

In this instance, it is my understanding that this Senator has proclaimed publicly why he is holding it. Is my understanding correct about that, I say to the Senator.

Mr. DORGAN. That is correct, I think perhaps boasting about it. He is saying: I have to do this for my State. But there is nothing he can gain for his State because the Corps of Engineers cannot move on these issues. They do not have the authority. They do not have the legal capability. The result is, this soldier, whose promotion he is holding up, meanwhile is wafting in the wind for 6 months and loses his promotion.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. That is the part I want to inquire about. Let's just say hypothetically, if the Army Corps of Engineers succumbed to what the Senator is asking and said: OK, you are going to hold up this brave soldier's promotion that he deserves because you want something for your State—if they did that, would that not be illegal?

Mr. DORGAN. Absolutely.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. So what he is saying is, he is asking the Army Corps of Engineers to do something that is illegal, and if they refuse to do something that is illegal, he is going to refuse to allow a soldier's promotion to go through? Am I actually getting that right?

Mr. DORGAN. I say to the Senator, I believe you have it pretty close to right. As I understand it, the Senator is demanding things of the Corps of Engineers that they do not have the legal authority to do. Until they do them, he is going to hold up the promotion of General Walsh, which I think—it is unbelievable to me that someone would do that.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator would yield further?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Let me read to you from the March 19 letter from the Corps on this issue. The Senator from Louisiana said the example he wanted to use was something called the Morganza project. That is the example. He said, let me just give you one example. Three times, he says, this project has been authorized.

Well, this is what the Corps says relative to Morganza. OK. This is in writing, a letter to Senator VITTER:

The Corps does not have authority to implement the Houma Navigation Lock as an independent project. Section 425 of WRDA 1996 authorized a study of an independent lock, but did not authorize construction. Section 425 in part read . . . "The Secretary shall conduct a study of environmental, flood control, and navigation impacts associated with the construction of a lock structure in the Houma Navigation Canal as an independent feature of the overall damage prevention study being conducted under the Morganza,—

That is his project—

Louisiana, to the Gulf of Mexico feasibility study." The Corps conducted a study in re-

sponse to Section 425, but that study did not recommend construction of an independent Houma Navigation Lock feature due to uncertainties of benefits and concerns over justification of an independent lock structure.

That is their answer. They do not have the authority to do it.

Again, I know the Senator from Missouri is on the committee, so she understands that we act in a bipartisan way. We try to protect and defend and support the uniformed members of the U.S. military. We have unlimited bipartisan support for what they do for us, and this is the response—a hold on a nomination because the Corps will not do something they are not authorized to do?

I think it is so unacceptable, I made this unanimous consent request about 2 months ago. The Senator from Louisiana objected then. He said to give him a few more weeks. He thinks he could work it out. Those few weeks have long gone. So I very much support the effort of the Senator from North Dakota here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, it is unbelievable to me that we have 100 of these. This is one I am particularly concerned about because I think it misuses a soldier's promotion in pursuit of something that really cannot be done by an agency, and I regret this is happening. This should not happen. And how on Earth are we going to find ways to work together in this place if this is the way we do business?

This makes no sense to me. It is not fair to a soldier. People listening to this would understand somebody demanding that an agency do something it cannot do in exchange for releasing a hold on a soldier's promotion? Is that what we have come to here? I hope not.

So my intention is to offer a unanimous consent request. My understanding is, someone is—

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield?

Mr. DORGAN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. LEVIN. I think the Senator from Delaware has a unanimous consent request which has been cleared. I wonder, just to make sure the Senator from Louisiana does have notice—apparently, he has been notified there is going to be a unanimous consent request.

Mr. DORGAN. I would be happy to have the Senator from Delaware do his request. I would say, however, that the Senator from Louisiana was on the floor, and I would have hoped he would have stayed on the floor to object to something that deals with the holdup he has made on this nomination. But apparently he has left the floor.

So let me yield to the Senator from Delaware for his unanimous consent request, and then I will propound a unanimous consent request on the subject just discussed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from North Dakota.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, April 21, following a period of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 699, the nomination of Christopher Schroeder to be an Assistant Attorney General; that there be 3 hours of debate with respect to the nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; further, that the cloture motion with respect to the nomination be withdrawn; provided that upon disposition of the Schroeder nomination, the Senate then proceed to Executive Calendar No. 578, the nomination of Thomas Vanaskie to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Third Circuit; that there be 3 hours of debate with respect to the nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the cloture motion with respect to the nomination be withdrawn; provided further that on Thursday, April 22, following a period of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 607, the nomination of Denny Chin to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Second Circuit; that there be 60 minutes for debate with respect to the nomination; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; with the cloture motion withdrawn, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action with respect to the above-referenced nominations; with all time covered under this agreement equally divided and controlled between Senators LEAHY and SESSIONS or their designees; finally, the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the cloture motions on the Schroeder, Vanaskie, and Chin nominations are withdrawn.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I yield to the Senator from North Dakota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Executive Calendar No. 526, the nomination of BG Michael J. Walsh; that the nomination be confirmed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Yes, Madam President, for the reasons I have clearly laid out, I again object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, let me again say the reasons that were clearly laid out were inappropriate reasons. The very specific project my colleague described as the problem—at least one of the problems—it turns out he would know, because he has received written notice from the Corps of Engineers, that they do not have the legal authority to do that which he demands.

So I do not know. I do not know where you go from here. If facts do not matter in this place, then I guess we have a fact-free debate and one does what they want to do without regard to the consequences. The consequence in this case—the negative consequence is for a soldier, a patriot who has gone to war for this country is now, in my judgment, being treated unbelievably unfairly by at least one Senator.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

GUN SHOW LOOPHOLE

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I rise because today marks 11 years since the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, occurred. This is a painful recall of a horrible moment in our country that should remind us all of a condition that could easily happen again.

I and millions of other Americans watched in horror as young students hung out of windows in that schoolhouse to try to save their lives, while two of their schoolmates went on a rampage and killed 12 students and a teacher. Those images will forever be burned in our memory.

But here is what a lot of people do not know: All the firearms used by the shooters were bought by an underage friend at a gun show. That purchase was able to be made because of the gun show loophole. Because of the gun show loophole, they were bought with no questions asked, no background check, no questions about who you are, where you might live. The weapons were bought “cash and carry,” without, again, any identifying questions being asked or being supplied. Those 13 people should never have died that day because those teenagers should not have had access to those guns. The young

woman who bought the guns for the shooters said she would not have done it if a background check had been required.

Our laws require a background check for all gun sales by licensed dealers. But a special exemption allows anyone—including terrorists such as bin Laden, criminals, gun traffickers, and the severely mentally ill—to buy guns without a background check from so-called private sellers, who sell hundreds of guns every year at gun shows, fully exempt from any responsibility for those sales.

In 1999, I introduced legislation to close the gun show loophole and to keep guns from falling into the wrong hands. In the aftermath of Columbine, the Senate passed my legislation, with Vice President Al Gore casting the tiebreaking vote. It was a great victory but a short-lived one. The gun lobby stripped my legislation in conference with the House, and in the decade since then we have done absolutely nothing at the national level to close the gun show loophole. No wonder domestic terrorists frequently use gun shows to sell their firearms to fund their illegal activities.

Just yesterday, we commemorated the 15th anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. It claimed 168 lives, including 19 children under the age of 6. Timothy McVeigh—the killer responsible for those horrific deeds—frequently set up his own booth. He sold weapons at gun shows.

We continue to see the tragic consequences of senseless gun violence fueled by gun show dealers who are not really licensed.

Just a few weeks ago, a few miles from this Chamber, John Patrick Bedell opened fire on two police officers at the Pentagon Metro station. They were wounded before they returned the fire and killed Bedell. One of his semi-automatic guns was linked directly back to a gun show sale. And it is no surprise that his gun was bought outside the normal stream of commerce because Bedell would have failed a background check. He actually tried to buy a gun from a licensed firearms dealer in California, but because of his diagnosed mental illness, he couldn't pass the check.

If that doesn't make it clear that we have to stop guns from falling into the wrong hands, just think of the Virginia Tech shootings. Last Friday, we marked the third anniversary of that horrible day. In that tragedy, a mentally deranged man killed 32 students and faculty in the worst mass shooting in American history.

Whether it is Virginia Tech, the recent shootings at the Pentagon, or Columbine, we are reminded over and over that our gun laws are not strong enough. Yet, while gunshots continue to ring out across this country, the silence from this Chamber is deafening.

I am a veteran. I served in the military in Europe during wartime, World War II, and I understand the desire to

protect one's self and family. But I know how important it is to keep terrorists, convicted criminals, and domestic abusers from having guns.

Some would argue that gun owners are against sensible gun laws, including closing the gun show loophole, but that is simply not true. Recent polling has shown that there is overwhelming support for closing the gun show loophole among gun owners. Here we have a placard that shows that gun owners themselves want the loophole closed. Sixty-nine percent of NRA members agree, and 85 percent of other gun owners agree: Shut down that gun show loophole. Republican pollster Frank Luntz recently found that 69 percent of National Rifle Association members and, as pointed out, 85 percent of other gun owners want us to close this loophole. After all, the vast majority of gun owners are law-abiding Americans who pass background checks and use their firearms responsibly. They know their lives and the lives of their children are in danger when a firearm is purchased by an unqualified buyer at a gun show, by someone who could never pass a background check at a neighborhood gun store. It is as easy as ever for criminals to buy guns—easier, in fact, than it is to get a library card.

We have an opportunity to save lives, and that is why I call on my colleagues to please join me and pass my bill to close the gun show loophole once and for all. Eleven years ago, we lost 12 students and a teacher to gun violence in Littleton, CO. One of the best ways to honor those who perished and those who have suffered is to make sure a tragedy like Columbine never happens again. We owe that and nothing less to the young people who died 11 years ago and the young people who count on us today. We have to step up to our responsibilities and ask all gun dealers to step up to their responsibilities.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Madam President, earlier today I came to the floor to talk about transparency and the bright sunshine of public service and how foundational it is to that service being open. It is impossible to do the people's business if we do not allow the people to see what we are doing.

I remember sound and fury coming from some of my friends on the other side of the aisle when they believed there were decisions being made about the health care bill behind closed doors, sound and fury that somehow someone wasn't telling the public everything that was going on. Meanwhile, dozens and dozens of nominees to do the work of our government have piled up under the heading of a “secret hold.”

I don't really understand how the secret hold came about. I don't really understand why one would ever need a