

This is something we ought to address. I am delighted that the House has done so and that the President has signaled his agreement with what the House has done. I have been working on this since I came to the Senate in 1995. I voted to substantially increase the limit in 1997. I called for the elimination of the test and cosponsored legislation that would get rid of the test.

This year, I have introduced legislation that would eliminate the test. My bipartisan legislation has 43 cosponsors, including the entire majority leadership. There are a number of others, organizations and all, who have endorsed this concept, including Green Thumb, 60+, the Seniors Coalition, National Association of Home Builders, National Taxpayers Union, the U.S. Air Force Sergeants Association, Americans for Tax Reform, CapitolWatch, National Tax Limitation Committee, United Seniors Association, United Seniors Health Cooperative, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The point is, the House of Representatives recognized the value of this concept and unanimously voted to eliminate the earnings limit. The President has indicated he would sign clean legislation, unencumbered by extraneous amendments. I believe we should follow the lead of the House and do what the President is asking us to do—to deliver this measure which would eliminate the earnings test. It is something I have been working on now for years. It is a counterproductive, unfair penalty. I believe that, because the President is prepared to sign it, the Senate now needs to move forward and eliminate this out-of-date and costly impediment, this discrimination, this very serious problem for our seniors, which prohibits our culture from having the benefit and value of the best effort of many of our very best workers.

With that in mind, I look forward to the debate later today. I am pleased to have had this opportunity to address this issue.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is now in a period of morning business.

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE CONFERENCE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will speak on a matter involving the juvenile justice conference—or, perhaps more accurately, I should say the lack of a conference on the juvenile justice bill. It is a matter that concerns me greatly because I was the floor leader on this side and the distinguished Senator from Utah was the floor leader on the other side when we had over a week of debate on the juvenile justice bill. We had a very solid debate. We then passed the bill with 73 votes in the Senate. It went to conference, and it was

like going into the Bermuda Triangle; we haven't seen it since.

Actually, this Congress has kept the country waiting too long for action on juvenile justice legislation and has kept the country waiting too long on sensible gun safety laws. We are fast approaching the first-year anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO. It has been 11 months since 14 students and a teacher lost their lives in that terrible tragedy on April 20, 1999. It has been 10 months since the Senate passed the Hatch-Leahy juvenile justice bill. As I said before, it was an overwhelming vote of 73-25.

Our bipartisan bill includes modest—and I believe effective—gun provisions. It has been 9 months since the House of Representatives passed its own juvenile crime bill, which was on June 17, 1999. Then the leadership in the Congress delayed action on calling a conference all summer. It has been 8 months since the House and Senate juvenile justice conference met for the first and only time. The Republican majority in the Congress convened the conference on August 5, 1999. They did that less than 24 hours before the Congress adjourned for a month's vacation.

Now, you don't have to be a cynic to recognize this for what it was. It was a transparent ploy to deflect criticism for delay, but also to make sure the conference could not do anything. They would not have enough time to prepare comprehensive juvenile justice legislation to send to the President before school began in September. But we did have time to do it before children went back to school in January. We didn't do that. Now I wonder if we will ever do it.

The Senate and House Democrats have been ready for months to reconvene the juvenile justice conference. We have told the Republicans we would meet with them on a minute's notice. We want to work with Republicans to craft an effective juvenile justice conference report that includes reasonable gun safety provisions. But even though the Senate passed this legislation by a 3-to-1 majority, no conference; the Republican leadership has decided not to act.

I think this is particularly shameful because the Congress has spent more time in recess than in session during the last meeting of this conference. Think about that. We have been out on vacation more time than we have actually been here working since we had that last conference. Let's take a couple days off one of these recesses and have a conference.

Two weeks ago, the President invited House and Senate members of the conference to the White House, both Republicans and Democrats. He urged us to proceed to the conference and to have final enactment of legislation before the anniversary of the Columbine tragedy. Unfortunately, the Republican majority has rejected the President's plea for action. I think more than re-

jecting the President's plea for action, they have rejected the American people's plea.

On April 22 of last year, barely 2 days after the killings at Columbine High School, I came to the Senate to urge action. I praised the Democratic leader, Senator KENNEDY, and others for their thoughtful comments on these matters and for reaching out to the families of those who were killed that week. At that time, almost a year ago, I urged the Senate to rededicate itself to the work of assisting parents, teachers, the police, and others in stemming school violence. I suggested that S. 9, the Safe Schools, Safe Streets, and Secure Borders Act of 1999, provided a good place to start.

Responding to our efforts to turn the Senate's attention to the problems of school violence, on April 27 the Republican leader came to the floor and said if we withheld for 2 weeks, he could provide a legislative vehicle "that we could take up, and the Senate would then have an opportunity for debate, have amendments, and have votes."

Senator LOTT returned to the floor the following day to repeat his commitment to provide the Senate with the "opportunity to debate and vote on those issues dealing with school violence." To Senator LOTT's credit, he proceeded to S. 254, the juvenile justice bill, which was then pending on the Senate calendar, and he did that on May 11. We then had 2 weeks of real debate on it—one of the few we have had recently—and then the Senate worked its way through this bill. The Hatch-Leahy juvenile justice legislation, which passed the Senate on May 20, passed with a strong bipartisan majority and 73 votes, with both Democrats and Republicans voting for it. No one should forget it was a Republican majority that decided to make the juvenile justice legislation the vehicle for the antiviolenence amendments adopted by the Senate last May. Three-quarters of the Senate voted for our legislation.

Following the action by the other body, I urged a prompt conference on the juvenile justice legislation. I took the unusual step of coming to the Senate to propound a unanimous consent request to move to conference on the legislation, which initially encountered Republican objections. But eventually this request provided a blueprint for moving the Senate to agreeing to conference on July 28 of last year.

Unfortunately, that conference was convened for only a single afternoon—not with votes but of speeches. Democrats in both the House and Senate tried to offer motions about how to proceed to begin some of the discussion. But that was ruled out of order by the Republican majority.

Then I spoke on the floor several times last year—on September 8, September 9, and October 21—urging the majority to reconvene the juvenile justice conference. I joined with fellow Democrats to request, both in writing and on the floor, the majority to let us

finish our work on the conference and then send a good bipartisan bill to the President. On October 20, 1999, all the House and the Senate Democratic conferees sent a letter to Senator HATCH and Congressman HYDE calling for an open meeting of the juvenile justice conference. The following year, on March 3, 2000, after yet another shocking school shooting involving 6-year-old classmates in Michigan, Representative CONYERS and I wrote again to Senator HATCH and Congressman HYDE requesting an immediate meeting of the conference. The response has been resounding silence.

Two weeks ago, I felt honored to be invited to a White House summit by the President of the United States. I joined Senator HATCH, Congressman HYDE, and Congressman CONYERS in an Oval Office meeting with the President—a very substantive meeting. It went on well over an hour on what was a very busy day for the President. He urged the reconvening of the conference. He urged action by the Congress to send him a comprehensive bill before the 1-year anniversary of the Columbine tragedy. I met with the President again that evening. He said again: Please, will you just meet and send me a bill, especially before the 1-year anniversary of Columbine. His entreaties, which I thought were well intentioned and were done seeking bipartisan support, were rebuffed. No conference has been scheduled.

This is only the latest in a long series of delays that have plagued this legislation. We had to overcome technical obstacles and threatened filibusters just to begin the juvenile justice conference, and, unfortunately, I see no sign of abating the delays. We worked hard on the Hatch-Leahy juvenile justice bill, S. 254, and passed it by a vote of 73 to 25, but we cannot get a conference.

What I worry about is the impression we give the country. We will stand here and debate symbolism. We will take long recesses. We will talk about everything but the thing that is on the minds of parents and schoolchildren.

I am blessed with representing a State that I believe has the lowest crime rate in the Nation. We are a State where most of us don't even lock our doors. But it is interesting, when I go to schools in my State and talk to parents, to teachers, and to the children, they worry. Then I go into some of these other larger, urban States, and the concern is enormous.

We have become a terribly violent nation notwithstanding that the vast majority of Americans are good and law-abiding people. I come from a State where a majority of the people own firearms. I own many myself. We don't have gun control laws in our State. We teach people to respect the weapons they have. But the people in Vermont have the same sense of revulsion that I do when they see some of these shootings and they see a Congress unwilling to even stand up to a powerful gun lobby.

Can anybody forget what was probably one of the most terrible pictures I have seen, and terrible in what it said, at the Jewish day center in California where a man went in attacking and shooting? You remember the photograph of the heavily armed police officers leading the little children out across the street. Every one of us has children and has been with children. We have seen them in grade school with a teacher leading the group of children. All the children hold hands. They hold hands with the teacher. And what a happy, cheerful time: We are going to recess. We are going to class. We are going to learn. And they are protected and safe because they are with their teacher or their parents. But this time police officers led these children. They did not know what was going on with the heavily armed officers bringing them to safety. The police officers must have children of their own, or grandchildren of their own, and were thinking about what was going on.

These are images that frighten people in this country. It is reasonable that they are frightened. We ought to respond. We are talking about a juvenile justice bill that has a whole lot of things way beyond any question of gun control. It closes some loopholes in the law where you can't go to a flea market in the middle of a Saturday afternoon, and buy a gun without a real check on your background.

We have an opportunity in the conference to cut through partisan differences to make a difference in the lives of our children and families. We need to meet in the conference to debate our motions, and vote them up or vote them down, but at least meet and vote. We are paid to vote yes or no. We are not paid to pass the buck. That is what is happening here.

I don't know what my friends on the Republican side worry about. There are more of them than there are of us. They control the schedule. They have the votes. They can vote down anything they want. The procedural hurdles and the delays that plague this legislation are simply because of the opposition of the gun lobby to any new firearm safety laws.

Unfortunately, the leadership is being held hostage by the extreme views of the NRA and other special interests. If they really wanted to pass effective juvenile justice reforms and protect our children against gun violence, they could do it tomorrow. The President would sign the Hatch-Leahy bill in a second if it reached his desk.

Last year, the Y2K Act conference only took 2 weeks to complete, and a bill was sent to the President to provide legal protections for business—legal protections, as it turned out, that they didn't need. But when it comes to protecting our children where there is a real need, we can't act unless the NRA tells us we are allowed to act. That is wrong.

I didn't come to the Senate to have any group or any special interest group on the right or the left tell me what I can do or not do. Only the voters of my State can make a decision that they don't like the way I vote. They can throw me out. But we should not allow this great body to be held hostage by special interest groups—no matter how many Members they have, no matter how much money they spend on television, or no matter how outrageous a claim they make.

I have stood on this floor many times, but some of the proudest times I have had in public service were as a prosecutor in law enforcement. Let's listen to our Nation's law enforcement officers. They say pass a strong and effective juvenile justice bill. Ten national law enforcement organizations, representing thousands of law enforcement officers, have endorsed the Senate-passed gun safety amendment. They support loophole-free firearm laws.

I remind Senators of the time Members of this Congress turned their back on police officers when the NRA said don't ban cop-killer bullets. Do you remember that? Law enforcement said: Wait a minute. We put our lives on the line for you. How about protecting us?

Here are the organizations that have endorsed the gun-safety amendment and that support loophole-free firearm laws:

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Police Executive Research Forum, Police Foundation, Major Cities Chiefs, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Sheriffs Association, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association.

These law enforcement officers need help in keeping guns out of the hands of people who should not have them. I am not talking about people who use guns for hunting and sport but about criminals and unsupervised children. These organizations want Congress to move.

We recognize there is no single cause and no single legislative solution that will cure the ill of youth violence in our schools or in our streets. We have an obligation to do our part. It is time to act.

This list represents organizations that endorse the Senate-passed gun safety amendments. These are not organizations that take a pie-in-the-sky attitude. These organizations represent people who work in an increasingly violent society, putting their lives on the line to protect all Americans, just as the police officers in the Capitol put their lives on the line every day to protect everyone. Since I have been here two have died doing that.

These organizations ask: Will you at least stand up for us as we stand up for the quarter billion Americans?

I see the distinguished senior Senator from Rhode Island on the floor, Mr. REED. I applaud Senator JACK REED for his resolution for the juvenile justice conference to report a final bill by April 20 of this year, the 1-year anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting.

I am proud to cosponsor this resolution. I am proud to work with my good friend. I admire him for his initiative. I yield the floor to the distinguished senior Senator from Rhode Island.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. I commend the Senator from Vermont for his eloquence and his passionate support of this vital legislation. It is vital to the children and to the families of this country.

As the Senator pointed out, it has been 11 months since the tragic incident at Columbine High School. Last April 20, we witnessed with horror and revulsion an attack on children who were just going to school. The entire country stood up as one and said: We have to do something. We have to stop this senseless gun violence. We have to create a country in which easy access to firearms and the resulting violence is something of the past.

However, it has not stopped. The violence continues every day with tragic consequences throughout this country—in Seattle, WA; in Atlanta, GA; in Los Angeles, CA; in Honolulu, HI; in Ft. Worth, TX; in Sidney, OH; in Wilkinsburg PA; in Mount Morris township in Michigan; and thousands of other places where, regrettably and tragically, gun violence is so common in this country that it doesn't make the front page because the incidents aren't that graphic or that violent.

The first anniversary of the tragedy at Columbine High School is just around the corner, April 20. Still, the conference committee on juvenile justice has not yet discharged their duty and sent back a bill that contains common, safe, gun safety measures that were passed by this Senate. In fact, as the Senator from Vermont pointed out, the committee has met only once, last August. For 8 months we have waited. We have waited; the American people have waited. We have waited for commonsense protections that have been frustrated and thwarted by the Republican leadership at the behest of the NRA. They have ignored the will of the American people and the overwhelming desire of the American people to protect the safety of their children and the safety of their communities.

I believe the American people have waited long enough. Today, along with my colleagues, Senator BOXER of California, Senator LEAHY, and others, I will introduce a sense-of-the-Senate resolution calling for the juvenile justice conferees to complete and submit the conference report before April 20, the first anniversary of the Columbine shooting, and to include in this conference report the amendments passed by this Senate seeking to limit access

to firearms by juveniles, by convicted felons, and by other persons.

Will the passage of this legislation stop gun crime in this country? No, it won't. But it will represent a step forward to impose reasonable controls on the easy access to firearms for those who should not have them: Children, criminals, those whose mental capacity is diminished enough so they resort to violence with these weapons.

Within the core of this juvenile justice legislation are simple, commonsense approaches to ensure we have a safer society: Closing the gun show loophole, requiring safety locks to be sold with handguns, banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, and outlawing juvenile possession of assault weapons.

We will bring common sense to our gun laws with these measures and, hopefully, reduce the avalanche of violence that is engulfing so many in this society.

In my home State of Rhode Island, in the city of Providence alone, 26 people were murdered in 1999. That is up from 15 in 1998. Firearms were used in the vast majority of the killings in both years: 19 out of the 26 people who were killed last year were killed with firearms, 11 of the 15 the year before. And Providence, my capital, is a small city of roughly around 200,000 people.

Last year, when we were talking about Columbine High School, if any Member came to this floor and said: I predict a 6-year-old child will walk into first grade and kill another 6-year-old child with a handgun, we would have been lambasted as extremists, hysterical, provocateurs, irresponsible, reckless. Guess what. It happened. Incidents such as that happen each and every day.

Just a few weeks ago in Providence, RI, two young boys were rough-housing with each other—a 17-year-old and a 13-year-old friend—doing what boys have been doing for a long, long time. They were razzing each year, wrestling with each other, seeing who was the most tough. They went on and on and on. One of them got frustrated. Now, when I was younger, that frustration might have led to a punch in the nose, a bloody nose, and some hard feelings, but that was all. Somebody in the crowd had a gun and this young boy recklessly and without thought grabbed that gun just to show how tough he was, pointed the gun at the 13-year-old, pulled the trigger, thinking nothing would happen, and shot that 13-year-old in the head. That shooter, that young man—not a criminal, just a kid rough-housing around in the neighborhood—was so overcome with remorse that he fled to an adjacent backyard and shot himself in the head.

That is gun violence in America today. That is the cost of easy access to firearms. These aren't criminals. These were kids doing something stupid. But because they had guns, it resulted in death and destruction.

We are not kids here. We are supposed to be adults. We are supposed to be responsible. We are supposed to represent the best values and ideals of this country. That means we must stand up and vote on measures such as this juvenile justice bill.

I ask on behalf of the 12 children killed each day by gun violence that we bring this conference bill back to this floor with those reasonable gun control measures included. Someone has to speak for them. Someone must speak for them. Someone must demand these measures come before the Senate.

We cannot continue to listen to the siren song of the NRA in this Chamber. We cannot be hypnotized by all the spin and the hype and all the misinformation and misdirection. We have to respond to the reality of kids easily getting handguns and unwittingly and, tragically, killing each other.

We have a country in which the homicide rate by handguns far surpasses that of any other country in the world. In Japan, in 1996, there were 15 people killed with handguns, in a country of 126 million people. That is 1 person in every 8.4 million. The ratio in the United States? One person out of every 27,000. What is the difference? Cultural? Genetic? Demographic? They have gun laws that make it difficult for anyone and everyone, willy-nilly, to own handguns.

It is the same story the world over. Canada, perhaps the country closest to us in culture, in demographics and ethnicity, is also a country that had a great frontier, a country that had the same kind of challenges we had opening up their great west. It is a country of outdoors men and women; it is a country, in many respects, with the same cultural values we have. Yet in that country, in 1996, 106 people were killed out of a population of 30 million. That is 1 person in every 284,000—many, many, many times fewer people killed by gun violence in a country so similar to ours. The difference? Once again, they have sensible laws that govern access to handguns.

We could go on and on. But as long as a criminal can walk into a gun show and buy a gun without a background check and walk out before any type of check can be done, as long as kids can get access to firearms without safety locks on them so they can use them, as we have seen happen too often, as long as it is harder for a kid to open a bottle of aspirin than it is to shoot a gun, because we have childproof tops on aspirin containers, we are going to have these problems.

It is our responsibility to act. It is our responsibility to stand up. We have not done that. Time is drawing close to April 20, 1 year after Columbine. I cannot think of a better way, not only to memorialize the victims of that shooting but to give meaning to that senseless tragedy, than for this body and the House to send to the President a gun control measure that will provide the sensible, reasonable controls that are so critical.

I see the Senator from California. There is no one in this body who is not only sensitive but more forcefully engaged in this effort than my friend and colleague, Senator BOXER, someone who I am proud to say will cosponsor this resolution, someone I am proud to say will continue her valiant efforts to lead the way for sensible gun control in this country.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, how much time remains in the morning business period?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). Thirty minutes remains under the control of Senator DURBIN.

Mrs. BOXER. I will take 60 seconds at this time, and then I will yield to Senator DASCHLE, who will speak on his leader time. I am so proud he has come over to the floor.

I wish to say in this minute, before my friend from Rhode Island leaves, what an amazing addition he is to this Senate. I say that from the bottom of my heart. I served with him in the House and he was a great House Member. I predict he has an unbelievable future in the Senate. Why do I say that? Because he has courage, because he has conviction. He is not afraid to take the floor on issues that are difficult; to take on, perhaps, some of the special interests that, believe me, do not take kindly when you stand up and speak from your heart about issues that impact on their bottom line. In this case, it is the bottom line of groups out there that want us to take no action against gun violence.

We have a plan. We have a great plan that passed the Senate. It is endorsed by so many law enforcement groups and the vast majority of the American people. I can think of no more appropriate speaker than our Democratic leader to tie the pieces together and to talk about why the time is ripe.

I did offer a similar resolution to that of Senator REED. I am proud to cosponsor his. It got 49 votes—49-49. We didn't know that or Vice President Gore would have broken the tie. Next time we will be ready.

I yield the floor, and I will reclaim it when my leader is finished.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I will use my leader time and allocate that time to my comments on the floor this morning.

Let me begin by acknowledging, as well, the extraordinary leadership, not only of Senator REED, but of Senator BOXER. Everything Senator BOXER has said about Senator REED is a view that I think is shared by Republicans and Democrats alike. He has come to the Senate and in a very short period of time established himself as an authority on a number of key issues, including education and defense matters, as well as now, on neighborhood safety. I applaud him again for taking the leadership, as he has.

Senator BOXER, on this, as well as on so many other issues, comes to the floor, grinds it out, and speaks as pas-

sionately and as eloquently as anybody in this Chamber. It is an extraordinary privilege to work with her as well.

I have heard the proposal made by the Senator from Rhode Island that we set for ourselves a date by which we must act with respect to juvenile safety, and that we choose a date that we all ought to remember—April 20th. Last year, that date, the date of the Columbine tragedy, triggered our commitment to better safety and prompted the Senate to act. We left with an expectation that, as a result of that action in the Senate, things were going to happen, that we could send a message of hope to the people of Colorado and to the people of this Nation that we will not tolerate the violence that exists in this country. We sent the message that we will respond to tragedy with careful, commonsense approaches that will make schools and neighborhoods safer, such as balanced gun legislation. That is what we said and that is how we voted. We are on record as having supported such commonsense legislation.

In poll after poll, it is remarkable the degree to which the American people support the actions taken by the Senate and the amendments offered by our Democratic colleagues. It is overwhelming.

There has been a sea change, an attitudinal progression on this issue in the country—a sea change. I represent a Western State where, after you are born, on your first or second birthday, virtually, you get a shotgun—because that is what we do. I am proud I have shotguns. I love to go hunting. I love to walk and take in nature in all of its splendor in the fall. That is part of the culture of the West. It is a part of the culture of growing up in South Dakota of which I am very proud and I love. I will defend it, and I will work to ensure that my children and grandchildren and great grandchildren have these same experiences.

But there is a difference. That difference is becoming even more extraordinarily evident as we read about experiences such as we read this morning in the Washington Post, an agonizing description of what kind of setting created this despicable act in Michigan. A young boy, 6 years old, takes a gun, walks into a school full of children, his school, picks out a girl, says, "I don't like you," and shoots her to death. That story generated a front page article and a spread, inside the paper, of two full pages—and it should have. Why? Because this incident illustrates the magnitude of the torturous existence that now is becoming more and more prevalent all across this country in schools and in neighborhoods.

But you could put that kind of story on the front page of the Washington Post every single day. It happened in Michigan, but it happened yesterday somewhere else. It happened in Rhode Island shortly after that. It happens every day. Those of us who appreciate the culture of a good pheasant hunt

recognize there is a huge difference between that and the disastrous consequences of this proliferation of guns that now has become a real threat to the safety and well-being of children in virtually every school in America today.

All the Senator from Rhode Island is suggesting is that at long last we say: Look, we've talked enough. Let's act. We took the first step last May. We expected that we would take additional steps. We have not. We have talked. We have positioned. We have wrung our hands in agony as one shooting after another has been pasted on the pages of every single newspaper in the country.

The litany of additional Columbines has continued all across the country. These new shootings may not have claimed as many lives. But they are tragedies nonetheless. They ought to trigger action.

Let us act. Let us meet in conference and work through our differences so that we can finally say: We are not only going to talk about this. We are going to do something about it.

We recognize that passing the modest gun safety measures in the Juvenile Justice report will not completely solve the problem of gun violence. There may be other things that can be done. I am very grateful to HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo, and others in the administration, for having worked out a remarkable and historic new agreement with Smith & Wesson.

What a statement: for Smith & Wesson to acknowledge that guns are inherently dangerous, and that they are going to do something about it. Regardless of what their motivation may be, the fact is, they are going to do something about it. In making this commitment, they are setting a precedent. I would love to see every gun manufacturer follow Smith & Wesson's lead. It is common sense.

I have long admired President Ford, for many reasons. My admiration for him increased again this past week when he spoke about the need for this Congress to respond in a commonsense way to the gun violence that is claiming too many of our children.

The American people are looking to us. They want to know that we hear them. They want us to give them some hope that we can solve the real problems facing families and communities—not only in Columbine, but in South Dakota, Michigan, Rhode Island, California, and all across America. The American people want to know that our democratic process works.

In these days before the first anniversary of the Columbine tragedy, we ought to take President Ford's wise counsel to heart. For the sake of our children, we need to come together and pass common-sense gun safety laws.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank my Democratic leader for his comments and his continual leadership on

the gun issues that impact the people of our Nation.

I want to set into the RECORD a series of facts, a series of statistics, a series of numbers. I know sometimes when you lay down a series of numbers such as this, people's eyes glaze over and they lose track of what you are talking about.

I urge everyone listening to this to think not about the numbers so much as the people behind the numbers.

In the year 1997, which is the last year for which we have statistics, 32,436 people died from gunshots in America—more than 32,000 people. I want everyone to think about what it would mean to you if any of these 32,000 people were from one of your families, what it would mean to you if it was your dad, if it was your mom, if it was your child, if it was your grandma, if it was your grandpa.

Twelve children die every single day from gunfire. Actually, if you average it out, it is between 12 and 13 children under the age of 18—each and every day.

Our children are dying. And what are we doing? We are dithering around doing nothing about it.

I understand that this week we are going to take up a flag desecration amendment. There are those who believe we need to protect the flag by authoring an amendment changing the Bill of Rights for the first time in our history to specifically spell out an antidesecration flag amendment. I will be supporting a statute, a bill, to protect the flag. I do not think we need to go to such a step as amending the Bill of Rights. But be that as it may, flag desecration is an issue.

In over 200 years, there has been an average of one flag desecration a year, and we are acting again. Mr. President, 32,436 people died in 1997—in 1 year—and we are doing nothing. Why can't we protect the flag and take care of protecting the people? Why can't we protect the desecration of the flag by a statute that is easy to do and then bring up the juvenile justice bill and protect the thousands of people who are dying each and every year? What about the desecration of the children, of the families?

In the 11 years of the Vietnam war—one of the most tragic periods in our history—58,168 fine, wonderful, glorious Americans died in combat. There is a number, a number that is enshrined on the wall on that beautiful memorial down here that we all go to often—and we should go to often—to pay our respects. It was a war that destroyed so many families; and so many veterans who came back then committed suicide because of that war. It was a time in our history when our country came to its knees; 58,168 Americans died in Vietnam over an 11-year period. Let me tell you how many Americans have died over an 11-year period from gunshots not related to any war: 395,441 Americans.

Mr. President, 58,168 Americans died in the Vietnam war; 395,441 Americans

died from gunshots in an 11-year period. What are we doing about it? Nothing. That is the equivalent of almost seven Vietnam wars over an 11-year period. What are we doing about it? Nothing.

We hear the NRA President say: We should do nothing. His answer is give more guns to people.

For every American who dies from gunfire, another three are injured.

Over that 11-year period, we have almost a million people injured from gunfire. They could be paralyzed. These could be very serious injuries, and sometimes they are. Fifty people killed or injured in school shootings in America in the last year. Thirty-one percent of children age 12 to 17 know of someone their age who is carrying a gun—gun-packing children. We are to blame. They are not to blame. We are the grown-ups. We set the rules. This is a society of law and order. What are we doing about it in the Senate? Nothing.

Fifty percent of children age 9 to 17 are worried about dying young. What kind of America do we have now? When I was growing up, I didn't think I was going to die young. I thought I was going to go to school, get an education, have a family, work, have a life of fulfillment. I never thought for one minute that that could all be ended by a gunshot from a friend, a classmate on the street, in a McDonald's, in a drive-by shooting, road rage.

We had better face our problems. We have the greatest country in the world, but we have problems. We need to face them. We are not here to ignore problems. We are not here to say everything is great. We need to act on our problems. This is a problem.

Listen to the law enforcement groups that back us on this when we say bring out the juvenile justice bill.

The juvenile justice bill; that is the one bright spot. We passed it in a bipartisan fashion about a month after Columbine, with AL GORE casting a tie-breaking vote on one of the most important amendments. This is what we passed.

We closed the gun show loophole—Senator LAUTENBERG's amendment—that allowed criminals to walk into a gun show and simply get it. He could be crazy. He could be a felon. He could be intending to kill people on the street, to kill people in a school, to harm himself. He could walk into a gun show without having a background check. But if he went into a gun store, he would have to have a background check. All we did was close that loophole. What is the Senate doing about it now? Nothing. It is languishing in the committee.

We banned the importation of high-capacity clips which are used in semiautomatic assault weapons. That was Senator FEINSTEIN's amendment, a very important amendment.

We prohibit the domestic manufacture of those clips, but the importation continues. These clips are coming in. We simply say: End that importation. We passed that.

We passed the Kohl amendment requiring that child safety locks be sold with every handgun.

We passed the Boxer amendment which required the Federal Trade Commission and the Attorney General to study the extent to which the gun industry markets its products to juveniles. These companies are manufacturing guns that resemble toys, that are sold to youngsters and get them interested.

We made it illegal with the Ashcroft amendment to sell or give a semiautomatic assault weapon to anyone under the age of 18.

Five amendments, we passed them in a bipartisan way. They went off to conference, and they have been languishing for now 9 or 10 months. It is the same with Senator REED's amendment.

It is time to stop the dithering. It is time to stop bowing to the National Rifle Association and bowing to the gun lobby. It is time to stand up and be courageous, bring those amendments forward, protect our children, and stop the carnage that is happening in our country.

Who supports these five sensible gun control amendments? Senator LEAHY, in his wonderful opening remarks today, put them forward: The International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, Police Executive Research Forum, Police Foundation, Major Cities Chiefs, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of School Resource Officers, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

We cannot have a more diverse group of law enforcement.

We have five important, sensible gun control laws that passed the Senate, that went into a conference committee.

If one reads how a bill becomes law, they know how it is done: A bill has to pass the House; a bill has to pass the Senate. The juvenile justice bills passed both bodies. You then go to the conference committee. Both sides sit across from each other and talk about what belongs in the bill. They bring the bill forward, and we vote up or down. This bill has languished for 10 months.

Now, what is some good news? Senator DASCHLE alluded to the Smith & Wesson agreement. Smith & Wesson is the largest manufacturer, if not one of the largest, of handguns. They have made an agreement as part of a lawsuit because gun manufacturers are now being sued for these deaths. They have agreed that all their handguns and pistols will now be shipped with child safety devices. Within 2 years, the handguns will be manufactured with internal locks. If a child picks up a gun and they don't know the combination, they will not be able to turn and hurt anyone—sensible.

Within 1 year, all pistols will be designed so they can't be readily operated by a child under the age of 6. Handguns must pass a performance test. That gets to a bill I have about banning junk guns. They will drop these guns down. They will see if they go off. A lot of these handguns are so cheaply made, they fire when you don't want them to, and when you need them to, they jam up. They are not good products. They are junk guns. Smith & Wesson is going to put forward a test.

Every handgun will be designed with a second hidden serial number so they can be traced in a crime—another very important point. The company will sell only to authorized distributors and authorized dealers who adhere to a strict code of conduct. That means they will perform the background check. They will make sure the person coming in is not inebriated, is not high on drugs, doesn't have a criminal record, isn't under age. They will not sell any gun at any gun show unless every seller at the gun show conducts a background check. They will not sell their guns until that background check is completed, and they say it may well take 3 days.

They will not sell any high-capacity magazines or semiautomatic assault weapons. They will not sell products to anyone who has not taken a certified firearms safety course. And Smith & Wesson dealers will only allow purchasers to take one gun with them at a time.

They will have to wait a couple of weeks before they get their other gun. The company will devote 2 percent of its revenues to development of smart guns and within 3 years the smart gun technology, which allows only the authorized person to shoot it, will be in place. All new models will not be able to accept magazines with a capacity of over 10 rounds. There will be an oversight commission to enforce this, which will include representatives from the city and State governments, and one from the gun industry.

So what I have laid out in this presentation, first of all, is the facts on violence in America—irrefutable facts. I give these facts out and my colleagues come up and say: Could this be true? Could it be true that in 11 years more than 300,000 Americans have been killed by gun violence? Could it be true that every day 12 or 13 children are killed?

They can't believe it. And we send the facts to the Centers for Disease Control. We send them to the people who keep these terrible statistics, and they come back to me and say: Senator, you are right. We doubted you. We are sorry. We can't believe this is happening in America today. But it is.

So we have laid out the data, the facts on gun violence in America. We have laid out the five gun provisions languishing in the conference. Commonsense gun control that passed this Senate in a bipartisan way is suddenly being smothered over there in the con-

ference committee, and we can't get it to the floor of the Senate and the House.

Day after day we read about 6-year-olds shooting 6-year-olds, 10-year-olds shooting 10-year-olds, 12-year-olds shooting 12-year-olds.

We don't deserve to be here if we don't do this. We don't deserve to be here, let alone be reelected, if we don't do this. The Vietnam war brought the country to its knees. We lost 58,000 people-plus in that war. It was a most tragic period of time. I remember that time. But we now have 300,000 people-plus dying from guns in an 11-year period compared to 58,000, and we sit here dithering around doing nothing while law enforcement tells us to please act. "We are outgunned," they tell us. "We are losing people. We are losing this war." We have a war in our streets. I laid out the organizations that are backing these five sensible amendments.

Finally, I laid out the good news of the Smith & Wesson agreement. I call on every single gun company that wants to stay in business to go ahead and duplicate what Smith & Wesson has done. I thank them for acting. They are taking the heat for acting. I think Senator DASCHLE is right. Maybe they acted only because they had a lawsuit. Maybe they acted only because they thought they would go bankrupt if they didn't act and people would continue to sue them. The fact is, they acted; they acted on each and every point we have made on this Senate floor.

So, yes, we are going to see flag desecration brought up. We know over the last 200 years there has been one flag desecration a year on average, while every day 12 children are killed by guns; and over the past 11 years 300,000-plus Americans have been killed, and we do nothing. The juvenile justice bill is languishing—languishing—in the committee. I call on the Senators who are in charge of that conference—and they are my friends—to break the logjam and bring this legislation to the Senate floor. It passed with a bipartisan vote. Overwhelmingly, people want us to do it.

The Smith & Wesson agreement proves the point that the time is ripe for these measures. I say if we do it, we will be proud; we will have done something to protect our children, protect our people, protect our communities, and turn around a blight on our country at a time of great prosperity and great hope.

I see the Senator who has done such an amazing job in the Presidential race. I welcome him back. I thought the issues he raised were vital. I am glad to see him back, and as a result of his appearance on this floor, I am happy to yield at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from California for her kind remarks. I appreciate, obviously,

the time that I was able to spend in her great State. I hope she appreciates the economic input that our campaign made, and I hope I can get some rebate from the numerous campaign commercials we purchased in her State. I thank her for the hospitality shown to me by all of the citizens of the State of California.

KOSOVO

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, this Friday marks the first anniversary of NATO's air campaign to drive Serbian forces out of Kosovo. I want to speak briefly this morning about the current situation that, regrettably, remains, in the words of the respected newsmagazine, *The Economist*, "a mess."

Reports over the weekend that General Reinhardt, the KFOR commander, believes that peacekeeping troops will likely need to remain in Kosovo for ten years or more have, I am sure, given my colleagues more than just cause to worry over the wisdom of our continued involvement there. That is more than understandable, given the divisions among NATO peacekeepers, and our allies' frustrating reluctance to meet their commitments to the international police force in Kosovo; considering the U.N.'s predictable difficulty in rebuilding something approaching normal civilian life where ethnic hatreds are as deep-seated as ever; and considering that the malevolent Mr. Milosevic continues to make trouble whenever and wherever he can.

Surely, the United States needs to be much more forceful with some of our allies who assume that the United States will always compensate for the deficiencies of their resolve and accept a greatly disproportionate share of the burden of stabilizing the Balkans. Most importantly, we must insist, and I emphasize that verb, that we have the full support of our peacekeeping partners in opposing Serbian efforts to foment further violence in Mitrovica and elsewhere. One of our allies sometimes appears to act, in defiance of the facts on the ground and the dictates of conscience, as a protector of Serb aggressors. Our other allies in KFOR should help us persuade our badly mistaken friend that such an attitude is a terrible impediment to KFOR's success.

This does not mean that the United States must end or threaten to end in the near term our participation in KFOR. Despite the unacceptable circumstances of the weak and endangered peace in Kosovo, it is infinitely preferable to the widespread atrocities committed during the course of Serbian aggression, atrocities that would surely reoccur were NATO to fail in our current mission. But our partners in peace can be persuaded by strong American leadership that the American people will not tolerate indefinitely Europe's inadequate commitment to peace and stability in their own backyard.

Mr. President, I do not mean to overlook or minimize in my discussion the