

conditions related to military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.

S. 296

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the names of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 296, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate discrimination in the immigration laws by permitting permanent partners of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents to obtain lawful permanent resident status in the same manner as spouses of citizens and lawful permanent residents and to penalize immigration fraud in connection with permanent partnerships.

S. 309

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 309, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the World War II members of the Civil Air Patrol.

S. 316

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 316, a bill to recalculate and restore retirement annuity obligations of the United States Postal Service, to eliminate the requirement that the United States Postal Service prefund the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund, to place restrictions on the closure of postal facilities, to create incentives for innovation for the United States Postal Service, to maintain levels of postal service, and for other purposes.

S. 325

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 325, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the maximum age for children eligible for medical care under the CHAMPVA program, and for other purposes.

S. 326

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 326, a bill to reauthorize 21st century community learning centers, and for other purposes.

S. 338

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 338, a bill to amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 to provide consistent and reliable authority for, and for the funding of, the land and water conservation fund to maximize the effectiveness of the fund for future generations, and for other purposes.

S. 359

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cospon-

sor of S. 359, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to exclude industrial hemp from the definition of marihuana, and for other purposes.

S. 367

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 367, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 369

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 369, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit taking minors across State lines in circumvention of laws requiring the involvement of parents in abortion decisions.

S. 375

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 375, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 379

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 379, a bill to rescind \$45 billion of unobligated discretionary appropriations, and for other purposes.

S. 399

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 399, a bill to protect American job creation by striking the Federal mandate on employers to offer health insurance.

S. 415

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 415, a bill to clarify the collateral requirement for certain loans under section 7(d) of the Small Business Act, to address assistance to out-of-State small business concerns, and for other purposes.

S. 429

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 429, a bill to enable concrete masonry products manufacturers to establish, finance, and carry out a coordinated program of research, education, and promotion to improve, maintain, and develop markets for concrete masonry products.

S. RES. 26

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 26, a resolution recognizing that access to hospitals and other health care providers for patients in rural areas of the

United States is essential to the survival and success of communities in the United States.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. NELSON (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 436. A bill to require that the salaries of Members of Congress be sequestered during any sequester under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985; to the Committee on the Budget.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I, like many of my colleagues, have just flown in our Nation's airways, going through a fairly crowded airport in Florida, coming into a crowded airport here in Washington, and in 30 days those TSA lines are going to get longer.

For the international flights, I and others have worked very hard to get additional customs agents to cut the time it takes to process our international visitors. In airports such as Miami and Orlando where there is quite a bit of international traffic, getting those additional customs folks has meant a great deal because we even had some airlines that would come in, for example, to Orlando, and they would have to keep the international passengers on the airplane for upwards of an hour before they could get off the airplane so that there was room, with the personnel available.

Well, you see where I am going, because all of that is going to change unless—as the Good Book says, come, let us reason together. Unless our sharply divided politics—be it partisan, be it ideological—unless we can come together and reach consensus to stop this ridiculous thing that went into effect last Friday called the sequester, which was never intended to go into effect, but because of the inability of the parties to come together, in fact, it is in effect, and it is cutting, in an indiscriminate way, like a meat cleaver across the board.

In certain agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, it even gets exacerbated because the cuts can only occur in certain accounts. Thus, civilian employees are going to be furloughed.

It is also happening in the Department of Defense. In my State of Florida alone, there are going to be 31,000 defense civilian employees who are going to be furloughed. What does a furlough mean? It means that after the 30-day notice, so about 30 days from now, that number of employees—in this example, in the Defense Department—is going to be laid off 1 day a week, under the law, for up to a maximum of 22 weeks. Is that in the interest of national security? Of course not.

Why is it exacerbated in the Department of Defense? Because the existing appropriations law—remember, we are not operating on a current law; we are operating on last year's appropriations

law. That has so constrained the managers—in other words, the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary—that they can't move the money around, and what they are having to do is to take the sequester cuts out of operations and maintenance instead of out of acquisitions of systems or programs. That is the worst possible place—out of operations and maintenance.

Now, I am an optimist. I couldn't be in this business if I were not an optimist. I have ultimate faith in the American people. And I know every one of these Senators here, from the extreme left to the extreme right, are all good people, and there can be consensus found if everybody would get out of their little silos and realize the greater good.

Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL and I want to help them, so we are filing a bill today. Since this was never intended and all these civilian Federal employees are going to be furloughed, our bill will say that Members of Congress will get docked the same percentage of their pay that the furloughed workers are docked in the percentage of their pay.

Now, the question is, Will this pass? I hope it doesn't pass because I hope it is not necessary to pass. We have 30 days of notice before the furloughs take place. I am certainly hopeful that happens by the end of this month, clearly by the time of March 27 when the existing appropriations bill—which is last year's appropriation—ceases to exist and the government can come to a screeching halt unless we continue the appropriations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

I am hopeful our legislation will not pass, but somebody needs to understand how ridiculous this whole thing is. Conservatives want to cut spending. You can do it in a more intelligent and rational way. If we are going to get serious about \$4 trillion of deficit reduction over the decade—and we have already enacted policies that will take us down about 2.5 trillion of deficit reduction—we have about \$1.5 trillion to go in enacting policies over that decade and we ought to be able to do that in a nanosecond.

Senator MCCASKILL and I want to try to help nudge the process along. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. You are going to dock all of these civilian employees who have lives, who have families, who have children, who have expenses, who need to buy milk and so forth and so on. You are going to dock them their pay because of the inability of the Members of Congress to get together to do what should have been done, by the way, a year and a half ago when this whole thing was enacted. The meat cleaver sequester was put there because it was so ridiculous that surely it would encourage, a year and a half ago, the supercommittee of six from the House, six from the Senate, half and half of each party—surely it was going to encourage them to come together in

agreement. All it needed was one vote. Instead of a 6-to-6 deadlock it would have been 7 to 5. It did not happen, and here we are a year and a half later.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander. If you are going to dock Federal workers' pay because you are going to force them into a furlough which was never intended, is not rational policy, is not good administration, then you are going to be docked your own pay.

This is not pontificating. Again, I say I hope this never passes because I hope it is moot. But it is trying to bring into focus just how ridiculous the goings-on here are right now. So I am very hopeful.

I say I love the Members of the Senate, every one of these Members of the Senate. I have a great relationship with almost every one of these Senators. They are all good people. We need to come together, give a strong statement of consensus building, and then send it down there to the House and tell them they have to get off the dime.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. KIRK, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. KING):

S. 443. A bill to increase public safety by punishing and deterring firearms trafficking; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. LEAHY. Today I am proud to introduce modified legislation to combat the practice of straw purchasing and illegal trafficking in firearms. Since my initial introduction of the Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act at the very beginning of the 113th Congress on January 22, I have had productive conversations with several Senators who share my goal of reducing this destructive criminal conduct. Today I am pleased to be joined by Senator COLLINS, Senator DURBIN, Senator KIRK, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator BLUMENTHAL. These Senators understand the weaknesses in our current law and the challenges faced by law enforcement officials. I thank them for their commitment to this legislation, for their support of law enforcement, and for their cooperation in making progress in our collective efforts to prevent and reduce gun violence.

I hope that as other Senators on both sides of the aisle become more familiar with our bipartisan proposal, they will understand how it provides law enforcement with the tools they need to go after those who engage in the straw purchasing and illegal trafficking of firearms. The practice of straw purchasing is used for one thing to put firearms into the hands of those that are prohibited by law from having them. Many are then used to further violent crimes.

I have heard again and again from Senators on both sides of the aisle that keeping guns away from those who should not have them is a goal worth pursuing. This bill will further that ef-

fort and help answer the call from Gabrielle Giffords and so many Americans for us to take action.

I want to commend the senior Senator from Maine, Senator COLLINS, for her leadership on this matter and for her willingness to work across the aisle to make real progress. She helped unite us to get this done. Without her, we would not have made the progress we have, or be in position to consider this comprehensive response to what law enforcement has told us they need.

This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee will continue our consideration of four measures to reduce gun violence. The issue of gun trafficking and straw purchasing is before the Committee. I will amend my original trafficking bill that is pending on the Committee agenda with the text of this bipartisan compromise, which combines the proposals that I put forward with Senator DURBIN at the beginning of this Congress as well as proposals that have been championed by Senator GILLIBRAND and Senator KIRK. Our substitute amendment will improve the language already pending before the Committee. As I did before introducing any measure related to gun violence this year, I also hope to continue my outreach to the Judiciary Committee's Ranking Member. I invite Senator GRASSLEY and other members of the Committee from both sides of the aisle to join with us so that I can report this measure with strong bipartisan support and without delay for consideration by the Senate.

Law enforcement officials have complained for years that they lack the legal tools necessary effectively to combat illegal straw purchasing and firearms trafficking. Congressional inquiry during the last Congress put a spotlight on the very difficult legal environment within which law enforcement officials currently operate. In fact, one of the whistleblowers who testified about the misguided tactics used by Federal law enforcement in firearms trafficking investigations in Arizona described the current laws as "toothless." If we are to address gun violence, we should respond to this clear vulnerability that is being exploited by criminals.

The Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act will make important changes to Federal firearms statutes that will better equip law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute the all-too-common practices of straw purchasing and illegal trafficking of firearms. Straw purchases typically involve a person, who is not prohibited by Federal law, purchasing a firearm on behalf of a prohibited person, or at the direction of a drug trafficking or other criminal organization. These practices result in the support of larger criminal organizations, and the illegally obtained guns are often sold and re-sold across state lines. This trafficking in firearms results in the proliferation of illegal firearms and gun violence in our communities. Straw

purchasers circumvent the purposes of the background check system, and they put law enforcement officials and law-abiding firearms dealers in difficult positions. Gun trafficking and straw purchasing make our communities less safe.

Under current law, there is no specific statute that makes it illegal to act as a straw purchaser of firearms. Nor is there a law directly on point to address the illegal trafficking of firearms. As a result, prosecutors must cobble together charges against a straw purchaser using so-called “paperwork” violations such as misrepresentations on a Federal form. These laws are imperfect, and do not give prosecutors the leverage needed to encourage straw buyers, often the lowest rungs on a ladder in a criminal enterprise, to provide the information needed for investigators and prosecutors to go after those directing and profiting from such activity.

The bipartisan bill we introduce today will add two new provisions to our Federal criminal code to specifically prohibit serving as a straw purchaser of firearms and trafficking in firearms. The bill establishes tough penalties for these offenses in an effort to punish and importantly, deter this conduct. We need a meaningful solution to this serious problem. Talk about prosecuting mere paperwork offenses is no answer.

Under current law, it is a crime to transfer a firearm to another with the knowledge that the firearm will be used in criminal activity. This bill would strengthen this existing law by prohibiting such a transfer where the transferor has “reasonable cause to believe” that the firearm will be used in criminal activity. We listened to concerns about family members who give firearms as gifts and other transfers that are not designed to get around the existing background check system. As a result, the bill contains important exemptions for the innocent transfer of a firearm as a gift, or in relation to a legitimate raffle, auction or contest.

Another key provision of our bipartisan bill is that it complements existing law that makes it a crime to smuggle firearms into the United States by specifically prohibiting the smuggling of firearms out of the United States. In light of what we know is occurring, particularly on our Southwest border, this is an important improvement to current law and another tool that was needed but missing over the last few years.

The provisions laid out in our legislation are focused, commonsense remedies to the very real problems of firearms trafficking and straw purchasing. Our bill does not affect lawful purchases from Federal firearms licensees, and in no way alters their rights and responsibilities as sellers of a lawful commodity. I hope Federal firearms licensees welcome a stronger deterrent to keep criminal straw purchasers out of their business.

The problems of gun trafficking and straw purchasers, particularly along the Southwest border, are matters we have been talking about for years. Senator DURBIN chaired a hearing on border violence back in early 2009. Law enforcement officials have called for a firearms trafficking statute that can be effective to go after straw purchasers. That is something agents did not have when they initiated Operation Wide Receiver during the Bush administration and later the disastrous Fast and Furious effort. Their frustration with the limits of the current law contributed to their looking for another way to make a difference in their fight against gun trafficking. Their initiative was a failure. What we need to do now is to create better law enforcement tools. I hope that those who have been concerned about Fast and Furious, whose investigation established that it was the local ATF agents in Arizona who initiated and so poorly implemented that effort, will join with us to close the loophole in the law that Mexican drug cartels are continuing to exploit.

Our bill was drafted at the request of law enforcement. It will provide needed tools to fight against the drug cartels and other criminals who threaten our communities. It will not undermine the Second Amendment rights of lawful gun owners. It has the support of many law enforcement organizations—both leadership and rank and file. Indeed, the original bill I introduced with Senator DURBIN has been supported by the National Fraternal Order of Police, the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the National District Attorneys Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum. I urge everyone who cares about keeping firearms out of the hands of criminals to join in this effort.

We have an obligation to find solutions to reduce gun violence and I thank these Senators for their strong leadership. We can do this in a way consistent with the rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment. I believe our bipartisan legislation meets those goals. As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, a Senator, a Vermonter, an American, a father and a grandfather, I look forward to continuing our progress on this important legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, let me begin my remarks by thanking the distinguished chairman of the Judiciary Committee for his very gracious comments and for his extraordinary leadership on a bill that I believe can bring all of us together.

I also want to thank our other cosponsors of the bill, particularly Senator GILLIBRAND, who has had a great interest in cracking down on the practice of straw purchasing.

The practice of straw purchasing is intended to achieve one result—to put a gun in the hands of a criminal. These individuals are easily exploiting currently weak Federal laws to obtain guns.

Peter Forcelli, ATF Supervisory Special Agent and Fast and Furious whistleblower, told the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in June of 2011 that: “Some people view [the current penalties for straw purchasing] as no more consequential than doing 65 in a 55 zone.”

These guns are frequently sold, resold, and trafficked across State lines, resulting in the proliferation of illegal firearms in our communities. This has also fueled the violence across our southern border associated with Mexican drug cartels as well as gang violence in our cities.

Straw purchasing and gun trafficking put guns in the hands of criminals. According to the ATF, of the nearly 94,000 firearms that have been recovered in Mexico in the last 5 years, more than 64,000 were sourced to the United States. Similarly, a large percentage of the guns used in crimes in our largest cities were trafficked across State lines.

The congressional inquiry into the ATF’s Wide Receiver and Fast and Furious investigations revealed how difficult it is for law enforcement officials to deter and punish these crimes effectively.

Current loopholes in Federal law make preventing and prosecuting these offenses very difficult for law enforcement officials. Right now, a straw purchaser can only be prosecuted for lying on a Federal form, which is treated as a paperwork violation.

Because straw purchasers by definition are nonprohibited persons and can lawfully purchase a firearm, prosecuting these individuals is difficult and any potential punishment is likely to be minimal.

Because of these weak laws, prosecutors have minimal leverage over straw purchasers who, in turn, have little incentive to cooperate and assist law enforcement in investigating trafficking crimes and crimes involving gun violence. For years, law enforcement has been asking Congress for better tools to crack down on this type of criminal conduct.

It is time to give law enforcement the tools it needs to combat this activity effectively.

Our bill reflects a combination of advice from law enforcement officials and leadership by many Senators. It gives law enforcement officials the comprehensive framework they have been seeking from Congress.

First, the bill creates new, specific criminal offenses for straw purchasing and trafficking in firearms. Instead of a slap on the wrist, these crimes would be punishable by up to 25 years in prison.

The proposal also increases the punishment for an individual who serves as

an organizer of a straw purchasing or trafficking enterprise.

This bipartisan bill also strengthens existing laws that make it unlawful to smuggle guns into the United States.

The bill protects legitimate private sales and is drafted to avoid sweeping in innocent transactions and placing unnecessary burdens on lawful private sales.

When buying from a private seller, the buyer is only in violation of the new straw purchasing prohibition if the buyer purchases a firearm for someone known to the buyer as a prohibited person, meaning a felon, drug addict, someone subject to a domestic violence order, or someone with serious mental illness.

When buying from a federally licensed firearms dealer, it is prohibited to buy a firearm on behalf of or for another person. This is consistent with current law that requires a person buying from a dealer to certify that they are the "actual buyer." It is important to note, however, that the bill also expressly exempts transactions like gifts and transfers that occur in raffles and auctions.

The bill is supported by numerous organizations, including the Fraternal Order of Police, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the FBI Agents Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, the National District Attorneys Association, and the Police Executive Research Forum.

This bill helps to keep guns out of the hands of criminals without infringing in any way upon the second amendment right of law-abiding citizens.

I urge my colleagues to support this much needed legislation.

I am, again, very pleased to have been able to work under the leadership of the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I am delighted he is going to proceed to mark up our bipartisan compromise this week, and I thank him for the opportunity to work with him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an issue that every mother in America is thinking about. Every parent in America who saw what happened in Connecticut bleeds for this issue. We have to do something in our country about senseless gun crime. We have to do something about making sure criminals do not have easy access to weapons to shoot down our children and loved ones in the areas that should be the safest places for them. We have seen these mass deaths, whether at a school, whether at a university, whether in a movie theater, whether in a community center; these crimes are happening over and over again.

I can tell you that from when I was first appointed to the Senate in 2009, I have realized our State of New York

suffers from grave gun crime all across our State. We have gang violence. We have gun trafficking. We have straw purchasing. Networks of weapons flow into our State. Eighty-five percent of the weapons used in crimes in my State come from out of State and 90 percent of those weapons are illegal.

I had to look into the eyes of parents who had just lost their daughter because of a stray bullet from a gang member. Nyasia's parents deserve an answer. The parents of the children in Connecticut deserve an answer.

I have good news today because the Senate is working on a bipartisan bill that is introduced today by the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Chairman LEAHY, to begin to solve this problem. This bill has wide bipartisan support. It started out with Senator MARK KIRK and I working together. He has a real tough problem in Illinois with gang violence that he wanted to address and crack down on. That bipartisan work began to address other bipartisan work. The ranking member, Senator GRASSLEY, was very interested in this bill and has been working with us to shape the bill, make it stronger. SUSAN COLLINS, who has been a leader on this issue, began to work with us to shape this bill and make it better. Senator LEAHY and Senator DURBIN have been working on the issue separately. We all joined forces to begin to write a bill that can tackle this problem, to make it a stronger solution, a better solution.

We now have cosponsors. We have the Presiding Officer right now, Senator JOE DONNELLY. We have both Senators from Connecticut who must answer the parents of their State, that they are doing something about these senseless deaths. Senator BLUMENTHAL, a former attorney general, knows what law enforcement needs to take on these criminals. Senator MURPHY, Senator KLOBUCHAR—also a previous attorney general—know what it takes to crack down on these kinds of crime and this senseless death. Senator KING, an Independent, also signs on to this bill because he knows it can do something to crack down on gun violence in this country.

Of all the laws on the books in this country today, not one Federal law says you cannot buy a truckload of guns, bring them to another State, and sell them to a criminal network. It is not even prohibited. You would not believe it. How could that be true in a country such as ours, where the Federal Government's No. 1 job is to protect our families? That is what this bill does. It makes it a Federal crime to traffic, to be a straw purchaser, to sell these guns to criminal networks with the intent of breaking the law.

The law enforcement agencies—whether it is ATF, NYPD, FBI—will now have the tools they need on the Federal level to begin to tackle this crisis.

I urge my colleagues on both side of the aisle, if they want to do something

about the senseless gun deaths in this country, this is a bill they can support. For all the law-abiding gun owners in this country who support the second amendment, as I do, they can look at this bill and say: That is a bill we are supporting; that bill should pass because it goes after the criminals and the illegal weapons that are the scourge of this country. Thirty people get killed a day because of gun violence—30 deaths. One is too many. When I look at Nyasia's parents, one is too many.

Enough is enough. I am certain that when this bill passes this Chamber and when law enforcement begins to have the tools, we will save lives.

I thank my colleagues again for all the hard work they have done. I thank Senator MARK KIRK for his courage for being the first Republican to stand up to do a gun bill, the first bipartisan gun bill introduced in this Chamber.

• Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act of 2013, which I am proud to join in introducing with Senators LEAHY, GILLIBRAND, DURBIN and COLLINS. There are an estimated 33,000 gangs with 1.4 million active members who live in our neighborhoods, towns and cities across the United States. With more than 100,000 gang members, the city of Chicago has more gang members who terrorize its residents than any other city in the United States. The Chicago Crime Commission also reported the existence of an additional 15,000 gang members operating in our suburbs.

Gangs such as the Vice Lords, Gangster Disciples, and the Latin Kings are responsible for nearly 80 percent of the city's homicides, which just last summer amounted to 500 deaths in Chicago. These homicides are most often perpetrated with illegal weapons. Law enforcement officers in Chicago confiscate an average of 13,000 illegal weapons each year. It must end.

That is why I have joined this bipartisan group to take serious action to prevent weapons trafficking and straw purchasing, where a third party member legally purchases a firearm then sells or trades it to a criminal who is legally barred from purchasing such a weapon. Our bipartisan, consensus legislation includes the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act, which Senator GILLIBRAND and I introduced earlier this year, that would for the first time make it a Federal crime to traffic illegal guns. The Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act also strengthens the tools law enforcement need to crack down on straw purchasers, particularly those who transfer those weapons in furtherance of crimes of violence or drug trafficking. This legislation also calls upon the Sentencing Commission to substantially increase the penalties when these crimes are committed by individuals affiliated with gangs and other criminal enterprises.

A portion of this new anti-illegal gun trafficking legislation is named after

Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old who was shot and killed by gang gunfire in Chicago. For Hadiya and thousands of other victims, my hope is we can break through the gridlock here in Washington to actually get something done to save lives.●

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING):

S. 444. A bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Appropriations.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss two separate problems facing our Nation—the first is sequestration, which is underway now and indiscriminately affecting a wide range of programs. The second is the prospect of a long-term Continuing Resolution to fund the Federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year, also not the way we should be doing business. Both will result in damage to our military readiness.

In order to tackle these two separate but equally devastating problems, I am introducing two measures today.

The first bill, which I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator UDALL, in sponsoring, will help mitigate the consequences of sequestration by providing Department and agency heads additional flexibility in implementing the cuts. The second bill, which I am introducing with my colleague from my home state of Maine, Senator King, will fund the Department of Defense for the remainder of the fiscal year at levels approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee in the funding bill that was reported unanimously by the Committee on August 2, 2012.

As Deputy Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has repeatedly warned, failing to pass an annual defense appropriations bill and requiring the Pentagon to operate under last year's law will continue to lead to dangerous absurdities that have ramifications that last far beyond the six months left in this fiscal year.

Military readiness will suffer. A hollow force will be created. The Pentagon will be unable to increase production rates for existing weapons, start new programs, or sign multiyear procurement contracts that would provide significant savings for taxpayers.

When I questioned Deputy Secretary Carter on February 14, at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing about what the continuing resolution means for the Navy and our domestic shipbuilding capability, he testified that:

We're in the absurd position where we're five months into the fiscal year and we have the authority to build the ships that we built last year and no authority to build the ships that we plan to build this year. That's crazy . . . and that has nothing to do with sequestration, by the way, that's the CR.

I have long argued that we need to bring the annual appropriations bills to the floor to be considered individually on their merits. I believe that CRs represent an abdication of our responsibility

and should be avoided altogether. But given where we find ourselves today, at the very least we should be able to come together to pass the full-year Department of Defense funding bill and the Military Construction/Veterans Affairs appropriations.

With regard to sequestration, we have known this day could arrive for a year and a half now. Yet, instead of working together to avert sequestration and replace it with a more rational alternative, the time has been spent jockeying for partisan advantage and engaging in a blame game. Last week, the Senate spent time voting against proceeding to debate on two partisan proposals that both sides knew beforehand were doomed.

The bill Senator UDALL and I are introducing today is a bipartisan effort to mitigate the harmful effects of sequestration. As a result of sequestration, vital priorities such as defense, education, transportation, and biomedical research, all face indiscriminate, meat-ax cuts. No distinction is made between high-performing programs and poorly performing ones.

The legislation we introduce today seeks to fix that. Instead of mindless across-the-board budget cuts, this legislation provides the heads of Federal agencies and departments with the flexibility to implement the savings targets required by the Budget Control Act until such time as a bipartisan agreement is reached to replace the sequester cuts or until Congress passes new appropriations bills for fiscal year 2013 that meet the sequester levels.

The bill requires these agency and Department heads to submit their proposals to the Appropriations committees of both the House and the Senate for approval.

This approval is an important step in the process because these Committees know the budget of each agency and can provide oversight of agency plans. This provides a strong incentive for each agency to put forth serious plans in order to avoid the across-the-board sequestration cuts that would otherwise take effect.

Let me emphasize that while our proposal is intended to mitigate the harmful and mindless across-the-board approach of sequestration, a comprehensive, bipartisan approach to put our fiscal house in order must remain a top priority.

I urge my colleagues to support both bills that we are introducing today.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 25. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the resolution S. Res. 64, authorizing expenditures by committees of the Senate for the period March 1, 2013, through September 30, 2013; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 25. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by

him to the resolution S. Res. 64, authorizing expenditures by committees of the Senate for the period March 1, 2013, through September 30, 2013; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 31, line 22, strike "IN GENERAL.—The Senate National" and insert the following: "RECONSTITUTION.—"

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Senate National
On page 32, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as extending or providing funding authority to the Working Group.

On page 35, strike line 2 and all that follows through page 36, line 3, and insert the following:

(1) DESIGNATION OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF.—
On page 36, strike line 14 and all that follows through page 37, line 2.

On page 37, line 3, strike "(C)" and insert "(B)".

On page 37, line 8, strike "(D)" and insert "(C)".

On page 37, line 10, strike "(4)" and insert "(3)".

On page 37, strike lines 13 through 22 and insert the following:

(2) LEADERSHIP STAFF.—The majority leader of the Senate and the minority leader of the Senate may each designate 2 staff members who shall be responsible to the respective leader.

On page 37, line 23, strike "(4)" and insert "(3)".

On page 39, strike line 3 and all that follows through page 40, line 2.

On page 40, line 3, strike "(d)" and insert "(c)".

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to announce that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will meet in open session on Thursday, March 7, 2013, at 10 a.m. in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled "Safe and Supportive Schools: Lessons from the Field."

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact Leanne Hotek of the committee staff on (202) 228-6685.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to announce that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will meet in open session on Tuesday, March 12, 2013, at 2:30 p.m. in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled "Job Corps Budget Shortfall: Safeguarding Workforce Training for America's Disconnected Youth."

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact Anna Porto of the committee staff on (202) 224-5363.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2013

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate