

What we have before us is a false choice posited by the Senators from Arizona and Connecticut. It does not matter how much they try to hold hostage the extension of the highway bill to keep these people working, there is no guarantee—and they cannot guarantee—that the House would accept whatever they put on.

They can hold this body hostage, and they have shown their willingness and ability to do so, but should they be able to add an amendment to the highway extension, or now that we have passed the bill on extending the 9/11 Commission, it still has to go to the House.

The action of the Senate Intelligence Committee yesterday was not unanimous. There are many other issues that should be debated about that bill, but I was not here to object and no one objected to passing the bill from this body to extend the 9/11 Commission.

It is important to realize this Commission was set up a long time ago. They knew their deadline was May 27, and if one were to ask the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. LOTT, who appointed members of the Commission, I believe he said at the time that the problem with commissions is we give them a lot of time and a lot of money and they do not always come up with the deadline.

They have had this time. They have had extensive hearings. Now the question is whether the House will accept the proposal that the Senate has adopted to extend the 9/11 Commission for 2 more months.

This body cannot hold hostage the other body. What the Senators from Arizona and Connecticut are doing is seeking to hold hostage the whole highway program in the United States. If they hold that hostage, there is no assurance that even next week there will be agreement by the House to take a bill with the 9/11 Commission.

TEA-21's current extension expires on Sunday. If we fail to extend this, there will be a shutdown of any further contract authority for Federal aid highway projects and a shutdown of payments for work already contracted for by the States and performed by contractors. This means no further projects can be approved or awarded. It also means that not only the Federal Highway Administration but also the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Motor Carrier Administration, as well as the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, will cease operation.

The Federal Highway Administration said that 2,925 employees will be furloughed. These are not just employees in Washington but Federal employees in every State office throughout the Nation, including those in the States of Arizona and Connecticut. This also does not even include the many contractors that will be affected by the shutdown.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration employees would also

be furloughed affecting about 630 Federal employees. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would stop operation. This action would put out of work 1,078 employees, and that does not even include the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

All told, 4,633 people will not be able to report to work on Monday, March 1, if this bill is held hostage to a proposition that may or may not be acceptable sometime or any time by the House of Representatives. Not only are we talking about people's livelihoods, we are shutting down the Federal agencies, which will have an adverse consequence for our Nation's highways, motor carrier safety, and consequentially for the condition and operation of our Nation's surface transportation system.

The Federal Transit Administration will be affected without passage of this extension. This is a time when the States are reaching the most intense quarter of the fiscal year for announcing construction projects.

States, particularly those that have seasonal construction award periods, and others that have work immediately prepared to go to bid, will be effectively stopped from making further awards or bid lettings that have not been previously approved. Construction and other contractors will suffer economic loss with the potential for smaller operators to suffer substantial economic hardship. Many of the businesses and many of the operations involved are small businesses that would effectively be cut off from their ability to be paid for their work if we refuse to do this extension.

Jobs will be lost in the private sector. Immense harm could happen. It is not possible to calculate immediately the actual job impacts for shutdown outside the workforce, but there was a survey, AASHTO's August 2003 survey, which emphasized that perhaps 90,000 jobs could be lost if we went to a short-term extension. An extension is bad enough, but a complete disruption of the program when there are crucial job needs across the country will have an economic impact on the families directly, and on the economy.

Another major problem if we fail to extend it is that further debts will not be paid. In the absence of an extension, the Government will not have authority to continue to reimburse States for projects for which expenditures by States have already been made. This has caused a cashflow crisis, since States are obligated to pay contractors with or without reimbursement from the Federal Highway Administration. Some States depend on Federal aid funds to pay bond debt service, and the highway trust fund will be charged interest under the Cash Management Improvement Act. We need the extension to stop playing politics with people's jobs in this most important legislation.

I thank my colleague from New Hampshire.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

CHARLES TAYLOR

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, in 1989, a little known thief and thug named Charles Taylor set in motion a series of events which have thrown the impoverished nation of Liberia into chaos and its neighboring nations into genocide. From Ivory Coast he launched a successful coup against Liberia's sitting President, Samuel Doe, plunging Liberia into 15 years of civil war. We are still dealing with the fallout of that war today.

The coup, notably, followed after Charles Taylor had escaped from a Massachusetts prison in 1985, where he was about to be extradited for embezzlement.

Groups on all sides of the Liberian conflict have committed atrocities, including widespread rape, massacres, mutilation and torture, and forced labor of children. There are literally hundreds of accounts of villagers having been slaughtered as they tried to flee, women being raped, children being brutally raped. Such atrocities have been part of the deliberate policies of Charles Taylor, his government, and the groups that fought for him.

In the conflict, it is estimated approximately 60,000 to 200,000 people died in the violence, and many more died from hunger, disease, and lack of medical care.

After the end of the civil war in 1996—it really wasn't a civil war; it was more of an attempt by Charles Taylor to use brutality to force his way into Liberia—Charles Taylor became the President of Liberia by winning an election which he won simply by saying if he did not win, he would continue the violence, continue the rape and destruction and plunder of the country. Meanwhile, in 1991, civil war erupted in the neighboring country of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone is one of the most impoverished nations in the world, which is particularly tragic in light of the fact that it has some tremendous natural resources. The conflict was primarily between the Government of Sierra Leone and a rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front. The RUF lacked any discernible political agenda other than violence and plunder. Its main objective was to take control of the Sierra Leone diamond mines.

The RUF became notorious for its use of forced amputations to control the civilian population. The conflict between the government and the RUF and other factions has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people, well over one-third of the population.

The situation in Sierra Leone became so bad in 1999 the United Nations established a peacekeeping mission. This mission was called UNAMSIL and has

cost the U.S. taxpayers a total of \$646 million over a period of 6 years. This mission got off to a rocky start. The British intervention in 2000 helped stabilize the situation, and we should congratulate the British for being willing to step up to this issue.

Today, Sierra Leone is a relatively stable country, which is quite a miracle. It is widely known that the then-Liberian President, Charles Taylor, during the time of the violence in Sierra Leone, was essentially the force behind the RUF. He was supplying the weapons, the training, and it was his purpose to use the RUF to control the diamond trade. For his support, he got a great amount of the resources in the diamond trade. This is an important point because herein lies two roots of the cause of Sierra Leone's woes: First Charles Taylor, and second, conflict diamonds.

We have addressed the issue of conflict diamonds through the Kimberley Process, which is something that our committee has played a major role in driving forward, where we now have some control over the types of diamonds that are sold into the international market and whether or not they are conflict diamonds.

We have also attempted to address Charles Taylor. This is why I come to the floor today, to talk about where we stand in addressing Charles Taylor. Back in Liberia, around the time that the mission to Sierra Leone got underway, the anti-Taylor forces began to mobilize and to actively fight the Taylor government in Liberia. In 1999, an anti-Taylor faction called the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, LURD, was formed in northern Liberia. In 2003, a second anti-Taylor faction called the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, or MODEL, emerged in the southern Liberia area. Both groups have been accused of atrocities similar to those committed by the Taylor forces.

As the situation in Liberia worsened in the summer of 2003, the United States came under intense pressure to intervene. At one point, the U.S. sent marines in to protect U.S. citizens in Monrovia and to conduct an assessment of the situation in Monrovia. On September 19, 2003, with U.S. support, the United Nations established a full-blown peacekeeping mission to Liberia, ordering the deployment of some 15,000 troops. One month later Congress responded by appropriating \$245 million to cover the U.S. cost of the UNMIL project, which is the U.N. initiative there—\$200 million for humanitarian aid in Liberia. In the fiscal year 2005 budget request, the State Department has requested another \$215 million for UNMIL. I am told the amount fell short of what the U.S. believes its share of the cost will actually be. I am unclear what will be required to stabilize Liberia, but it is estimated that 40,000 combatants, including 15,000 children, must be disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated into society.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians who were forced to flee their homes during the wars must be reintegrated into their villages from squalid refugee camps in and outside Liberia. Liberia's infrastructure must be rebuilt. So it is an expensive and long path.

In the fall of 2002, the neighboring and equally unstable country of Ivory Coast also collapsed into violence. Charles Taylor is known to have recruited some of his mercenary fighters in Ivory Coast. He is now reported to have supported rebels in west Ivory Coast who were trying to oust the President of Ivory Coast. He is now reported to be supporting the rebels in west Ivory Coast that seek to oust the President of Burkina Faso, a neighboring country that has enjoyed relative stability.

The U.N. is expected to take a vote as early as tomorrow, or maybe even today, on the establishment of another U.N. peacekeeping mission to Ivory Coast. The State Department has informed me that the United States will vote for such a mission. The U.S. share of that cost will be about \$60 million.

Both Sierra Leone and the Liberian missions are attributable in large part to Charles Taylor. It is clear that Taylor is also heavily involved in the Ivory Coast conflict. We know he continues to dabble in other west African countries.

The conflicts that plague west Africa have many common denominators, but the one that stands out is Charles Taylor. Another one that stands out is the amount of death, destruction, and loss of economic well-being that has occurred in that region as a result of Charles Taylor's actions.

In 2000, with strong U.S. backing, the U.N. and the Government of Sierra Leone began the process of establishing a special court for Sierra Leone. The mission of the Special Court is to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for the genocide which occurred in Sierra Leone and to try them under Sierra Leone law.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone indicted Charles Taylor as its first act. As its first act, it indicted the President of Liberia. He is accused of 17 counts of war crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

But where is Charles Taylor? Not in prison awaiting trial where he should be. He is living in a luxury villa in the southeastern port city of Calabar, Nigeria. He is able to live in luxury because of the timber he plundered from Liberia and the diamonds he plundered from Sierra Leone, much of which can be tracked to terrorists. He is able to live in luxury because he was allowed to leave Liberia and to go to Nigeria.

When the situation in Monrovia last summer became so bad that his safety could no longer be assured, Taylor began looking for an escape route.

As pressure mounted in the international community for an intervention in Liberia, key players such as the

U.S., U.N., the Economic Community of West African States—ECOWAS—and Nigeria correctly realized that a peace agreement—a necessary precursor to U.N. intervention—could not include Taylor, an indicted war criminal. Further, the parties recognized that even if an agreement could be reached, the rebels would never trust Taylor to abide by it, given his long history of renegeing on peace agreements. So Taylor had to go—and fast.

The U.S., U.N., ECOWAS, and Nigeria engaged in talks about how to get Taylor out of Liberia. An agreement was reached in which Nigeria would offer Taylor asylum, but would not then be pressured to turn Taylor over. The details of these talks are vague, but finding a way to bring Taylor to the Special Court was reportedly not even discussed. But such a promise to Nigeria—that it would not be pressured to hand over Taylor—should not have been made.

The parties involved decided that getting Taylor out of Liberia was the fastest way to “stop the bloodshed.” I would argue that, indeed, giving Taylor asylum in Nigeria was the surest way to prolong the bloodshed. Now safely ensconced in Nigeria with a hefty security detail, Taylor is arguably in a better position now to destabilize Liberia and other West African nations. I will come back to this point.

Taylor, astutely, took Nigeria up on its offer of asylum. And on August 11, 2003, he and his entourage of 100 flew to Nigeria. Taylor used Nigeria's offer to escape both the rebels and prosecution by the Special Court.

The Nigerians have been offended by Congress' recent calls for them to hand over Charles Taylor to the Special Court. The Nigerians should be commended for the important leadership role they have played in this and other West African crises. But their past and continued contributions do not justify their refusal to cooperate with the Special Court. If Nigeria is going to play a leadership role in West Africa, it must be committed to seeing those who destabilize that region stopped and held accountable for their actions. It must be committed to promoting the rule of law.

But the blame does not rest on Nigeria alone. The blame rests equally on the parties that negotiated for Taylor's transfer to Nigeria instead of his delivery to the Special Court—the U.S. and the U.N. It is inconceivable that the U.S. and the U.N., which have been driving forces behind the Special Court, would cast aside an opportunity to get the Special Court halfway to its goal and would not pursue the first person consequential in their activities of violence in Sierra Leone.

Upon his departure from Liberia, Taylor pledged: “I'll be back.” Taylor has reneged on at least 13 cease fire agreements and 8 peace agreements, each time using the negotiations to stall and re-arm. It is clear from statements like this and from Taylor's past

actions that he intends to use asylum in Nigeria to stall and re-arm, just as he has done in the past. The result of this is that, now, no one believes Liberia has seen the last of Charles Taylor—least of all the Liberians.

Very clear conditions were placed upon Mr. Taylor's offer of asylum: he was to completely disengage himself from the day to day affairs—military or otherwise—of Liberia. Immediately upon his arrival in Nigeria, however, Taylor began breaking—flagrantly—the terms of his asylum agreement.

Taylor has maintained contact with his lieutenants and supporters through telephone calls, instant messaging, and intermediaries who act as couriers. It is also said that Taylor maintains control over substantial numbers of combatants. Sources told me that Taylor was "on a satellite phone every day talking with Liberian officials." Even the United Nations Security Council in October, 2003, then under U.S. chairmanship, issued a warning that Taylor should discontinue communications with his supporters in Liberia.

In November, 2003, it was reported that Taylor's former chief of staff was recruiting mercenaries in Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, and Ghana, all small and similarly troubled West African nations. Also in November, it was reported that Charles Taylor's son was in Ukraine negotiating for arms with which to launch a fresh attack from Ivorian territory.

It is reported that Taylor lieutenants and loyalists have carved out a piece of western Ivory Coast and have clashed with French peacekeepers there.

It has even been reported by highly reliable sources that Taylor engineered the attempted coup in Burkina Faso last October. The reason? The President of Burkina Faso, a former ally of Taylor's, was starting to cooperate with the Special Court. It is also thought that Taylor supported the coup because he believes renewed regional chaos would assist him in his return to power in Liberia. Taylor is reported to be training 400 armed men in the town of Guiglo Ivory Coast. This group, called "Death Roll M-15", was reportedly established for the sole purpose of destabilizing Burkina Faso.

These are just reports. It will be partly the Special Court's job to confirm or discredit them. But if even one of these reports is true, that is enough.

As long as Taylor's former warlords take their orders from the man himself, no one is going to disarm. I am told that Taylor supporters are already, in fact, refusing to disarm because they believe he will return to power. Anti-Taylor rebels also refuse to disarm because they too believe Taylor's exile is temporary. They believe they will need to maintain the ability to defend themselves against reprisals or prevent his return to power.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, or DDR, is the backbone of all U.N. peacekeeping missions. U.N.

peacekeepers do not have the authority to disarm rebels forcibly. Disarmament is always voluntary. What incentive, I ask you, do combatants have to lay down their arms while their boss is still calling the shots from his mobile command center in Calabar?

Similarly, many Taylor subordinates hold key positions in Liberia's transitional government. What incentive do they have to cooperate on necessary reforms when they too believe that Taylor could one day return? The longer Taylor escapes justice, the longer UNMIL will last and the worse its prospects for success.

As if all of this weren't bad enough, I am told by well-placed sources that reports of Taylor's link to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are "highly credible". We have heard public testimony from members of the Liberian media, now living in the U.S., that Taylor "supports terrorists and encourages the presence of al-Qaeda members in Liberia". Taylor's reported motive for supporting terrorists is to assure himself access to large amounts of arms.

What am I missing here? Why are we so willing to go around cleaning up messes created by Charles Taylor, and yet we seem so content to let him live his life peacefully in his villa? He continues to terrorize and destabilize, and yet now he does so under the protection of a nation that is in danger of becoming an accomplice, though most certainly unwitting, to his crimes.

The people of Sierra Leone deserve justice. They deserve the right to have the person who essentially designed and was the brains behind the RUF and the atrocities which it committed brought to justice.

It sends a terrible signal to Charles Taylor, an indicted war criminal by an internationally recognized tribunal set up by the United Nations, underwritten by the United Nations and supported with American tax dollars. That tribunal has not been able to bring Charles Taylor before it. The forces which are keeping that from happening are the very forces which set up the tribunal itself. This is not only a bad precedent for the Sierra Leone situation but we know that other special courts are going to be needed to deal with atrocities in other countries, with genocide in other countries. Who is going to take those courts seriously when a court that has been set up by the U.N. and underwritten by the United States finds itself stymied when the person it believes is most responsible for the genocide and the horror, the destruction and the death in Sierra Leone is not allowed to be brought before the court because the intermediaries that allow him to maintain his safe haven in Nigeria are the same people who set up the court? Nobody is going to take the special court seriously if we do not pursue Charles Taylor and bring him to justice before that court. He cannot be tried in absentia under Sierra Leone law; he must be present in Sierra Leone.

I have heard that some have the position, maybe we could try him in Nigeria while doing the trial in Sierra Leone. That does not work because Sierra Leone does not allow that to happen. Nigeria tried to be a positive and constructive player in this effort. I congratulate them for their purpose of being constructive and positive. But it is now time to hand over Mr. Taylor. We should support Nigeria in that effort. The United States should support Nigeria in that effort.

We are not pursuing the handover of Charles Taylor to the special court for what I believe are selfish reasons. That we are pursuing the Taylor handover is critical to peace and stability in west Africa and because the people of Sierra Leone deserve justice.

I commend the men and women of Sierra Leone. They have gone through extraordinary pain and trauma. They have made the difficult decision to support the special court. They are trying to run a democratic government. They have done this with the expectation that the international community will support the commitments we have made. Clearly, one of the fundamental commitments we have made is that the special court, when it indicts an individual, will have the ability to bring that person before it.

The prosecutor of the special court is a man named David Crane. He is an American, a very competent and dedicated former Defense Department official. Each day, he and his team demonstrate that justice can be effectively and efficiently delivered in a war-torn region of the world. We should be proud of what they have done. What they have done is incomplete and will continue to be incomplete as long as they are not allowed to bring Charles Taylor before the bar of justice in Sierra Leone.

It is time for the international community, the U.N., the United States, to put an end to this extraordinarily destructive chapter in west African history. The only way we can put an end to it is if we allow the court to try Charles Taylor and bring him to justice. It is time to support that effort.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator GREGG for his important statement.

As we all know, Charles Taylor was the brutal dictator of Liberia, responsible for numerous atrocities in West Africa. His loyalists raped, killed and hacked the limbs off of innocent civilians. To bring Mr. Taylor—and others responsible for these crimes—to justice, the United States and United Nations Security Council established an international tribunal—the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Congress has consistently supported the Special Court by appropriating \$20 million for it. The Prosecutor for the Special Court is an American, a former lawyer in the Defense Department. He moved quickly to indict Mr. Taylor for his crimes. To back up this indictment,

INTERPOL issued a Red Notice asking member states to help bring him to justice.

Today, Mr. Taylor remains beyond the reach of the court. He is in Nigeria—shielded by that government. To make matters worse, Taylor continues to work to destabilize parts of West Africa. The State Department says it will not pressure Nigeria to turn Taylor over to the court.

This is completely unacceptable. Taylor is under indictment by a UN-backed court. He continues to destabilize parts of West Africa. We know where he is. The United States needs to act and it needs to act now.

Yesterday, Senator GREGG and I—along with 5 other Senators—sent a letter to the State Department urging immediate action to get Taylor to the court. It is time for the United States to do the right thing. It is time for Taylor to come before the court.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1805, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1805) to prohibit civil liability actions from being brought or continuing against manufacturers, distributors, dealers, or importers of firearms or ammunition for damages resulting from the misuse of their products by others.

Pending:

Hatch (for Campbell) amendment No. 2623, to amend title 18, United States Code, to exempt qualified current and former law enforcement officers from State laws prohibiting the carrying of concealed handguns.

Kennedy amendment No. 2619, to expand the definition of armor piercing ammunition and to require the Attorney General to promulgate standards for the uniform testing of projectiles against body armor.

Craig (for Frist/Craig) amendment No. 2625, to regulate the sale and possession of armor piercing ammunition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, today we begin the third day of debate on this important bill, S. 1805, addressing the problem that should outrage many Members of this Senate and by the cosponsorship we have at this moment, I believe that is the case. That outrage should be against the abuse of our courts by those who cannot change public policy through representative government but instead are attempting an end run around the State and Federal legislatures to impose their political agenda on the people of this country through litigation. In this case, their target is the one consumer product whose access is protected by nothing less than the U.S. Constitution itself; that is, firearms.

ing less than the U.S. Constitution itself; that is, firearms.

The bill, the Protection of Lawful Commerce In Arms Act, we are talking about today and debated thoroughly yesterday and the day before, would stop what I call junk lawsuits that attempt to pin the blame and the cost of criminal misbehavior on business men and women who are following the law and selling a legal product.

This bill responds to a series of lawsuits filed primarily by municipalities advancing a variety of theories as to why gun manufacturers and sellers should be liable for the cost of injuries caused by people over whom they have no control, criminals who use firearms illegally.

This is a bipartisan bill. Let me acknowledge my Democrat sponsor, MAX BAUCUS of Montana, for his work on this initiative. Many others have helped advance it, as well as the leaders and the assistant leaders on both sides. By that demonstration, this bill is truly a bipartisan effort. The cosponsors we have to date are substantial. With myself and Senator BAUCUS included, we now have 54 cosponsors.

We introduced the bill nearly a year ago, last March, with more than half of the Senate as cosponsors at that time: Senator ALEXANDER, Senator ALLARD, Senator ALLEN, Senator BENNETT, Senator BOND, Senator BREAUX, Senator BROWBACK, Senator BUNNING, Senator BURNS, Senator CAMPBELL, Senator CHAMBLISS, Senator COCHRAN, Senator COLEMAN, Senator COLLINS, Senator CORNYN, Senator CRAPO, Senator DOLE, Senator DOMENICI, Senator DORGAN, Senator ENSIGN, Senator ENZI, Senator GRAHAM of South Carolina, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator GREGG, Senator HAGEL, Senator HATCH, Senator HUTCHISON, Senator INHOFE, Senator JOHNSON, Senator KYL, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator LINCOLN, Senator LOTT, Senator MILLER, Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator NELSON of Nebraska, Senator NICKLES, Senator ROBERTS, Senator SANTORUM, Senator SESSIONS, Senator SHELBY, Senator SNOWE, Senator SMITH, Senator SPECTER, Senator STEVENS, Senator SUNUNU, Senator TALENT, Senator THOMAS, and Senator VOINOVICH.

This range of cosponsorship reflects extraordinarily widespread support that crosses party and geographical lines and covers the spectrum of political ideologies that is clearly always represented in the Senate. It demonstrates a strong commitment by a majority of this body to take a stand against a trend of predatory litigation that impugns the integrity of our courts, threatens a domestic industry that is critical to our Nation's defense, jeopardizes hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs, and puts at risk access Americans have to a legal product used for hundreds of years across this Nation for lawful purposes such as recreation and defense.

We have been joined in this effort by a host of supporting organizations representing literally tens of millions of Americans from all walks of life.

I thank them all for their effort to help pass the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. I invite my colleagues to consider a broad cross section of American citizens represented by such diverse organizations as unions, including United Mine Workers of America, United Steelworkers of America, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, the locals of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; business groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Alliance of America's Insurers, the National Association of Wholesale Distributors, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Tort Reform Association, the National Rifle Association; and more than 30 different sportsmen's groups and organizations whose members are engaged in the conservation and hunting and the shooting sports industry in all 50 States across this great Nation.

I have used the term "junk lawsuits," and I want to make it very clear, because this was part of our discussion yesterday, to anyone listening to this debate, I do not mean any disrespect to the victims of gun violence in any way who might be involved or brought into these actions by other groups.

Although their names are sometimes used in the lawsuits, they are not the people who came up with the notion of going after the industry instead of going after criminals responsible for their injuries or for their losses. The notion originated with some bureaucrats and some anti-gun advocates, and the lawyers they were with.

Victims, including their families and communities, deserve our support and our compassion, not to mention our insistence, on the aggressive enforcement of the laws that provide punishment for the criminals who have caused harm to them.

There are adequate laws out there now, and we constantly encourage our courts to go after the criminal, to lock them up, and to toss the key away when they are involved in gun violence and when they use a gun in the commission of a crime. If those laws need to be toughened, our law enforcement efforts improved, then the proper source of help is the legislatures and the governments, not the courts, and certainly not law-abiding businessmen and workers who have nothing to do with their victimization. No.

The reason there are junk lawsuits is that they do not target the responsible party for those terrible crimes. They are predatory litigation looking for a convenient deep pocket to pay for somebody else's criminal behavior. Let me repeat that. I define junk lawsuits as predatory litigation looking for a convenient deep pocket to pay for somebody else's criminal behavior.