

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

(The remarks of Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. HATCH, and Mr. PORTMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1900 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I yield back my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

REMEMBERING JAVIER MARTINEZ

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, many of us have come back from a couple of wonderful weeks in our home States, traveling and visiting with families, and had the privilege of spending time with loved ones and sharing our hopes and plans for the new year. Not everyone was so fortunate.

I rise today to honor the memory of yet another tragic victim of gun violence in Connecticut and our country.

On December 28, in New Haven, shortly before the beginning of this new year, one family's time together with their son was cut short when Javier Martinez was shot and killed.

I have his picture here in the Chamber. His memory is with us today, as I ask this body to honor him, along with other victims of gun violence who have died since Newtown, and those who have died before Newtown, and now I ask them to be remembered not only in words but also in action by this body, so that Javier shall not have died in vain.

He was only 18 years old. He was a senior at Common Ground High School in New Haven, one of the really extraordinary educational institutions in our State.

His teachers and classmates describe him as a kind, intelligent young man who was becoming a leader in the school and in his community.

He had a bright future. In fact, he had the whole world, his whole life ahead of him.

At Common Ground, a charter school that focuses on sustainability and connecting students with natural resources in their own communities, he was absolutely thriving.

I have heard that some of his classmates and teachers at Common Ground are perhaps watching right now or will watch at some point, and I want to thank them for joining in honoring his memory and continuing his work to make our planet, our world, our Nation, and the community of New Haven better, and keeping faith with his memory.

Javier cared about his community and the environment and the issues of

sustainability and clean air and clean water, and he took action to improve the world around him.

Last summer he participated in a highly competitive internship at the Nature Conservancy, where he worked to protect endangered species. A director of this program regarded Javier as one of the most outstanding participants that the program ever had.

He spent last spring planting trees—planting trees—with the New Haven Urban Resources Initiative. He planted trees that he will never sit under, but the world will be better for all that he did—one small act, one small part of what Javier did to make New Haven and the world better.

This past fall he joined a crew of West River Stewards, identifying and documenting sources of pollution along the West River in the New Haven area.

Not only did he have a bright future ahead of him, but he knew what he wanted. He was pursuing the American dream. He was seeking and working to make America a better place for him and for his fellow students at Common Ground.

By all accounts he was not only dedicated and hard working, but he had a good heart. He had a great sense of himself. He stayed out of trouble. He had no criminal record whatsoever, it goes without saying. He worked hard at his studies.

He was loved in New Haven by his classmates, by his teachers, and by all who knew him. He had a growing dedication to protecting that world. Unfortunately, our society failed to protect him, failed to protect him during the simple act of walking home, failed to protect him from gun violence, failed to protect him in a neighborhood where he thought he would be safe as he walked.

On that early morning of December 28, shortly before 1 a.m., he was found shot to death on the streets of New Haven. In fact, he was walking from his house to a friend's house. He did not have a car, so his only choice was to walk. He sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was pronounced dead at the scene.

The police are continuing to investigate. Have no doubt that they are working hard. The New Haven Police have been extraordinarily responsive and responsible in combating gun violence, so I know they are going to get answers. Whether they will ever get enough answers to prosecute someone remains to be seen. But I know they are dedicated to finding out what happened on that night.

The death of Javier Martinez is a tragedy, heartbreaking. It is heartbreaking, as are many of the random deaths in America resulting from gun violence. This young man is a testament to our continuing responsibility, our obligation, and our opportunity to combat and prevent gun violence on the streets and in the neighborhoods across our country.

Just a few weeks ago I spoke on this floor, in this very place, about another

promising young person from Connecticut who was killed by a person with a gun whose name was Erika Robinson. The victim of that crime, Erika Robinson, just like Javier, was killed because she was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

We ought to remember some of the other victims. We should keep in mind all of the now tens of thousands, just since Newtown, who maybe survived but who are changed and challenged in ways they never could have envisioned. Their lives have been changed forever.

Amber Smith, who worked as a manager in a New Haven Burger King restaurant, was shot on September 15, 2013, when two robbers entered that Burger King.

The robbers demanded that she open a safe in the business, and one of them shot her in the upper hip and through her leg. She was just 19 years old at the time on September 15, 2013.

She remembers thinking that she was going to die and wondering who would take care of her two small children. She almost bled to death but was saved, fortunately, by receiving surgery in the emergency room. So she survived the shooting, but she lives with the psychological and the physical trauma of that shooting every day.

These random acts of violence may not always make the national news, they may not always take a life, but they change lives, and they take lives one or two at a time.

Those shooting deaths of Javier Martinez and Erika Robinson have become all too often the mundane evil of our time. The banality of evil is found in gun violence, and we seem to accept it all too often with indifference as another news item. Yet it should be as repugnant and abhorrent and unacceptable as the deaths of 20 innocent children in Newtown and 6 great educators because every act of gun violence diminishes us as a nation and as a community.

Our country has come to the point that gun violence can happen anywhere. If your life has not been touched by it, there is a near certainty that it will be at some point—tragically, unfortunately—because far too often communities suffer in silence. We need to end that silence. We need to end the inaction and the acceptance of this mundane and banal evil that lives among us.

While we have failed to act in this Chamber, even though we had a majority of 55 Senators ready to approve very simple, commonsense measures to stop gun violence, the President has done what he can through executive action, most recently on mental health. I commend him for those actions. He has done what he can to strengthen Federal background checks for firearms purchases. I thank him for that action.

These changes are incremental, but they are steps in the right direction.

States have taken the leadership on this issue as well, maybe even more so than the Federal Government. My own

State of Connecticut, laudably, has passed laws to effectively ban, for example, the sale of assault weapons.

But this body and this government need to act. The Federal Government has a responsibility that only it can address, because we know that guns are trafficked across State lines. Stolen and illegally bought guns are trafficked across State lines. No single State can put a stop to it.

We know that without action in this body, mental health will remain an unmet need in this country. We know that without action in this country, background checks for people who buy firearms will be incomplete and inadequate.

So Javier's death should be a reminder and a call to action. As the people of his family and New Haven mourn his death, we should celebrate his contributions in making our planet better, in protecting the precious resources that, unfortunately, he was unable to enjoy, and resolve to protect better the innocent people, particularly our children, who at any moment, at any place, may become victims of gun violence.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in morning business for debate only until 3:15; that the majority leader be recognized at 3:15, with all other provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COATS. Madam President, we have been discussing, the last couple of days, the unemployment insurance issue. A number of us have had concerns relative to the effectiveness of the program relative to the cost that would undertake and how it would be paid for if it goes forward and is extended and the reforms we think would be needed to make this a much more effective program. We have not been offered the opportunity to do more than just discuss it on the floor. We have not been offered the opportunity to offer amendments, offer our ideas, have them debated and voted on. It is my understanding that the majority leader will be coming to the floor shortly to potentially—well, to tell us what the decision is relative to whether we will have that opportunity.

Let me very quickly say I have been working with my colleagues Senator

AYOTTE from New Hampshire and Senator PORTMAN from Ohio. All three of us voted for the motion to proceed because we felt this is an issue that ought to be discussed and debated, and not simply dismissed, and because we would like to make corrections to the program that make it more viable.

We would like to raise the issue of, is there a better way to deal with unemployment in this country? We have some amendments that would allow us to move and improve and move to what we think is a better way, as well as pay for a bill that, without being paid for, exceeds the budget agreement we just entered into.

I offered four amendments. I was not insisting on offering all four. They were similar to what my colleagues had offered. The three of us want to very briefly speak to these and indicate to our colleagues what it is we would be doing. I offered the original bill way last fall, which would delay the individual mandate under the Affordable Care Act.

As we all know, the President has delayed for 1 year the mandates on employers who provide health insurance for their employees, but did not so do so for individuals, for those who do not have coverage under their employer. We did not feel that was fair. Why one entity and not the other? It also violated the law that the President took the liberty to exercise.

We are saying: Well, let's at least be fair, that those who are not covered by the 1-year delay on the mandate of employers would be subject to having to comply and we have—I will not go through all of the details, but we have seen the disaster that has happened in terms of that rollout.

My amendment, No. 2611 to this bill, I am going to select out as the amendment I am going forward with. My colleagues also have excellent ideas. They will be offering those. Frankly, I agree with all of their amendments and what they are doing also, so I think we are pretty much on the same page.

This amendment would delay the individual employer mandate under ObamaCare for 1 year. The estimated cost savings on this is \$35 billion. I think that is a savings that obviously could be used for a number of offsets. I think at this particular point in time, I would yield the floor and let my colleague from New Hampshire explain her amendment and how the savings would be applied to some very necessary things.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Indiana. As he said, I, as did my colleague from Indiana and my colleague from Ohio, moved to allow this bill to go forward for debate. I thought it was important that we have a debate on obviously the situation of struggling workers in our country and on the issue of whether to extend unemployment benefits for them.

I have been clear that on the pending bill if there is a way we can responsibly pay for this temporary 3-month extension to do that, I would be willing to support that—except the current bill does not have a way to pay for it—because I do not believe we should be adding to our debt, \$17 trillion, and our yearly deficits in order to do this.

But let me say that I have a very commonsense amendment. It is amendment No. 2603. Let me say what it is about. My amendment fixes what is an abuse in our Tax Code. The Treasury inspector general found that individuals who are not authorized to work in this country are collecting billions of dollars in tax refunds by filing for an additional child tax credit. The disturbing part about this trend is that there has been a steady increase each year of billions of dollars collected by illegal workers seeking these refunds.

Investigations of these tax refunds have found some gross examples of fraud; examples of refunds for children, children who do not live in the United States of America; examples of fraud of many children who may not even exist. For example, in Indiana, they found four unauthorized workers claiming over 20 children who lived in a residence, fraudulently collecting tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars. They found examples of tax refund claims for children who live in Mexico, not the United States of America. In North Carolina, 1,000 tax returns were linked to 8 addresses—1,000 tax returns were linked to 8 addresses, refunding \$5 million in tax refunds. Another example in North Carolina: 398 returns associated with 2 apartments—398 returns, refunding \$1.9 million to workers who are not authorized to work in our country. There was no evidence that the children being claimed either lived in the United States of America or even existed, for that matter.

My amendment is very straightforward in terms of the fix. The filer of the tax return who is going to claim the additional child tax credit would have to list a Social Security number. This is the same requirement for those who claim the earned income tax credit for which you can receive a tax refund if you qualify. So it would be simply to add that same requirement.

What the Joint Committee on Taxation has estimated is that we could save \$20 billion over the next 10 years simply by treating this child tax credit just like the earned filers income tax credit, that filers would have to use a Social Security number as well.

What would this \$20 billion go for? With this \$20 billion, we can pay for the recent cuts in the budget that were unfair, where our men and women in uniform, military retirees, were singled out for cuts to their retirement, to their cost-of-living increases, including, by the way, our wounded warriors, those who have medically retired, who got a cut to their cost-of-living increase in this recent budget. This was the only group that was singled out in