

legislation earlier this year with Senators STABENOW and BLUNT that promotes investment in vehicle-to-infrastructure technology by authorizing States to use existing surface and highway transportation funding to invest in V2I projects as they upgrade their highway infrastructure. It is called the Vehicle-to-Infrastructure Safety Technology Investment Flexibility Act of 2015, and today I am proud to say this legislation passed as part of the FAST Act.

My vehicle-to-infrastructure provision and the broader bill's other major investments in research and development represent the type of forward-thinking policymaking on which Congress should be focused. By committing now to help usher in the future of mobility and by providing the funding and time to execute these programs, we have the ability to transform our society for the better.

The FAST Act also contains several provisions to improve rail safety in the United States. I am pleased that legislation I authored, in the wake of the devastating Amtrak No. 188 crash earlier this year in Philadelphia that unfortunately took the lives of 8 people and injured over 200, was included in the FAST Act. My provision requires the Department of Transportation, Amtrak, and the National Transportation Safety Board to conduct a post-accident assessment of the Amtrak No. 188 crash to determine if Amtrak followed its emergency preparedness and family assistance response plans and to determine if and how these plans can be improved for the future.

Finally, the FAST Act reauthorizes the Export-Import Bank. Since the beginning of July, the jobs supported by the Ex-Im Bank have been unnecessarily jeopardized. The Ex-Im Bank helps level the playing field for American companies in a tough global market. Last year it supported more than \$27.4 billion in U.S. exports and 164,000 jobs. More than \$10 billion of that total—nearly 40 percent—represented exports by small businesses, and 90 percent of its overall transactions directly supported small businesses, including many that serve as suppliers for large companies.

In Michigan, for example, the Ex-Im Bank has supported 229 exporter businesses selling \$11 billion worth of goods to places such as Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Canada. This support is particularly important for our manufacturing industry, and the majority of Michigan exporters using Ex-Im Bank are manufacturers of motor vehicles and parts, machinery and chemicals—basically the backbone of Michigan's economy.

I am proud to see that with the FAST Act's passage, we can get back to the business of doing what makes sense for the economy and for jobs in America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, while my colleague from Michigan is here,

let me say that we appreciate so much his participation in the commerce committee, especially the expertise he brings to the table with regard to all things automotive since, in fact, his State is the automotive State. He is a valued member of our commerce committee. I thank the Senator from Michigan.

FIGHTING ISIS

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, Americans are understandably frightened by the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino. As we mourn the loss of the victims, our hearts go out to their friends and families.

We were shocked 14 years ago, on September 11, when foreign terrorists struck our homeland. For the first time, two big oceans did not protect us from foreign terrorists. Now we know we have to be prepared to meet the threat not only abroad but here at home.

First, that means we have to see the threat clearly. It doesn't just come from shadowy foreign terrorist groups such as ISIS or Al Qaeda; now we see that it comes from a lone wolf or wolves, individuals who get radicalized. We saw that in the case at Fort Hood. We have seen it in other cases. We saw it in the case that was averted in Times Square, from someone who had come all the way across the country. They are extremely hard to detect.

Of course, ISIS uses the Internet to spread its propaganda, its influence, and to try to inspire disaffected young people with its propaganda far beyond where ISIS is located over in the Middle East. That means we have to use all the tools at our disposal to collect actionable intelligence, harden our defenses, counter radicalization, counter propaganda, and stiffen our resolve.

We ought to ensure that terrorists can't exploit the Visa Waiver Program. There are 38 countries with which we share this visa waiver. We ought to ensure that our law enforcement and intelligence agencies have the access they need to the terrorists' electronic communications to disrupt the attacks—that is a big order—all the while protecting Americans' privacy and constitutional rights.

That is why this Senator thinks it was a mistake to change the previous law, as we did earlier this year, which allowed telecom business bulk records to be readily accessed to trace terrorist communications. We have done this. We do not have the ready access of those bulk business records. Again, I remind our listeners we are not talking about the contents of communications—telephone calls or content of the Internet messages. We are talking about the bulk records which are business records that such and such a number or such and such an IP address on such and such a date transmitted a message to another number or another IP address.

In the past, through a court order, those bulk records were held by the

NSA, granting ready access so that if we were trying to stop a terrorist by getting intel ahead of time, we could go back and see where those communications were and with whom and how many hops it had gone in order to try to break up the terrorist activity. The problem with the lone wolf is that if they are disguising their operations, they are not communicating with anybody. That is why it makes it so much more difficult to intercept the lone wolf who has been inspired by ISIS.

Recently we saw that ISIS has claimed the responsibility for the bombing of a Russian airliner over Egypt, and it reminds us that our planes and airports remain a target for terror attacks. That is why I am introducing, and will explain tomorrow, legislation to tighten internal security at airports across the country. We had some good examples of that a year ago in Atlanta. Unbelievably, for several months, guns were brought into the Atlanta airport by airport workers, were transferred to a passenger who had already gone through TSA security, and they were actually transported over a number of months from Atlanta to New York. It is the lack of security on the perimeter of allowing workers into the airport proper that needs to be tightened up at all of our 300 airports. Two have already done that over the last several years, and I am very proud of the Miami airport and the Orlando airport that they have done it and done it very successfully.

Because ISIS exploits war in Syria and the instability and sectarian conflict in Iraq, meeting the terrorist threat means the use of military force as well. With the help of our coalition partners, as we speak, our forces are striking ISIS from the air and training local forces to fight ISIS on the ground. We are intensifying airstrikes against ISIS leadership, against heavy weapons, against oil tankers and oil wells, and have recently deployed U.S. Special Operations forces to help local forces build the necessary battlefield momentum to take back territory.

Special Operations forces will be central to the fight in order to avoid the large-scale deployment of U.S. ground forces. These forces are trained to conduct surgical strikes against terrorist leaders. There are press reports that GEN Joseph Votel, the current commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, in the next year will become the next commander of Central Command, responsible for operations against ISIS. He already works side by side with General Austin—the commander of U.S. Central Command in Tampa at MacDill Air Force Base—and he will bring tremendous experience to the job.

The Congress is not doing our job. We should authorize the use of military force. It is our responsibility. I believe the President has the responsibility to fight ISIS in Iraq or Syria or wherever, but the unity of the Congress backing the President in law is constitutionally

required. We ought to debate these proposals and vote. The authorization would show the world that the United States is united in defeating ISIS.

The military fight is one piece of a broader effort to destroy ISIS and bring about a political transition in Syria to a government where finally Bashar al-Assad will have finally left. That is critical to ending the war, ending the resulting humanitarian crisis, and stemming the flow of the refugees. Our efforts will take time and commitment, but they are clearly necessary to protect our national security.

This is going to be a long, hard war. We can't do it overnight. There has been success in the war effort. We brought together 65 nations. Twelve thousand terrorist fighters have been killed. We have shrunk the territory ISIS occupies and has sanctuary.

I want to show the Senate this map. It has been shown before. It is not classified. All the area in green is what ISIS used to occupy, along with the area in orange—there along the Euphrates River. All of that area in green ISIS occupied but no longer does because of the coalition efforts. There has been success. Someone needs to talk about that success. Going forward, we are going to have to use more Special Operations troops. We are going to have to insist on our Arab neighbors picking up the fight and doing the fighting on the ground, and we do not need to make the mistake of tens of thousands of Americans on the ground because that plays right into ISIS's hands because it looks like—and ISIS would portray it as—it is the United States versus Muslims.

We should treat Muslims with respect here at home in America; treat them with the respect they deserve. Don't overreact. Otherwise that plays to ISIS's advantage of the image of Americans; in other words, it is us versus them. We are accelerating the fight. We have more and more intense coalition partners. We have extensive intel sharing. We have an outreach to Muslims about the truth of ISIS, and we insist our partners share their intel with us. That includes the visa waiver of those 38 nations.

Fear at this time—like San Bernardino—is a natural response. It happens at times such as this, but we cannot let fear get the best of us. We must overcome the fear and not let it compromise who we are as Americans by overreacting. We need to nail down a truth that our government has no greater obligation than to keep us safe.

I want to share with the Senate, where is the unity that we used to have? I know it is not in vogue to say “the good old days,” but I can tell you that when this Senator was a young Congressman and when it came to national security, partisanship stopped at the water's edge. Isn't it time to unify? Isn't it the time to disagree without being disagreeable? Isn't it time to think of ourselves as Americans instead of partisans? Isn't it time to re-

member that Latin phrase that is up there above the President's desk, “e pluribus unum”—out of many, one. It is time to come together. God bless America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask to be recognized in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise to speak about the devastating impact gun violence has on our families and our communities across America. Every day in America, we have a staggering amount of gun violence. On average, 297 people are shot in America each day, and 89 of them die. On a typical day, there are 31 murders and 55 suicides by gun, as well as several accidental shootings. And every day, on average, 151 Americans are shot and wounded in an assault and 45 are accidentally shot but survive. We have had over 350 mass shootings in America just this year, meaning incidents where at least four people are shot, and we have had over 50 incidents this year where guns have been fired at a school—50 at a school.

These statistics are sobering and a call to action. Most shootings in America have become so routine, they don't even make the news. Sadly, many Americans believe this staggering level of violence is just a normal day in America. But in recent weeks, horrific mass shootings at a Planned Parenthood office in Colorado Springs, CO, and a holiday party in San Bernardino have brought the issue of gun violence back into the forefront.

After high-profile mass shootings, we often hear the gun lobby and their political allies say: Any effort to pass a new gun law is just politicizing a tragedy. They say: We don't need any new gun laws; what we really should do is enforce the laws on the books. We saw this dynamic play out just last week. The day after the San Bernardino shooting, the vast majority of Senate Democrats voted for an amendment by Senator FEINSTEIN to close the loophole that lets suspected terrorists buy firearms in America. The vast majority of Senate Republicans voted no. Senate Democrats also voted overwhelmingly for a bipartisan amendment offered by Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY. This amendment would close the loopholes that allow guns to be sold without background checks either on the Internet or at gun shows. Again, the Senate

Republicans overwhelmingly voted against a background check to keep firearms out of the hands of convicted felons and mentally unstable people.

Make no mistake—the whole world saw what happened last week in San Bernardino, and the whole world now knows that people who want to commit acts of mass violence or terror in the United States sadly have easy access to an arsenal of guns. There are major loopholes in the laws on the books.

This is a serious vulnerability, and Americans know we need to address it. The risk of terrorist-inspired mass shootings like Paris has never been higher. What are most effective ways to guard against this vulnerability? Well, I thought those two amendments we considered last week were a good start. Won't we agree—even those who own guns, value them, use them for sport, hunting, or self-defense—won't we agree that keeping guns out of the hands of convicted felons and mentally unstable people is the starting point? I think we should.

The ATF did a review of the crime guns that were seized in the highest crime areas in the city of Chicago. They found out that 40 percent of the guns used in the commission of crime in some of the deadliest precincts of Chicago came from northwest Indiana gun shows. Why? Well, because you don't go through a background check if you buy from certain people at a gun show. So the thugs, the drug gangs, the drive-by shooters—all they have to do is take the Skyway over the border into Indiana, go to one of those gun shows, fill their trunks with guns, firearms, and ammunition, and drive back for a killing spree in Chicago. There are no background checks. Does that make sense?

When they say, “Well, you know, it is a shame they have so much gun violence in Chicago because you know they have some of the strictest laws on the books,” well, those strict laws don't apply when you cross the State line into Indiana. Sadly, those laws don't apply as they should across the United States.

So we called the amendment on the floor, a bipartisan amendment. PATRICK TOOMEY of Pennsylvania and JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia—neither one of them liberal by self-definition—have come forward and said—JOE MANCHIN said: I learned a long time ago that if you want to own a gun in West Virginia, in my family, you didn't sell it to a stranger, you didn't sell it to a criminal, and you certainly didn't sell it to someone who was mentally unstable. He said that is just common sense. Well, it is common sense that escaped the support and attention of the Senate Republicans. They voted against that provision overwhelmingly, against background checks to keep firearms out of the hands of convicted felons and those who are mentally unstable. How would you explain that? Well, it might be easier to explain that than to explain the other amendment they voted against.