

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MURKOWSKI. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order following the remarks of Senator LAUTENBERG and Senator ASHCROFT.

It is my understanding that tomorrow the two sides will have 1 hour equally divided. Sometimes we start a little late around here, in spite of our efforts.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I think I heard the Senator from Alaska say 10 minutes for each of us who were going to speak in morning business. I ask unanimous consent that up to 15 minutes be allocated to me.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I have no objection.

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

GUN SAFETY

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, on April 20, we are going to mark a 1-year anniversary of the terrible tragedy that occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado. That was the day when two teenagers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, walked into the school and sprayed the library and cafeteria with gunfire, killing 12 classmates and a teacher and wounding many others. A few who were aware of what took place that day will never forget that horrible scene of a young man jumping out a window, people running, weeping, the whole place in disarray, students lying on the ground wounded, some fatally.

You would have thought by now, 9 months after that massacre, that Congress would have been able to get together to pass commonsense gun safety measures. Some of my colleagues will say there is not much we can do about it.

No, we cannot go back and undo that tragedy, but we sure can do something that maybe will prevent something similar from happening in the future. It is preposterous to say we can't do anything better. We can do a lot about it. Reasonable gun safety legislation can make a difference.

For proof, I ask that we take a look at testimony of the young woman, Robyn Anderson, before the Judiciary Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives. In case the name isn't familiar, Robyn Anderson is the young woman who went with Harris and Klebold to the Tanner gun show in Adams County, CO. It was in late 1998. She wanted to help them buy guns.

Harris and Klebold were too young to buy guns because they had an 18-year age limit, but Robyn Anderson was 18. She bought three guns at that gun show, two shotguns, and a rifle, and immediately handed them over to Har-

ris and Klebold. Four months later, Harris and Klebold used all three of those guns in their murderous rampage.

This is what Ms. Anderson said during her testimony:

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had gone to the Tanner gun show on Saturday and they took me back with them on Sunday. . . . While we were walking around, Eric and Dylan kept asking sellers if they were private or licensed. They wanted to buy their guns from someone who was private—and not licensed—because there would be no paperwork or background check.

That was her statement to the committee in the Colorado House. As all can see, they had one mission: to avoid a background check.

I am the author of a piece of legislation we tried to get through the Senate that said we ought to have everybody available for a background check. We know those unlicensed dealers who were able to sell at these gun shows—and there are over 4,000 gun shows a year—unless a State law says no, can sell guns to anybody who has the money. They can put them in the back of their car. They can carry them on their shoulder. Even someone who is listed on the 10 Most Wanted—criminals—could qualify to buy a gun from one of these dealers.

Tragically, these three young people found three gun dealers, and they bought their deadly weapons. This is what she had to say about gun sales at gun shows:

It was too easy. I wish it had been more difficult. I wouldn't have helped them buy the guns if I had faced a background check.

Robyn Anderson said that in front of the Colorado legislature. This shows clearly that background checks for gun sales can make a difference. They can keep guns out of the wrong hands.

When the National Rifle Association says that our gun laws are sufficient, it is wrong. They are simply out of line. There is a glaring loophole—the gun show loophole—which Congress must close.

There is no more time for delay. The American people are requesting action, demanding it, if you look at surveys. I hope my colleagues will complete action on the juvenile justice bill because it did contain a prohibition on gun sales that are done at gun shows without a background check. Now, that was knocked out of the House bill as it came over to the Senate for conference. But the fact is that it was in the Senate bill, and we ought to include it in any bill that finally passes. Let's do it before we mark the anniversary of that terrible day at Columbine High School, showing that we are serious and that we care about what happened.

In the nine months since April 20, we have seen more terrible shootings and bloodshed. In May of last year, a teenager in Conyers, GA, shot and injured six of his classmates. In July, a gunman in Ohio shot three teenage girls and the teacher of a Bible study group. In August, a white supremacist

stormed into a Jewish community center near Los Angeles and shot two children and a senior citizen. Later that day, before this culprit was apprehended, he shot and killed a postal worker. In September, more gun violence—a gunman in Fort Worth, TX, walked into a Baptist church and killed seven young people who were there for a prayer meeting before shooting himself. In November, the worst mass shooting in Hawaii's history—a Xerox employee killed seven coworkers. Yet another school shooting in December—a seventh grader in Fort Gibson, OK, takes his father's gun to school and wounds four classmates.

That is what we see. It doesn't matter what the heritage is of the individuals; race or religion doesn't matter. Everybody is subject to this kind of violence if they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. These are just the shootings that got the most attention. Month after month, the death toll from gun violence continues to mount. From Colorado to Georgia, from Ohio to California, from Texas to Hawaii, families across this country continue to mourn.

What do we do here in Congress about it? Nothing. It is a disgrace.

Of course, the Senate did pass several reasonable measures as part of the Juvenile Justice bill, including the amendment I mentioned before, which would prevent criminals from being able to buy guns at gun shows.

Technically, this legislation is stuck in a conference committee. For those who are not part of the structure here, the conference committee is where legislation is finally resolved when the House committee and the Senate committee, with similar jurisdiction, meet together and argue out the differences, if any, in a bill. But it would be more accurate to say that it is being held hostage by the extremists at the NRA and the politicians who march lockstep to their commands.

We have to free this legislation, and we dare not let the gun lobby prevail over the vast majority and the will of the American people who simply want to make their families a little safer.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in pushing the congressional leadership to finish work on the juvenile justice bill. We want to do it before there is another episode of gun violence, another loss of life that could be avoided. We have to do more to stop the gun violence, the epidemic that lies within our country. I hope we will be able to do it soon.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

REMEMBERING DERRICK THOMAS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I come to the floor today. Just a few days ago, on February 1, I came here to talk about a professional football achievement, congratulating the St. Louis Rams on their Super Bowl victory. It was a tremendous victory.

Today, I come to the floor on what may seem to some to be another “football story,” albeit one that is much more tragic. I want to make remarks about my friend, Kansas City Chiefs’ linebacker Derrick Thomas. I want to talk about more than just professional sports. I believe what is important in life is not what game you play but how you play the game to which you are called. I want to share my thoughts on a young man who was a true professional.

Yesterday, the Kansas City Chiefs’ great linebacker, Derrick Thomas, died of cardiorespiratory arrest, a complication from a tragic automobile accident of January 23. The accident occurred on a snow and ice-covered stretch of Interstate 435 in Clay County, MO, as Derrick and two of his friends were headed to the airport to fly to St. Louis for the NFC championship game between St. Louis Rams and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. To Derrick’s many loyal fans, the news of his death is stunning and saddening—profoundly saddening.

The life of Derrick Thomas, who lived but 33 years, should be celebrated. His accomplishments on the field and off the field were substantial. An All-American at the University of Alabama, he became an instant star with the Kansas City Chiefs after his selection in the first round of the 1989 draft. He was named as an All-Pro in each of his first nine seasons in the league. Derrick ranked ninth on the all-time list in career quarterback sacks.

Chiefs fans will never forget the day in 1990 when No. 58 set the amazing single-game record of seven sacks in a game against the Seattle Seahawks on Veterans Day. What some people don’t know is that Derrick dedicated his efforts on Veterans Day to his father, an Air Force pilot killed in Vietnam in Operation Linebacker II when Derrick was just five.

The fighters from nearby Whiteman Air Force Base periodically do a fly-by during pre-game ceremonies. The planes, according to Derrick Thomas, reminded him of his father and provided inspiration for some of his greatest and most spectacular performances. I have been at Arrowhead Stadium before games for those pre-game ceremonies, when in the parking lot there was tailgating, with the smoke from the barbecue and the roar from the jets as they crossed the field in a fly-by. It is a moving experience, but it moved none of us as much as it moved Derrick Thomas, who set records based on the inspiration that reminded him of his dad.

Derrick will, no doubt, enter the pantheon of Kansas City’s great athletes—George Brett, Tom Watson, and Len Dawson, just to name a few. But Derrick’s accomplishments off the field are worthy of note as well. He was that kind of special star who took all that he gained from his talents and gave back with generosity, energy, and joy to his community. Very early in his ca-

reer as a Kansas City Chief, he began an inner-city reading program called the “Third and Long Foundation.” As part of it, he read to children at local libraries on Saturdays when he was home in Kansas City during the season.

He was No. 832 among President George Bush’s celebrated “Thousand Points of Light.” He was named the NFL’s Man of the Year in 1993. Two years later, he received the Byron “Whizzer” White Humanitarian Award from the NFL Players Association for his service to the community. In addition, he received the Genuine Heroes Award from Trinity College in Chicago.

But more important than accolades from several foundations was the love and respect directed toward Derrick by the people of Kansas City. They understood that Derrick helped bring an invigorated sense of civic pride and community and togetherness to Kansas City, and the Chiefs fans were inspired by his sunny smile, his giving heart, and his winning ways. The arrival of Carl Peterson and Derrick Thomas to Kansas City marked the resurrection of Lamar Hunt’s historic franchise. The people of Kansas City loved Derrick Thomas—as a Chief and as a person. Carl Peterson, at yesterday’s news conference, clearly communicated his deep respect and profound joy in his association with Derrick.

Others expressed themselves eloquently as Kansas City Chiefs fans who, visiting the Web site on the Sports Illustrated chat room, left remarks about this great football player. The first remark I would like to call to your attention is from a fan who calls himself “Frank L.” In a frank evaluation, perhaps, he put it this way:

Thanks for everything, D.T. [Derrick Thomas]. You helped bring our city to life and gave us a common cause. While doing that you helped a lot of those less fortunate. Now you are with your father that you always talked about and never knew. Back here in the land of the free and the home of the Chiefs we will never forget you. God bless your soul.

That line back there, “in the land of the free and the home of the Chiefs,” is the way they sing the anthem at the stadium. They didn’t want to say the “brave,” so they said the “Chiefs.” Derrick knew that and enjoyed it.

Listen to what a fan, called Big58, says. And, of course, we all know Derrick was No. 58. He wore that number on his jersey. A fan who identified himself as Big58 said:

I can’t believe that Derrick is gone. He was one of my heroes for more than a decade now. Derrick did so much for the Kansas City community and the people here. It wasn’t loved in KC because he was such a great athlete. He was loved in KC because of the person he was. The time and money he gave to help the kids of the Kansas City community was enormous. And who can forget his Veterans Day performances dedicated to his father who was killed in Vietnam? They were always D.T. at his best. At least D.T. will have some great company along with our Lord in Heaven. I’ll bet he’s chasing around Walter Payton right now. And ya know what, Derrick will finally get to spend

time with his Dad. We love you and will miss you Derrick. Rest in Peace.

And finally, not only are Chiefs fans saddened, but others who recognized his talents as well. Listen to what Lance Reynolds had to say:

I have been a Raider fan for over 20 years. Derrick Thomas single handedly ruined at least a dozen Sunday afternoons for me; destroying O-tackles, tight-ends and quarterbacks of the Silver & Black. The Raiders-Chiefs rivalry runs deep. Even though, I have found myself pacing the Chiefs sidelines the past couple of weeks avidly cheering for Derrick Thomas’ quick recovery. Today I find myself amongst the millions mourning his death. Derrick Thomas, you wickedly ruthless foe, God Bless You! You are already missed!

From time to time, we are compelled to pause and consider the real and lasting value of the things we hold dear. For Missouri football fans like me, today is a reminder that, as much as we love the game, it is just a game.

To those to whom we look for examples, we extend our thanks, and we give our thanks to Derrick, for he was one who excelled not just on the field but inspired us by an example and called us to our highest and best.

Friends such as Derrick Thomas are a rare and special gift to each of us. We will miss him. Our prayers are with his family his friends and each other as we, his fans, across the Nation and certainly across Missouri and Kansas City are saddened by this very substantial loss.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for such time as I may consume despite the order.

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

Mr. GRAMS. I thank the Chair.

NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I want to take some time today to express my outrage with the way the federal government has handled its responsibility to remove and store nuclear waste from 41 states across the country and to outline my thoughts on the bill before us. I’m also going to speak about my expectations for the future of nuclear energy and the future of nuclear waste storage in the State of Minnesota.

First, I hope the Senate will indulge me while I review the process that has brought all of us here today.

As everyone in this chamber knows, Washington’s involvement in nuclear power isn’t new. Since the 1950’s