

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.

Listen to this one. If our government, in their investigation, comes up with the name of a person they believe is involved in terrorism and they put them on a no-fly list so they can't get on an airplane, guess what—they can still go to a licensed gun dealer in America and buy a firearm.

These mad people in San Bernardino had AR-15s, semiautomatic and automatic weapons. They weren't on a terrorist watch list that I know of or a no-fly list, but if their names had been on a list, it wouldn't have slowed them down one bit in making a purchase.

So Senator FEINSTEIN of California offered this amendment, an amendment which had previously been offered by the late Senator Lautenberg of New Jersey repeatedly. Senator FEINSTEIN took up his cause and brought this amendment to the floor for a vote last week in Washington.

I went back and looked at the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to see what the objections were of the people who said they had to vote against the amendment which would say if you are on a terrorist fly list, you cannot purchase firearms or explosives in the United States. I read some of the statements that were made by the senior Senator from Texas. In his argument against this, he said:

If you believe the Federal Government should be able to deprive an American citizen of one of their core constitutional rights without notice and an opportunity to be heard, then you should vote for the Senator's amendment.

The Senator from Texas continued:

This is not the way we are supposed to do things in this country. If you think that the Federal Government never makes a mistake and that presumptively the decisions the Federal Government makes about putting you on a list because of some suspicions, then you should vote for this amendment.

So as far as he is concerned—and I suppose those who joined him in voting against this amendment—if your name is on a terrorist watch list in America as somebody we suspect is involved in terrorism, you start off by presuming the government must be wrong and the government has to prove it. You start off, in their position, by saying that the first thing we should do is let that presumed terrorist buy a gun and then let's have a due process hearing. What? What is he thinking? If you thought there was a dangerous person in your city or your community who might engage in terrorism, would you want them to buy an assault weapon? Would you want them to buy explosives? I wouldn't.

Let's err on the side of safety and security and say: No, if you are on that list, you cannot purchase a weapon or an explosive. If you protest being on the list and don't think you belong there, so be it. That is your right. You are entitled to a process to get your name off the list, and the Feinstein amendment provides such a process. And if you prove that our government is wrong, then proceed with buying the gun or the explosives.

But the presumption on the other side is that you are always entitled to buy a gun, you are always entitled to buy explosives, and if the government says otherwise, they have to prove it. It doesn't sound like a recipe for safety in America, but that is what happened on the floor of the Senate.

So we called this measure, and there were 45 who voted yes and 54 voted no—45 to 54 on whether someone on the terrorist watch list should be able to be prohibited from buying firearms and explosives.

There has been a lot of tough talk lately about terrorism, this dozen—13, 14; I forget the number—running for President on the Republican side. They are trying to out trump one another and get tougher with terrorists. Yet when the moment came on the floor of the Senate and the Republicans in the Senate—including three or four running for President—had a chance to vote to keep firearms and explosives out of the hands of suspected terrorists, they voted no. How does that make us any safer? Oh, they are tough as can be in their speeches, but when it comes down to their votes, they are nowhere to be found.

REFUGEES

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there is also a question about what we can do to keep our country safe in terms of people coming into our country.

Each year we admit about 70,000 refugees from all over the world. The No. 1 country providing refugees to the United States—Burma. Most people wouldn't have guessed that. About one-fourth of our refugees come from Burma.

How do they get into the United States as refugees? They are first identified by the United Nations Council on Refugees, and then they start a process, a background check and process. This goes on for 18 months to 24 months. It involves repetitive fingerprinting and checking, interviews, examinations, questions. Then, finally, after 24 months, they may be allowed to come to the United States as a refugee. About 70,000 a year come into our country. I have met a lot of them. They are from all over the world—Africa, Asia, all over the world. And now we have a focus on them, a laserlike focus on them.

Some are arguing that the way to keep America safe is to stop refugees from coming in from Syria. Well, we know Syria has been engaged in a civil war for more than 4 years. We know some 4 million people have been displaced. I was in Greece a few weeks back and saw numbers coming across the Aegean Sea from Turkey into Greece. These Syrian and some Iraqi refugees are desperate people. You literally see a family walking—mother, father, carrying babies, walking toddlers—with all that they own on their backs. That is it. We stopped to talk to

some of them, and they told the story of what it was like to live in Syria amidst a civil war, what it was like to have barrel bombs going off in your town—the damage that it did, the killing that it did. Many of them had lost members of their families. They were running away from that violence—not only from Assad, the head of Syria, but from ISIL as well.

Some of them decide to ask to become refugees in the United States. They know that if they ask, they are in for a long, long haul—18 to 24 months. Some have made it, fewer than 2,000, during the last 4 years. Some have made it. Not a single Syrian refugee coming into the United States since this war began has ever been charged with terrorism. It just hasn't happened.

What happens with other visitors to the United States? Well, we welcome visitors. Certainly we do. Many of us look forward to visiting their countries too. About 55 million foreign travelers come to the United States each year; about 20 million are from visa waiver countries—38 countries where we have a special relationship and say: You don't need a specific visa to come to our country because we have this agreement between us; you may freely travel to the United States on what we call a visa waiver. That is about 20 million of the 55 million.

We can do better when it comes to these visitors on both sides—Americans traveling overseas and foreigners coming into this country. We need to make sure that before a person gets on a plane, we check their fingerprints, for example. That is a pretty easy thing to do these days. Just put your hands down; it reads them and cross-checks against the data bank of suspected people, suspected criminals, and suspected terrorists. Obviously, the overwhelming majority of people will have no problem whatsoever, but it is a way, just like taking off your shoes, to make sure that we are safer. It is a little inconvenient but worth it.

What we have said on the Democratic side is that if you want to make America safe—and we all do—it is far better to focus on foreign travelers and visa waivers, and make sure we are doing the proper checks before the person gets on the airplane. I believe we should do that. When I travel to their countries, I am prepared to face the same fingerprint check. It is not too much to ask in the 21st century, with the terrorism and violence that we face.

All these things will make us safer, but focusing on 70,000 refugees, among which a few hundred are Syrian, instead of looking at the larger group of 55 million foreign travelers—did you know that most of the terrorists in Paris, France, were carrying European passports which would have allowed them to come to the United States without a visa? So if we want to make our country safer—and I do—let's do things that are practical and thoughtful.