I will just speak for a few minutes on this subject.

The bottom line is very simple. There are bad people who always want to evade the law, and there are good people—most Americans, the vast majority—who want to protect the law. Our job is to prevent the bad people without hurting the good people. We will have different views on the issue of gun control as to where to draw that line, but it seems to me on this issue there should be no dispute whatsoever. As the Senator from Florida outlined, there is new technology that for the first time will allow guns to be made that function without metal. That presents a serious danger—some might even say a mortal danger—to our safety because if a person can pass a gun through a metal detector with the very purpose to stop guns from getting into delicate areas, such as airports, sports stadiums, courts, and schools, it can create real havoc. To allow plastic guns that can fire one bullet, two bullets, three bullets, four bullets into these places creates real danger for our citizenry.

There were some wise people back in 1988, even before these guns could be developed, who passed a law that said we should not allow them to exist. It was a good law. The trouble is, as my colleague from Florida has outlined, technology has advanced, so not only are these guns real, but they can be made so that the law that exists and expires tonight can be evaded.

If one were to add an easily removable piece of metal to one of these plastic guns, walk with it, with that metal on it—legal under present law—take it off as a person puts the gun through a metal detector, so it is all plastic, and then quietly insert it back on the gun after it goes through a metal detector, one would have a gun on both sides of the metal detector that is legal under present law, the law that expires tonight, and a person can then evade the very purpose that we have metal detectors at our airports, sports stadiums, and other places—to prevent guns from being smuggled in.

So what we would ideally like to do, the Senator from Florida and I, is say that those types of guns, as well as guns that are purely plastic, should be illegal and that a gun must have some metal in it that can't be removed easily—and those guns would be legal, but those guns wouldn't be smuggled through metal detectors.

Now, years ago, it seemed as though this was all fiction. I remember that in the movie ''In the Line of Fire,'' John Malkovich, seeking to kill the President, takes months to make a gun out of plastic. It was science fiction. But in the last few years that science fiction has become a reality. Three-D printers—a technology overall that is miraculous—can create a trachea for a baby so the baby can live. Three-D printers can create car parts at a much cheaper price. But they can also create plastic guns. Technology allows them to be sold for $1,000 or a little more than $1,000, so just about anyone can get one, certainly a terrorist intent on doing evil. So the ban takes on new urgency.

Today there is good news and bad news. The good news is that the House of Representatives has passed a bill to extend that ban for 10 years. The bad news is that the dangerous loophole I mentioned is still in the bill. Under existing law—the law that expires tonight—one can make one of these undetectable guns perfectly legal by simply attaching a metal handle at the last moment when you want to slip it somewhere where it could be very dangerous and then remove the metal part and make the gun invisible to the metal detector. All the Senator from Florida and I wish to do is simply require that the metal piece be permanently affixed to the gun. Any gun without a permanent metal piece would be illegal—a simple fix that will save lots of lives. Unfortunately, the House bill that passed keeps the present loophole in the law.

I haven't heard any argument against our amendment other than: Nose in the camel's tent; this will allow people to do other bad things. But I haven't heard one specific argument against our closing the loophole

in the law the way we want to do it. Unfortunately, from what I am told, there will be an objection to that and we will just pass a 10-year extension. That is better than nothing, but it doesn't get us across the finish line. The House bill is a step in the right direction, certainly better than letting the law expire, but it still has a glaring loophole in it.

So I hope we can pass a bill that not only extends the current ban but closes the loophole that allows for the manufacture of guns that can evade detection by simply removing a piece of metal. It is a simple fix to the existing statute that won't interrupt any lawful commerce in arms. One can be the most fervent believer in the Second Amendment, and the amendment we propose does not interfere with anyone's right to have a gun—none. All we do is keep the legislative language up to speed with technological developments.

In conclusion, a few years ago these undetectable plastic guns were science fiction. Now they are frighteningly real. That is why we have to extend the ban and hopefully close the loophole.

I again thank my colleague Senator NELSON, as well as my colleague in the House, Congressman ISRAEL, and so many others who have joined us in this, including Senator MURPHY, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator SCHATZ, who have been partners in trying to get this done.

Now I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3626, which is at the desk; that the Nelson-Schumer, et al. amendment, which is also at the desk, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read three times and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is this objection?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3626, which was received from the House. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is this objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3626) was read the third time and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I don't think I find fault with anything Senator SCHUMER said, except as a matter of timing and when to consider those things. Before making any changes to current law, Congress needs to gain an understanding of printed gun manufacturing technology and its relation to permanent metal parts. There are other technical issues that should be resolved before any legislation passes that reflects scientific and manufacturing process realities.

Today is the day the current plastic gun ban expires. The House had already passed a 10-year extension on a bipartisan vote. The only way to be sure the current ban remains on the books is to pass the House bill, which the Senate just did. Since the Democrats wish to extend current law, there are no current circumstances that demanded immediate changes to the law.

Every previous extension of the bill has occurred on a bipartisan basis and has lasted for at least 5 years so that Congress does not need to constantly revisit it. Before Thanksgiving, my colleague, the Senator from New York, offered only a 1-year extension. Ten years is much better, and the 1-year extension proposal contained none of the substantive provisions the Senator from New York offered with mere hours to go before current law expires.

After the Senate passes the House bill—which we did—Congress then has a responsibility to review the issue, hold hearings and obtain expert testimony, and consider alternative legislation, including what the Senator from New York has suggested. The date of expiration of the current ban has been set for many years. If anybody in the Senate is so concerned about what they consider to be a loophole in the law, this obviously should have been done through hearings and the introduction of legislation long ago. We did not even see the language of the proposed amendment I objected to until this afternoon. Dropping a bill at the eleventh hour without any investigation into the technological situation demonstrates that their real objectives were things other than just getting an extension.

Under current law, ''the Attorney General shall ensure that rules and regulations adopted pursuant to this paragraph do not impair the manufacture of prototype firearms or the development of new technology.'' That is a quote from the proposed language that I objected to—or that is in present law, but the amendment of the Senator from New York strikes that language. It seems to me that the Justice Department's regulations should not impair new technology or firearm manufacturing, so I don't know why that change should have been suggested. I am willing to listen to anybody's arguments to the contrary, but that is the way I see it, and I am glad we have taken the action we have.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Iowa. Obviously, I disagree. I think we should be closing this loophole. The language may have been available this afternoon, but the concept was out there for weeks and weeks, if not longer. But I appreciate his language, and he said he did not object to any specifics that I have mentioned here.

So I look forward. We are going to work hard with the Senator from Iowa and others, with whom I disagree on interpretations of the Second Amendment in general, to try and come to an agreement here to close a loophole that we do not think touches any Second Amendment rights in any way at all. If we can work together over the next few months, weeks, with hearings and other things, and convince our colleagues that we have no intent other than to close this loophole and make sure the very law the Senator from Iowa wished to renew is simply made whole, given the new technology and the loophole is closed, I look forward to that opportunity.

So I appreciate my colleague's remarks. I wish we had passed this amendment. I think it would have made the bill better, stronger, with fewer loopholes, but that does not mean we cannot try to do that over the next several months. I appreciate the opportunity to do so with my friend, the only other ''Charles E.'' in the Senate.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, undetectable plastic guns used to be a hypothetical security threat. But now the threat is real.

3–D printer technology has evolved to the point where a person can make a functioning plastic handgun in a matter of hours. These guns are lethal, and the technology used to make them is getting better—and cheaper—every day.

It is a serious concern that the plastic in these guns does not set off walk-through metal detectors. Many of our buildings are protected by these walk-through detectors—courthouses, schools, government buildings, sports arenas, concert venues, and more.

The Undetectable Firearms Act sensibly bans guns that are not detectable by these types of metal detectors. It is essential that we reauthorize this important law.

I am glad the House of Representatives passed an extension of this law last week. It is important that we not let this law expire.

But it is also important for Congress to update this law to close a potentially dangerous loophole.

Under the current law, a plastic gun can be legal if the gun owner simply clips a piece of metal onto the gun, even if the metal is unnecessary to the functionality of the gun. This is a problem because the person could simply unclip the metal from the gun to pass through a metal detector and then have a fully-functioning gun inside a secure location.

We need to close this loophole and make sure that the functional components of guns are detectable by walk-through metal detectors.

I do not mean to be alarmist about the risk that these plastic guns pose, but the risks are real.

Earlier this year the Jerusalem Post reported that an Israeli journalist tried to prove this point by bringing a plastic gun to a press conference at the Israeli Knesset. He got the gun through security, and he filmed himself pointing the gun at Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Fortunately the gun was unloaded and the journalist had no intent to harm anyone. But we should take steps to protect against the risks of these undetectable guns before a tragedy occurs.

I will support efforts to extend the current law, but I also urge my colleagues to work to close this loophole as quickly as possible.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I thank Senator SCHUMER and Senator NELSON for their work on the extension of the Undetectable Firearms Act.

Plastic guns printed from 3D printers are one thing: dangerous. They have no place in our society. These 3D-printed guns can be used to dodge security checks the way Tom Brady dodges opposing defenses. Members of the law enforcement community, police men and women, the ATF, TSA, FBI, and Secret Service all support this legislation because it will make our communities safer. I share their concerns and the concerns of so many of my constituents in Massachusetts. I come here today to express my support for this bill because the safety of our children and communities must be our top priority. No parent, student, or traveler should be worried that a plastic 3D gun could be left undetected and find its way into an airplane, a train, or a classroom.

I am pleased we are passing this legislation today, but we must all remember that this is the bare minimum. Passing this legislation keeps plastic guns from becoming legal, but it does not crack down on the torrents of assault weapons filling our streets or ensure that all gun sales must include a background check. Neither does it close the loophole that allows a plastic gun with a single piece of removable metal to evade the ban.

Even after this bill passes, we must continue to fight for commonsense gun safety regulations. In 1994, I worked with my colleagues and now-Vice President BIDEN to enact tougher gun control laws that helped remove dangerous Chinese assault weapons from our streets. At the time, it seemed like an insurmountable task, but we got those weapons of war off our streets. Today we face a challenge that seems similarly insurmountable. So I hope that in the coming days and weeks the Senate and Congress acts in a bipartisan manner to curb the epidemic of gun violence in our country. I will work with any Member of this Chamber, on either side of the aisle, to enact comprehensive gun control legislation that will keep our neighborhoods, our communities, our cities, and our public safe. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that we finally put tough gun safety laws on the books and get these dangerous weapons off our streets and out of our neighborhoods.

Thank you.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, on December 3, 2013, the House of Representatives passed a 10-year reauthorization of the Undetectable Firearms Act. This law prohibits firearms that are undetectable by widely deployed security screening technologies such as x-ray and metal detectors. These are the standard technologies used by law enforcement officials to protect the public in State and Federal government buildings, courthouses, airports, and a host of other public spaces and events and these are the same technologies that protect the public and elected officials in the Capitol and congressional office buildings, where so many congressional staff and members of the public work and participate in the democratic process in an open and accessible environment. It is not difficult to appreciate why lethal weapons capable of evading such detection cause significant concern for the law enforcement community. This law has been the widely supported policy of Congress since 1988, when the legislation was signed by President Reagan. Ten years ago, Senator HATCH and I came together to reauthorize this law in 2003.

While today's legislation is an important step to reauthorize this law, we have more work to do. Law enforcement experts have urged Congress to make modest changes necessary to close a loophole that allows an individual who makes a firearm using 3D printing technology to easily evade the reach of the current law. I support those changes in order to better protect the public and update the current law in a responsible way.

Unfortunately, these recommendations have been met by Republican objections. As the expiration of this law has crept closer and the issue has gained the greater attention of law enforcement officials and Members of Congress, I worked in the Senate to find bipartisan support for a reauthorization of the law that would include these needed updates. I was disappointed that no Republican senator was willing to engage in a joint effort to responsibly update the law.

Today, a functioning, all-plastic, undetectable gun manufactured in the home using publicly available technology is not theoretical; it is reality. Unfortunately, the legislation we pass today fails to provide law enforcement officials with the best tools possible to keep pace with current and rapidly developing technology. This reauthorization does give Congress time to consider necessary updates to the law that law enforcement experts believe are critical to close the loopholes that have been exposed by emerging technologies.

I hope that as we go forward, Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle will closely examine the improvements we need to make to this law and will act responsibly in addressing them. Given this law's long history of bipartisan support, we should work together to carefully consider the recommendations that law enforcement experts have made to make this law better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I too thank Senator GRASSLEY for arranging so we could proceed with the current law. I have found Senator GRASSLEY to be someone who will listen, who will deliberate, and who will try to do what he thinks is in the best interests of the people, in this particular case, the security interests of the people. I would ask Senator GRASSLEY to consider, as we meet about this over the course of the next several weeks or months, since we both fly in to Washington, DC—and if you are on flights like this Senator is, there may be a good chance there is an air marshal on that flight because the flight is so sensitive coming in to a city where you are only seconds—if an airplane aborts a landing, you are only within seconds of that airplane being near some of the centers of the U.S. Government, such as the Capitol, such as the White House, such as the Supreme Court. If a person were able to sneak a plastic gun through, then it seems to me that poses a much greater threat to the security interests of this country and its people.

If it is, in fact, legal to have a gun where you can remove that piece of metal and someone has been able to sneak that through the metal detectors at the place of origin of that person's flight, then it seems to me we are asking for trouble. In the great tradition of the Second Amendment of protecting people and letting them have their rights to guns, this is an aberration of that right that we need to duly consider and protect against.

I thank Senator GRASSLEY for coming here and extending the law today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business until 7 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Tennessee.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I intend to speak for more than 10 minutes when I get the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.