

ahead. If you don't have much, we will have a Tax Code which is simple and understandable. When you work hard and play by the rules, you will have an opportunity to get ahead as well.

Comprehensive tax reform will make it easier to file. It is going to lay out an opportunity for the Senate Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to come together.

I close simply by saying once again, we saw in the past few days how broken and dysfunctional our tax system in America has become. Can you imagine what people thought when their software was crashing in the last couple of days? They are trying to find their receipts, flailing through filing cabinets trying to find those documents which attest to their taxable events for the past year. They can't know with certainty, based upon some of those analyses by the Government Accountability Office, whether they have done it right or even professionals have done it correctly.

Until this Senate comes together on a bipartisan basis to work for a simpler, more coherent tax system—one which promotes growth and eases the burden on American families and American businesses—there will be no relief from the Ides of April. This, in my view, is a tragedy worthy of Shakespeare.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask for such time as I may consume.

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

#### TAX DAY

Mrs. FISCHER. I rise today on Tax Day, the deadline for Americans to file Federal tax returns on their hard-earned income for the 2012 tax year. Benjamin Franklin famously said the only sure things in life are death and taxes. Today we Americans live up to that second hard truth, the day when the taxman comes.

For those of us in Congress, Tax Day serves as an important reminder of just who is funding all of the government's spending: it is the American taxpayer. Even as families across America have made tough decisions and tightened their household budgets, the Federal Government has gone on a spending spree. The government has posted four straight trillion-dollar deficits and is growing the national debt, which is approaching \$17 trillion.

In recent years the average annual deficit has skyrocketed to 8.7 percent of our gross domestic product. These deficits should be all the evidence we need in order we get our fiscal house in order.

I believe, and Nebraskans believe, to generate economic growth we must first address our Nation's addiction to spending. We need to fix our broken tax system, and what better time than Tax Day to highlight this need?

Tax Day is a day to renew our efforts to simplify the tax system and ease the burden on hard-working Americans. The act of actually filing taxes is never pleasant, but it also allows Americans the chance to assess just how much of their income is going toward subsidizing an ever-growing bureaucracy.

Rather than make it easy for citizens to comply with the income tax requirements, the Federal Government has held onto an arcane, convoluted tax system. Many citizens, particularly small business owners, are forced to hire costly accountants or buy tax software just to sift through the 3,951,104 words of the Tax Code which, along with other rules and regulations, fills 73,608 pages of text, all in order to figure out just how much one owes.

Nebraskans shouldn't need to waste their time or pay for expensive financial advisers just to fork over more money to Uncle Sam. Americans collectively spend more than 6 billion hours preparing their tax returns. Imagine what more could be done if Americans could focus less time and resources on tax compliance.

According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, 90 percent of small businesses have given up attempting to comply with the Tax Code. Instead, they pay a professional tax preparation service.

Through tax reform to make the Tax Code simpler and fairer, these small businesses could redirect scant resources currently used for tax compliance to focus more on growth and creating jobs.

I am encouraged, however, by the recent efforts toward much needed comprehensive tax reform to simplify our Tax Code. Just last week the chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator MAX BAUCUS, wrote an opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal with House Ways and Means Committee chairman DAVE CAMP highlighting their progress to date in pressing toward bipartisan tax reform.

President Obama has called for revenue-neutral corporate tax reform in his fiscal year 2014 budget. Unfortunately, the President's proposal is contingent on a \$1.1 trillion tax increase above and beyond the \$1.7 trillion in tax increases the President has already sought and won.

Such a tax hike sends the unmistakable message to every American taxpayer that the government knows how to spend their money better than they do. I believe American families know how best to spend their money, particularly during ongoing times of economic hardship when everyone is called upon to make tough decisions and to make those tough decisions about their budgets and about spending.

Revenue-neutral, pro-growth tax reform should not only be geared toward the corporate side of our Tax Code, we should pursue revenue-neutral tax reforms on the individual side as well which would benefit American families as well as small businesses that pay those taxes at the individual level.

Small businesses generate two out of every three new jobs. Ninety-five percent of businesses, which employ nearly 70 million Americans, are organized in such a way that earnings are passed through the enterprise and therefore subject to taxation at the individual level. Tax day provides us with a needed reminder of how broken our Tax Code is. We can and should use it as the impetus to pursue pro-growth tax reform. My goal for tax reform is simple—a fairer tax code that ensures that Nebraskans and our neighbors from across the country can keep more of the money they work hard to earn while providing for the core duties and responsibilities of our government.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

#### GUN SAFETY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we are about to enter into an incredibly important debate about a series of issues relating to violence—specifically, gun violence—in our communities all across America.

Today I rise to speak about a very important bipartisan amendment I will be offering with Senator ROY BLUNT and others called the Excellence in Mental Health Act. This addresses a very important piece of the discussion. It is an opportunity for us to come together amidst a lot of controversial debate and agree on something that is a very important piece of the puzzle—having access to comprehensive, quality mental health services.

This weekend we heard from Francine Wheeler, whose 6-year-old son Ben was murdered on December 14 in Newtown, CT. We know that Ben was one of 26 people—20 children—who lost their lives. I can only begin to imagine what all of us as parents would feel in that situation. For those 26 victims and the 3,300 other Americans killed since then in acts of gun violence, it is time to take action. I am hopeful, given the strong bipartisan vote we had to move forward on this debate, that we can actually have the debate, that people will have their say and then vote on this very important issue.

The bill before us is a commonsense effort toward comprehensive background checks that will help save lives. I am very supportive of not only that provision but others that will be offered as well.

One important piece that hasn't been in the headlines as much but is very important in getting it right is the need for better access to comprehensive mental health services. That is why we need the bipartisan Excellence in Mental Health Act passed as an amendment that will increase access to care and improve the quality of life for those who need it.

We know that a person who does not receive treatment after his or her first psychotic episode is 15 times more likely to commit a violent act. But let me

be clear. We also know that the vast majority of those who are living with mental illnesses are more likely to be a victim of crime than to be a perpetrator of crime. But tragedies do happen when treatment and help are not available.

In too many instances today we are seeing that there is not effective help available to people in communities. The current lack of access to mental health services means too often it is the local police who are responding to psychiatric emergencies, and they may not have services to which to take someone. These police officers are being diverted from what they should be doing—responding to other crimes—and so they take people to jail rather than have them get the services they need. They are spending resources incarcerating people who would otherwise need to be and should be in a treatment situation.

That is why we have law enforcement supporting this amendment. We have over 50 organizations—from law enforcement and community mental health and health groups, as well as those who represent our brave veterans home from the war—supporting us because they know that if we don't have quality service in the community, we will continue to see people in jail who shouldn't be in jail, we will continue to see families and individuals not getting the help they need, and in some circumstances we will see more tragedies occur as well.

Over the course of this week, we are going to hear a lot of debate about different aspects of gun safety. Colleagues are going to disagree about the manner of background checks or limits on assault weapons. But I hope there will be no disagreement that people with serious mental illnesses should be given effective treatment and that we can do a better job in our country to make sure treatment is readily available in a community setting. That should be the hopeful part of this whole debate.

Science has shown us significant advances in the study of the brain and the most effective mental health treatments. There are solutions if people get the help they need. They can live healthy, productive lives rather than struggling with their illness. And I applaud President Obama's historic brain mapping initiative to expand that knowledge even more.

It is amazing to me that we have so many studies relating to heart disease, kidney disease, or diabetes, and yet all of the issues relating to the brain—whether it is bipolar disorder or Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease or schizophrenia—we have not tackled with the same vigor. There are solutions. We are finding those every day. There is hope. Today, thanks to cutting-edge research, we have answers for people living with severe mental illnesses. We have proven therapies, treatment options, and medicines that truly transform lives.

I speak as someone who lived, as a daughter, through a time when we did

not have appropriate treatments. When I was growing up, in middle school and high school, my father had bipolar disease. At that time we didn't know what it was. He was misdiagnosed for 10 years. At that time everybody was schizophrenic. There was no understanding that we actually have chemical imbalances in the brain, just as someone who isn't monitoring their sugar because they are diabetic might have. They need to monitor that in order to take medicine to keep them on an equilibrium so they do not get sick and have problems. We have the same thing with something called mood disorders in our country, and we have learned much about it. If someone is taking the right medicine, it stops the imbalance where they are either manic or severely depressed.

There are solutions. When my dad was finally diagnosed correctly and received the help he needed and the medicine—at the time it was lithium—he went on to lead a very productive life for the rest of his days. So I have seen both what happens when people don't get treatment and when people do, and we literally have the opportunity to take this next step in order to make sure people all across our country get the help they need.

Unfortunately, today one-third of all bipolar disorders do not get any treatment even when we know there are absolute answers for individuals and families. Shame on us for not making sure those are readily available. The amendment I will be offering would make sure those are available and close what I believe is the final step in what we have called mental health parity.

We, as a group, on a bipartisan basis passed legislation authored by our dear departed Paul Wellstone and Senator Pete Domenici, with strong advocacy from Senator Ted Kennedy, to provide parity under health insurance between physical and mental health services. We passed that. We have now gone on to strengthen that with the new health reforms that are in place. The only place where we don't have mental health parity right now is in the community outside of the insurance system. We do not have the same parity between what we do through a community health clinic receiving reimbursement for preventive care for health services and what we do for behavioral health—mental health, substance abuse—which is what we are going to fix with this amendment. We want to make sure we are focusing comprehensively in the community.

As part of this, I also wish to talk about another tragedy facing our country; that is, the loss of so many of our heroes from Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a very important part of this story and part of what our amendment will address in a very positive way. Men and women who survive the horrors of war are ending up taking their own lives when they come home. Twenty-two veterans a day commit suicide, 22 a day today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

They and their families, all those in that situation, need to know there is help available for them. That is why we have very strong support from veterans, the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans organizations, which were very pleased to have stood with us last week when we did a press conference with veterans to focus on this important part of the puzzle.

We know that one in four veterans coming home needs some kind of mental health support, so we want to make sure that if they are in a rural community in northern Michigan and it is 3 or 4 hours to drive to the VA, they instead could receive some help in their own community—working with the VA but receiving help in their own community—and that is what this does. We want to make sure that our veterans are fully receiving the services promised them and that comprehensive health care will be available to them when they come home.

I would like to share just one story from our press conference.

Jennifer Crane joined us. She is a veteran of the war in Afghanistan. This October will mark 10 years since she returned home, but she says, "The experiences live inside of me like it was yesterday." She suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. She couldn't sleep. She self-medicated and ended up homeless and in trouble with law enforcement. But when she got the help she needed at a community mental health center, it transformed her life. She met the man who would become her husband. She is now going to have a baby and now works with Give an Hour, which is a wonderful organization that helps veterans get the mental health services they need, and they are strongly supporting what we are doing as well.

Jennifer could have ended up a statistic, but she got the help she needed. We need to give every one of our heroes coming home from war the same opportunity. That is why the Excellence in Mental Health Act is so important as a part of all of this effort.

We have come a long way, in a bipartisan way, to recognize the need for mental health treatment. As I mentioned before, the wonderful partnership of Senators Domenici, Wellstone, and Kennedy paved the way for us to more fully understand that when we talk about comprehensive health services, we shouldn't stop at the neck—from the neck down, one set of rules; from the neck up, another set of rules—that, in fact, we are talking about comprehensive care. We need to make sure we lose that stigma and focus instead on what we can do to help people receive the services they need. This amendment takes those efforts across the finish line by expanding access to community mental health services.

I knew there would be a lot of controversial debate, but I hope in the end we will be able to come together, as we have on this amendment. I am very appreciative of the bipartisan support. I

want to thank Senator ROY BLUNT again on our Excellence in Mental Health Act, as well as Senator MARCO RUBIO, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI, and others who have expressed their support as well. This is an opportunity for us to come together, as we have in the past, and do the right thing for millions of families dealing with mental illnesses that are treatable. The good news is there is hope now. There are actually answers now to so many mental illnesses. By passing our bipartisan Excellence in Mental Health Act we can prevent tragedies from happening in families all over our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, first, I commend and thank my colleague from Michigan, Senator STABENOW, for her leadership on an issue that is among the paramount questions for our time: whether we will meet our obligation to regard mental illness on a par with physical illness, a cause that has occupied me for a long time. So I want to thank the Senator from Michigan for spearheading this initiative, which is a vital part of the effort to stop gun violence in our country and, in fact, make our country healthy in so many ways. I am proud to join her as a cosponsor and a supporter of these efforts.

I come to the floor today to continue the debate on the gun violence initiatives which are central to making America safer and making our country stronger. This bill is a comprehensive set of provisions that will hopefully be further strengthened by an amendment to be offered this week. We are on the cusp of voting on that amendment, the work done by Senators TOOMEY and MANCHIN, our colleagues, to reach a reasonable compromise. It is indeed a sensible, commonsense compromise that I am proud to support that will guarantee a criminal background check system to keep firearms and weapons of war out of the hands of people who are dangerous, people who should not have guns, criminals, mentally ill, seriously mentally problem-stricken, and of course others, such as domestic abusers.

For too long, criminal individuals and organizations have prospered from illegally distributing weapons and firearms. So the bill in its second title takes a great step toward barring illegal trafficking and to also ban straw purchases.

Too often given short shrift or little attention is the third title which speaks to school safety, and that is the measure that brings me here today.

School safety is not an afterthought. It is central to stopping gun violence. The tragic lessons we have learned from Sandy Hook include not only the courage of the educators, those brave teachers and administrators and school psychologists, who literally threw themselves at bullets and cradled the

loved ones of families who lost their lives, cradled children in their care as they were met by a hail of gunfire—that teaching moment should not only inspire us but obligate us to do more about school safety.

That is why I have gone to the schools of Connecticut, most recently on a tour that I conducted to ten schools around the State, to learn from our educators what they think those lessons are from Sandy Hook and where they think the priorities should be in terms of school safety. That experience provided me with some pillars of a program that I believe is important and is embodied in the act that is before us: the School and Campus Safety Enhancement Act. I want to thank Senator BOXER for her leadership on it which reauthorizes in effect the Secure Our Schools Program, which has been very productive and unfortunately was not reauthorized when it expired.

These measures and the pillars of this program can be summarized very simply:

First, decisions should be made locally about what best fits the community. Those decisions ought to be made by school districts and their boards, parents, teachers, administrators—all who are involved and have the knowledge and expertise and commitment locally, and Washington should not impose its judgment on those communities with a one-size-fits-all set of policies.

Second, school safety ideally should involve a partnership between educators and law enforcement. In many of the schools I visited, I saw the value of school resource officers. More importantly, educators pointed out to me the value of their partnership with local law enforcement through school resource officers who acted not only as security personnel but also as mentors, counselors, and role models, preventing crime, not just stopping it in progress or apprehending criminals afterwards.

Third, schools must be open, supportive, nurturing environments. They cannot be prisons. They cannot be transformed into permanent lockdown. We must commit ourselves to the freedoms and liberties that are embodied in our schools and the educative atmosphere that is so priceless and essential to real education. We cannot solve this problem by simply having more guns in schools, or arming teachers or administrators. Trained school resource officers or others provided with law enforcement support have to be part of a nurturing and open environment.

The act that is before us today embodied in title III is important to move forward school safety, and to embolden, encourage, enable, and empower local decisionmaking.

Today, I want to provide a very short report to my colleagues on what I have learned in my tour; and I encourage my colleagues to do the same around their States because it is genuinely a learning experience. The teaching moment

of this tour changed my perspective on school safety, and certainly reinvigorated my appreciation for what happens in the classrooms and schools of our country with the leadership of our teachers and administrators. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

The issue of safe and secure schools certainly raised its head last week in the town of Greenwich, CT, when reports of a gunman put Greenwich High School in a lockdown. Thankfully, the suspect was apprehended, unarmed, with no casualties. The fact that a lockdown was even necessary underscores that we have made great strides; but our young people will not be safe in schools unless we know all of the best practices and implement them. This threat proved empty, but it offered a learning experience in terms of the training, the locking and unlocking procedures for school doors, the types of issues that can be addressed through better and more regular coordination with local police and others who can provide that kind of guidance.

Over the past 3 weeks, the schools I visited were large and small, in widely varying parts of our State: Manchester High School, Kelly Middle School in Norwich, Middletown's Snow Elementary School, New Britain High School, West Bristol K-8 School, the Gilbert School in Winsted's High School, Northwestern Region 7 High School, Waterbury's West Side Middle School, Ross Woodward Magnet School, and Shelton Intermediate School. In every one of them, I saw different ways of dealing with school safety, and also aspiration for even better procedures and equipment—locks, lighting, alarms, cameras—but also training for teachers, and more school resource officers. I believe one of the most important pillars of this program has to be Federal resources that meet those local needs without imposing a one-size-fits-all policy. These schools are in widely different areas in terms of geography and demographics, the size of the communities they serve, the size of the schools, the qualifications of their staff and their training. That is why this program has to be individualized in terms of how it meets these needs and, again, empower and enable local decisionmaking.

The Secure Our Schools grant program has impacted Connecticut very positively. The program has a direct and tangible impact on schools in Stamford, for example, where the problem of gang violence was addressed, and in other schools around the State such as Hartford, where the grant was used for the purchase of an outdoor intercom station, as well as locks and card readers to control access to school.

The Secure Our Schools Program was a success story, and this act now will not only reauthorize but strengthen the Secure Our Schools Program.

To give some examples: In Manchester, the swipe card entry program not only provides for better security

but better attendance tracking. The Iling Middle School in Manchester is considering that system, but the installation costs run about \$50,000—a small price to pay for greater security that the card system provides. In general, I found security was not only cost effective, it was minimal in its cost compared to many other programs we are potentially taking to improve school safety.

When I went to see Kelly Middle School in Norwich, I had to buzz in on an intercom and announce myself. That was true of many other schools as well. A Senate pin may allow us access to the floor of the Senate without passing through security, but it doesn't get you into Kelly Middle School, nor should it. They have a simple, practical system. If you are visiting during school hours, you buzz in and announce yourself, and then they decide whether that individual can enter through another set of locked doors. The double locks are a system that some schools are considering implementing. It is a sensible policy that is enabled by an intercom system and a camera—again, minimal in cost compared to many other infrastructure programs we may be considering this year.

In Middletown, I visited Snow Elementary School. Principal James Gaudreau demonstrated how their doors are locked. When a person is buzzed in, video cameras record and archive who is entering. Some schools have archiving systems, others do not. Law enforcement knows that archiving is important. As Chief William McKenna and Mayor Dan Drew told me, these systems are planning that was undertaken even before Sandy Hook. School systems, boards, administrators, and teachers were aware of security before Sandy Hook, but their awareness has been enhanced and they are planning to devote additional resources to this issue. Both Mayor Drew and Chief McKenna extolled the virtues of the three school resource officers, and they are looking for additional resources to create afterschool programs and other measures to enhance that partnership and cooperation between police and students, and teachers, educators, and law enforcement can collaborate.

Visiting New Britain was very important on this tour.

When I went to New Britain High School with Mayor Tim O'Brien and school superintendent Kelt Cooper, I saw there the requirement that any visitor is automatically run through a database check—the sex offender database check. Using the driver's license they were able to run that kind of check virtually instantaneously. They also have, in that single high school, 150 cameras to know what is going on in that school minute to minute and with direct links to the police headquarters so that any kind of emergency is immediately apparent to law enforcement. The school is going to install discrete panic buttons, allowing for rapid alerts to be sent to law en-

forcement, a belt-and-suspenders approach that many schools are implementing.

At Sandy Hook we know that Adam Lanza ended his massacre and took his own life when law enforcement arrived. So the presence of law enforcement can often have a powerful deterrent effect. The knowledge that apprehension will be swift, that killing will be stopped, is a huge deterrent.

At West Bristol K-8 School, Tim Callahan, who is the school project manager there, pointed out to me how a parent dropoff was configured with visual straight lines. Again, design and architecture is important to security so that out in the parking areas there are virtually no blind spots. They have integrated security features into this building while it was constructed. West Bristol also requires visitors to buzz in through the main office when they go through the main building. With grant funds made available under this legislation, this school could install locks on a second set of doors, slowing down potential intruders. We know in these dangerous emergency situations that time is critical. Slowing down a killer, stopping an invader at a second locked door, can gain time for law enforcement to respond and save lives.

Adam Lanza killed 26 people, 20 beautiful children and 6 great educators, in 5 minutes with 154 bullets. If he had been stopped earlier, if a second set of doors had alerted police, if a buzzer had been available of the most immediate kind available elsewhere, the consequences might have been different. There were alerts to the police. They responded virtually immediately. Their response was heroic and profoundly significant to saving even more lives. But we know that time is of the essence in these situations and that is why double locks, buzzer systems, identification, additional checks—all can be important.

The chief operating officer in New Haven Public Schools, Will Clark, told me about that kind of buzzer system there and in Winsted. School officials, including the regional school district school superintendent, Judith Palmer, and the high school principal, Candy Perez, are working hard to improve its security system. But infrastructure there, as they told me, is a continuing challenge. Winsted Board of Education member, Mimi Valyo, told me, "We do not even have wifi."

In 2013 we are in a wireless age, and the next generation of security systems may rely on Wi-Fi or smartphones. We need to make sure schools like Winsted have the resources they need to address the security needs of the 21st century with the technology of the 21st century. School security is too important to be allowed to lag.

I thank all of the educators who educated me, who shared with me their stories of progress, their goals for the future, their hopes that we can improve our schools and make them safer. If we make our schools safe, we make

our children safer, and we make America safer. I am hopeful—more optimistic than ever in light of the vote we took last week—that we are making progress and that we will have positive votes in the days ahead, votes that fully fulfill our obligation to stop the plague of gun violence.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their courageous votes last week and urge them to move forward this week in the same way.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. 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. MANCHIN. Mr. President, last week Senator TOOMEY, my dear friend from Pennsylvania, and I introduced this important piece of bipartisan legislation with our colleagues Senator KIRK and Senator SCHUMER. It is called the Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act because that is what it does.

This bill protects the safety of the public and our constitutional right to bear arms. Since we introduced the bill, there has been a lot of misinformation about this legislation. I wish to set the record straight with hard facts about our proposal and what it will do and what it will not do.

I think people need to understand how guns first get into their life, which is through a commercial sale of some sort. We are not talking about creating any new laws; we are making the laws we have uniform.

First of all, today we have on the books FFL—Federal firearms licensed—dealers, and there are approximately 55,000 throughout the United States of America. We all have one close to us in our neighborhood. These are friends of mine and people I know. If a person goes to a licensed dealer today and purchases a gun, they are required to do a criminal background check. The background check is basically to see if that person is able to have a gun. That licensed dealer puts that record of the background check they did, and only he or she, as a licensed dealer, can keep it.

It is against the law to form some type of registry. The paranoia of those who say someone will know where my guns are and people can take them away cannot happen. In our bill, we double down to make sure it doesn't happen by making it a felony with a 15-year imprisonment, so that myth is gone.

The second way to buy a gun is at a gun show. If a person goes to a gun show and that same FFL dealer—if that person went to their store, he or she would go through a background

check. If a person goes to a gun show and buys from a dealer there, he or she would still have to go through a background check under current law. If that person goes to the next table, he or she can buy whatever they want and nobody is checking, and that is what we are going to stop.

Let's say I want to buy a gun through the Internet from Senator TOOMEY in Pennsylvania and I am in West Virginia. I see he has a gun for sale, and I want to buy that gun. As the law is stated today, as far as buying interstate—from West Virginia to Pennsylvania—Mr. TOOMEY would have to send that firearm to a licensed dealer in West Virginia, and I would have to have a background check done before I can take possession of that gun.

We are not creating new law. All we are saying is if a person goes to a gun show, there will be a background check for all guns that are sold at the gun show. If a person buys through the Internet, there will be a background check whether it is instate or out of State. This is not a universal background check. This is basically a criminal and mental background check and that criminal and mental background check has to show that person has been found guilty by a court that he or she is a criminal or criminally insane and not allowed to buy a gun and that is all.

So what everybody is hearing with all this talk is just falsehood. If a person is a law-abiding, proud gun owner, such as myself, and likes shooting and going out in the woods with friends and family, we do not infringe in any way, shape or form on individual transfer.

For those transactions which are not commercial transactions—for example, in West Virginia usually your grandfather or uncle or somebody gets you your first gun. There are some people who never bought a gun but have a collection of guns that was handed down to them by their family. Those people will still be able to have that type of transaction. That is not interfered with. A person can sell a gun to their neighbor without any interference. A person can put a note on the bulletin board in their church and say: I have a gun I would like to sell and sell it to a church member.

So if anyone says we are infringing on somebody's right, we are not. As we worked on the bill, we basically looked at the gun culture in America, who we are, how we become who we are, and that is what we took into consideration.

I, for one, as a gun owner and a person who enjoys hunting and shooting and all the things and camaraderie which that brings, I feel sometimes I am looked upon in an objectionable way because I enjoy that. I am a law-abiding citizen and my second amendment right gives me that right. I want to make sure that right is protected. I also have a responsibility to do the right thing, and that is why we are here.

If we are looking for ways to keep our citizens safe from mass violence, then shouldn't we look at the culture of mass violence? I have gone around to the schools in West Virginia and talked to some of the students.

We can talk to our young pages, the brightest and best of what we have. They have probably become desensitized compared to what the Presiding Officer and I would have seen in our generation. If we saw what they do in a movie—and we didn't have the Internet back then, so we didn't have anything to compare to it.

If we are going to talk about banning somebody's weapon, such as a hand-me-down gun, if you will, don't you think we ought to have people with expertise who can tell what the gun does to make sure it isn't just something that might look fancy but doesn't perform any better than a deer rifle? The Commission on Mass Violence is part of this bill. Basically, we are going to have people who have gun expertise, people who have mental illness expertise.

I have gone to the schools and talked to teachers in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. They are saying: Wait a minute. We have no help. We have identified kids who are challenged mentally or come from a home that is unstable and not getting proper support, and we have nothing to do to help them. As a society, I believe we have a responsibility, so we are going to have that Commission with guns and mental illness expertise.

How about school safety expertise? We had the horrific situation in Newtown. That gentleman got in that school, not because he had a key or because the door was unlocked, he got in that school because he was able to shoot the glass out of the front door and stick his arm in, hit the safety bar and let himself in.

I have been a Governor for 6 years in the State of West Virginia. We built a lot of schools, and we remodeled a lot of schools. Not once did an architect come to me and say: Governor, if we are going to build these schools, we need all these safety devices so a person cannot get into the school.

They told me about the lockdown for each room so a person would need to have a safety code to get into a room. Not one time was I told we should have bulletproof glass on every first floor window. Not one time was that ever brought up to me. We need people who have school safety expertise.

There is video violence. Talk to the children and youth of today. If you have not gotten on the Internet lately and flipped to video violence, you should do it. It will amaze you. What you see will absolutely scare you. They are exposed to horrific things, which I can never imagine from my childhood. Don't you think we should have the people who are the first defenders of the first amendment come and talk to us about how we can change the culture of violence in our society? That is what we are talking about.

I have heard a lot of my colleagues on different talk shows saying they didn't like this or we should be doing that. My good friend Senator PAT TOOMEY and I are going to go through this bill and explain what it does and what it doesn't do and how we can move the ball forward by keeping society safe, treating law-abiding gun owners with the respect they should have and make sure criminals or the mentally insane who have been found to be so by court cannot buy a gun.

So if someone is a law-abiding gun owner, they are going to like this bill. If someone is a believer in the second amendment right of Americans to bear arms, they are going to like this bill. If someone is a defender of the rights of our military veterans, they are definitely going to like this bill. If someone is looking for ways to keep our citizens safe from mass violence, especially our precious children, they are going to like this bill. For those criminals or persons who have been declared mentally insane by the courts, they are not going to like this bill, and that is exactly what we have tried to do.

I want to go through much of this, but I want to give my friend Senator PAT TOOMEY an opportunity. I appreciate his input so much. We are sister States, West Virginia and Pennsylvania—especially western Pennsylvania. My family and I grew up in Farmington and Fairmont and northern West Virginia, which is an hour and a half below Pennsylvania. We have the same slangs and sayings. We say “you’ns” instead of you all or you. Pat and I understand each other.

I would like Senator TOOMEY to explain the part that is so near and dear to him as well as to me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### TRAGEDY AT THE BOSTON MARATHON

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I wish to begin by actually taking a moment to inform the Members of this body and people who may be listening, if you were not aware, it appears that a tragedy has struck at the Boston Marathon and bombs have gone off and there are injuries that we know of, casualties, the severity of which we do not yet know. We hope and pray there are no fatalities. Apparently, according to the news reports I have seen, it is too soon to know that with certainty.

I know my good friend from West Virginia joins me in having our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families of the very disturbing news we have just learned this afternoon.

#### GUN SAFETY

Mr. TOOMEY. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the Senator from West Virginia. The work we have done together has been challenging and constructive. I think we have come to a