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Senate

The Senate met at 4 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Ruler of all creation, each day seems to bring more bad news than good. We hear about floods, bombs, murders, disunity, pestilence, and anguish. In spite of bad news, we continue to look to You, our help in ages past and our hope for years to come.

Lord, today we pray for the many around our Nation and world who are suffering from the effects of poverty, experiencing incessant hunger. We pray also for those who don't have access to quality education and for the tens of thousands fleeing deplorable and dangerous conditions in their countries.

Sovereign God, intervene and help the hurting in our Nation and world by providing our lawmakers with the wisdom and courage to be instruments of Your glory.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we live in an incredibly dangerous

world. The number of threats facing our Nation is simply staggering. That is one reason both parties actually came together to pass the national defense authorization bill through both Chambers by very large bipartisan margins. In the Senate, it was 71 to 25; in the House, 269 to 151. A bipartisan committee then worked to merge both Chambers' bills into one.

Republicans on the committee supported that unified Defense bill. Democrats on the committee also supported that unified Defense bill. The House already passed the unified legislation, and we will vote on it here tomorrow.

Americans have every reason to expect that Democrats will vote again to support—not block—America's national defense authorization bill. And yet, at a time when the United States faces numerous conventional, cyber, and terror threats, the Obama administration is goading Democrats into opposing the very legislation that sets out defense policy and authorizes funds for our military.

Democrats just voted to pass America's national defense bill this summer. Now they might filibuster it? This is part of a pattern that should be worrying to all of us. Just consider what we have seen already. The Senate passed a bipartisan veterans funding bill out of the Committee on Appropriations. Democrats voted for and praised the bill at that time; then they filibustered it. The Senate passed a bipartisan defense funding bill out of the Committee on Appropriations. Democrats voted for and praised the bill at that time; then they filibustered it twice.

This really hasn't stopped, Madam President. These are serious times. It is time for Democrats to prove they can be serious as well.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING JANICE SHELTON

Mr. REID. Madam President, at about a quarter to eleven this morning, one of my friends passed away. Her name was Janice Shelton. She was a fixture in the Senate. She worked in the Senate for more than three decades, but the reason I feel so bad this afternoon is that Janice worked for me. Janice Shelton worked for me for 25 years. She was such a good person. She ran my office, and that is an understatement.

Janice was born in Virginia, in Warrenton. She graduated from Mt. Vernon High School in Alexandria and attended Northern Virginia Community College. She was married to Robert Shelton for 61 years. They have two daughters, Robin LeCroy and Laurie Nelson. They have eight grandchildren in total, two of whom I know well. Shelton Nelson worked for me. Well, I shouldn't say he worked for me. I got to know him very well. I read the papers every Sunday to find out how his football team had done. He was a huge offensive lineman. He weighed more than 300 pounds, all solid muscle. His brother Chris, who is 6 foot 4, was a stunningly good baseball pitcher, also at the college level. Rebecca and Holly worked in the Senate as Senate pages. And they have four great-grandchildren.

Janice started her career working with the Department of the Army. She worked in the Carter White House in the Office of Domestic Policy. She worked in the Reagan White House. She then moved to the Senate in 1981, working as an executive assistant. She worked for Paula Hawkins of Florida for 6 years and worked for Senator MIKULSKI for 1 year and then worked for me for 25 years. She left maybe less than 3 years ago and moved to North Carolina to be near her two daughters, one of whom now lives in Atlanta.

Janice spent her professional career creating order where chaos could easily have been. In my office everyone knew

- This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Janice Shelton. She ran that place so well and was so polite, yet so firm, in what she would allow to happen and not happen. There was no bad language. She had a little cup, and if people used bad language, they had to put money in it. She was so gracious and so kind, and she had unbelievable energy. It didn't matter what the job was, big or small, Janice could handle that job. She was a stenographer, but she was a person who could handle the most difficult administrative situation, and she was a woman of tremendous faith.

Janice had a love affair with her husband Bobby for a long time. I remember Bobby, with that southern accent of his. When Bobby was still in business around here, he would bother his morning breakfast crowd by wearing T-shirts of mine. He ran with a kind of conservative crowd, and my T-shirt didn't fit in very well all the time. But she and Bobby were so loyal to me.

Janice was good to my family. She knew every one of my children and knew my grandchildren. She suffered with the bad times that we had. I remember I was heavily involved in the final stages of the Obama health care bill when she walked into my office and said: I have to talk to you. She told me my wife had been in a very bad automobile accident. She, of course, was available anytime she was needed to help Landra or me with things—those personal things you can't have just anyone help you with; it had to be somebody like Janice.

Janice's desk was right outside my office door. She was a fixture there. She was there all the time that I was. Whatever my hours were in the Senate, those were her hours. And I mean that without anything other than the truth. If I was there until 10 o'clock, she was there until 10 o'clock. Often, after I would go home at night, I would call back and say: Janice, why are you still there? And she would say: Well, I still have a few things to do.

I have missed Janice now for almost 3 years. I talked to her as often as I could. I am going to truly miss her now. She will leave a tremendous void in my heart. I am going to call my kids later today—I haven't done it yet because I haven't had time for anything—and tell them about Janice's passing.

I wish words could convey to everyone within the sound of my voice what a wonderful human being Janice Shelton was. I will miss her. The impact she has made in my life and my wife's life will be there forever.

Two of my staff came into my office separately and broke down in tears about Janice no longer being with us. She created such loyalty, such admiration for her hard work and professionalism. I love Janice Shelton and always will.

MASS SHOOTING AT UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Mr. REID. Madam President, just a few days ago—last Thursday—our great

Nation witnessed another tragedy. While preparing these remarks, we were trying to come up with what we should say, and “tragedy” doesn't quite convey how horrible that mass killing was in Oregon.

Once again, a young man was able to obtain an arsenal of guns and end the lives of innocent people. Nine men and women woke up Thursday morning, all to attend a community college, but they were assaulted and killed in a demented, sadistic killing ritual. Lucero Alcaraz, age 19; Treven Taylor Anspach, age 20; Rebecka Ann Carnes, age 18; Quinn Glen Cooper, age 18; Kim Saltmarsh Dietz, 59 years old; Lucas Eibel, 18 years old; Jason Dale Johnson, 34; Lawrence Levine, 67; Sarena Dawn Moore, 44—all victims of a deranged gunman's murderous attack.

Madam President, our hearts are broken for the families and loved ones of the victims and for this whole community of Roseburg, but a broken heart isn't enough, is it. This senseless act of gun violence is not an isolated tragedy. Communities all around our Nation are shattered daily by these cruel and undeserved acts of gun violence.

The reality of gun violence in the United States is not only shocking; it is pathetic. Every day, gun violence claims the lives of 30 Americans. Tomorrow at this time, 4:15—24 hours from now—about 30 more Americans will be killed by guns. And 11,000 Americans are murdered with guns each year. This year alone, we have had 200 mass shootings—200. Anywhere else in the world these alarming facts would prompt action. Sadly, here in the United States we have become so desensitized to the lives taken every day by guns that our response is to do nothing—to do nothing.

Each time gun violence claims a life in America, the Nation follows the same routine. Here is what it is. The same thing happens. We have shock and sorrow. Then we start asking questions. Who did that? Who was the killer? We usually have to wait a few hours to find out who it was. Why did they do this? Why did they carry out this horrible act? Then we wonder aloud, when the time allows it: What could we as a nation have done to prevent this terrible thing from happening? But we don't do anything. We don't act.

It is within our power to reduce gun violence in this Nation and prevent mass shootings—not all of them but some of them, a few of them. We know these tragic events almost always occur in instances where somebody is unstable or they are terribly violent, and they are able to get a gun easily and use it to carry out these terrible attacks. We know this, yet we fail to pass improved Federal laws placing distance between mentally ill, violent people and guns. Instead of taking action, lawmakers all around this country pander to the extreme rightwing gun lobby and leave Americans vulnerable to these attacks. This year alone there have been more than 200 mass

shootings—this year. The United States is the global leader in mass shootings—this great Nation. Can't we raise standards in this country for gun purchases? The answer of course is yes. We can do it while not infringing on the rights to restrict access to firearms but to keep Americans safe. Let's not mince words about who would stop us from passing background checks: Republicans who wage a rightwing ideological crusade fashioned by the National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America. These two organizations are in a scramble of who can raise the most money. That is what it is all about. If one of them does something, the other will do better than that. Each request comes with “Can you send some money?” This rightwing ideological crusade, fashioned by the NRA and Gun Owners of America, is to prevent background checks to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists, criminals, and the mentally ill.

The National Rifle Association is a far cry from the sportsmen's organization it once was. The NRA once called mandatory background checks “reasonable.” That is what they said. Now it uses its energies and its members' dues to fight against even the most sensible reforms. In opposition to this deadly agenda, Democrats have long sought to strengthen background checks. But instead of joining Democrats in finding ways to protect American lives, Republicans have pledged their loyalty to what was once a moderate sportsmen's organization.

Times have changed. Now the NRA and its leadership are committed to a radical agenda that allows criminals and mentally ill Americans to access guns and commit these terrible acts. Is this what the American people elected us to do? I think not. Is this the protection they want or deserve? I think not. Americans are smarter than that. They deserve better than that.

The majority of people who belong to the NRA believe there should be background checks to stop people who are mentally unstable and are criminals from buying guns, and 90 percent of gun owners believe there should be background checks, including 86 percent of Republicans. But even in the face of overwhelming public support, Republicans still refuse to join Democrats in taking steps to implement background checks that could save the lives of countless Americans.

We have witnessed the consequence of inaction too often. Why do I say that? This is over a period of many, many years—now decades: Fort Hood, 13 Americans killed; Tucson, 6 Americans killed; Carson City, 4 Americans killed; Newtown, 27 Americans killed, including 22 babies, little tiny children; Aurora, 12 Americans killed; the Navy Yard, here in DC, 12 Americans killed; Charleston, 9 Americans killed while worshipping; Moneta, VA, 2 journalists shot to death on live television; and now there is the massacre at Umpqua Community College, 9 dead.