

Incidentally, those who come to the United States on visa waivers from 38 countries around the world can currently legally buy firearms. What is that all about? Our law prevents foreign visitors who come in on a visa from buying firearms, but a loophole allows those who qualify under the Visa Waiver Program to come as visitors to buy a firearm. I think we can do better there as well.

Let's tighten up the Visa Waiver Program, and make sure we do the proper checks so dangerous people don't ever get on the plane to come to the United States. Let's make sure as well that if you have a visa waiver and you come to the United States as a visitor, you are not going to be purchasing firearms. Finally, if you are on a suspected terrorist no-fly list, you should be disqualified from buying a gun or an explosive, period. Those are three practical steps. I think we ought to move forward and do that on a bipartisan basis. It will be something to keep in mind and make America much safer.

In closing, some of the suggestions being made as these Republican Presidential candidates try to out-trump one another are very sad. They reflect the ignorance of history and a willingness to ignore the values of this country. When I hear some of the awful things being said about people of the Islamic faith—I think about a dinner I went to Saturday night. It was in Chicago; it was by the Children's Heart Research Foundation. They were saluting a number of doctors in the Chicago area who were extraordinary in saving the lives of children. One of them is a current surgeon. He started with Children's Memorial Hospital; he is now with the Advocate hospital system. He is considered to be the best in Chicago. If your baby—and 1 out of 100 are—is born with a congenital heart defect, this is the doctor you want to see the child; this is the surgeon you want to save your child's life. This doctor is a Muslim. He is an American. He is an important part of America. Those who are making negative statements about all people in the Islamic faith, calling for registration or exclusion or whatever it may be—their statements and views are not consistent with who we are as Americans. The President said as much last night, and I agree.

Madam President, I yield the floor. 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. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2359

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2359) to restore Second Amendment rights in the District of Columbia.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

PRESIDENTIAL STRATEGY TO DEFEAT ISIL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, last evening President Obama addressed the Nation concerning the threat ISIL poses to our people. Unfortunately, the American people did not hear of a strategy or a plan to defeat and destroy this terrorist army. Instead, they heard a restatement of a military campaign crafted to contain—ISIL within Iraq and Syria.

Following the attacks in Paris and California, and the downing of a Russian airliner, about 60 percent of the American people disapprove of the President's handling of terrorism. Nearly two-thirds disapprove of his handling of ISIL.

The American people understand intuitively that ISIL and the wider terrorist threat have not been contained but, rather, that they have evolved into something increasingly more serious and more challenging. Americans also know that the operational concept ordered by the President is insufficient to defeat ISIL. It is not just the American people saying this. It is not just Republicans saying it, either. President Obama's last Defense Secretary recently criticized his approach; so have several other former Obama administration officials.

Here is a sampling of what they have said over just the last week or two: One called on the Obama administration to "wake up" to the threat. Another said that the Obama administration "seems to be really flailing and tone deaf to this latest challenge." A third called on the President to "change your strategy" because "by any measure, our strategy in Iraq and Syria is not succeeding." And then there is President Obama's former Secretary of State, Secretary Clinton, who put it plainly: "We're not winning." Hillary Clinton said: "We're not winning."

The President had a real opportunity last night to show the American people that defeating ISIL is his priority. He had an opportunity to demonstrate his willingness to adapt to the threat. He had an opportunity to explain how he can better prepare our Nation for a fight that will inevitably be passed on

to his successor, but he didn't do that. He didn't do it last night.

The American people were looking for a serious strategy and a real vision last night, not a recap of an approach that clearly hasn't worked. Last night was only the President's third Oval Office address, and by any measure a missed opportunity.

Look, throughout his time as Commander in Chief, President Obama has shown an inflexible adherence to policies he advocated as a candidate for office in 2008, most specifically to end our Nation's War on Terror. In his first days in office he issued a series of Executive orders designed to weaken the ability of our warfighter and intelligence community to gather targeted information, to capture terrorists, interrogate, and detain them to advance our understanding of terrorist networks and plans, as well as to protect the American people. Although the President conceded that the complete withdrawal of our forces from Afghanistan would be harmful to our national security interests and slowed our withdrawal in the face of Al Qaeda and Taliban resistance, he inflexibly clung to a fixed date for our drawdown of forces in Iraq, which allowed for the growth of ISIL. As the President inflexibly pursued an end to the War on Terror, the terrorist threat evolved and adapted as Al Qaeda affiliates advanced in presence and capability and Al Qaeda in Iraq grew into the terrorist army we now know as ISIL. ISIL's use of social media and encrypted communications burgeoned at the very moment the President and his allies were working to take away critical electronic surveillance tools from our intelligence community.

Here is what we need from the President now. What we need from the President is for him to clearly outline what it is he aims to achieve, how he aims to achieve it, and what authorities he thinks he will need to make that happen. He needs to match strategic objectives to the means to reach the goals. The President needs to tell us what authorities he needs to defeat encrypted online communications. The President needs to tell us what is needed to establish our capture, interrogation, and surveillance capabilities. The President needs to tell us how the coalition or NATO will forge a ground force capable of not only trying to contain ISIL but actually driving it from Raqqa. The President needs to tell us the force structure and the funding our commanders will need to rebuild our conventional capabilities so we can continue and expand this fight while facing other global threats. The President should also explain why he will not use the secure facility at Guantanamo Bay to safely hold and interrogate newly captured terrorists in order to help prevent the next plot against Americans.

These are the kinds of things the American people are looking for, and by leading on them, President Obama

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

can demonstrate his commitment to protecting our Nation and leaving it better prepared for his successor.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEW CONGRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, last November the American people elected a new Congress to get Washington working again. Nearly every day seems to bring more signs that we are. Over the weekend, President Obama signed the FAST Act, a multiyear highway bill, into law. It represents a significant departure from years of short-term extensions and congressional inaction. In fact, the FAST Act is the longest term highway bill to pass Congress in almost two decades, providing 5 full years of highway funding.

Here is what Kentuckians for Better Transportation—a top transportation advocacy organization in my State—had to say about it:

After many, many years of short term continuing resolutions we finally have a long term authorization that will give our states the opportunity to plan for and implement major road projects. . . . We can [now] plan for the future.

That is because in a new and more open Senate, Senator INHOFE, a Republican, and Senator BOXER, a Democrat, were able to work together for its passage. Senator BOXER herself called it “a major accomplishment.”

Here is another major accomplishment: the Every Student Succeeds Act. It is a bipartisan, reformist replacement for No Child Left Behind. Pundits in Washington could never agree on how to replace No Child Left Behind. The issue went unresolved for many years, but in a new and more open Senate, Senator ALEXANDER, a Republican, and Senator MURRAY, a Democrat, worked hard and found success in the bill before us. The House already passed it, 359 to 64. The Senate previously passed a very similar version of the bill, 81 to 17.

Tomorrow we should work together to pass it for a second and final time and send it to the President for his signature. It will be the latest important achievement for the American people from a new Congress that is back to work and back on their side.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRESIDENTIAL STRATEGY TO DEFEAT ISIS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last night the President addressed the Nation. It was one of the few times during

his Presidency that he addressed the Nation from the Oval Office, signifying that this was going to be an important address by the Commander in Chief. Unfortunately, what the President communicated was that little, if any, change will be made in the current administration’s approach on terrorism following the attack on San Bernardino last week. The President’s approach to eradicating this terrorist threat has only resulted in a tactical stalemate that has kept the morale of ISIS high and their recruitment efforts robust, as we have seen.

In the wake of the shootings last week, an event the President himself called an act of terrorism, the American people deserve a credible and aggressive strategy to combat this terror threat that clearly poses a danger not just over there but over here. A good start would be for the President to listen to his own military leadership as well as members of the intelligence community. If the reports are true—and they certainly haven’t been denied—the President has turned a deaf ear to his own military leadership and leaders of the intelligence community on how to fight and defeat the ISIS threat. Despite the President’s rhetoric on his so-called strategy against ISIS, one thing is clear: It is not working. So our country clearly needs to change course, and that should start with a real plan and real candor from the Commander in Chief on how he intends to defend our interests abroad and at home to keep our people safe.

While I was eager to hear what the President might say about the bad results from his current strategy, unfortunately, we didn’t hear it last night. However, what we did hear was this recent theme from some of our colleagues across the aisle—as we voted on the repeal-ObamaCare set of votes last week—as well as from the President himself during his weekly address, the Democratic leader, and some other Members of the Senate, that what they are basically trying to do is to change the subject. You will recall that one way they tried to do that was by offering an amendment that said people on watch lists would be denied their core constitutional rights under the Bill of Rights, and in this case it happened to be the Second Amendment; that is, you are presumed to be guilty without the necessity of having to go to court and actually prove what you are claiming is true.

I was struck by the fact that the New York Times, back in 2014, noted in an editorial entitled “Terror Watch Lists Run Amok” that “A 2007 audit found that more than half of the 71,000 names on the no-fly list were wrongly included.” This is the New York Times making the case that basically I and others argued for, which is that there cannot be any presumption of guilt just because the government includes your name on a list, particularly when it comes to denying your core constitutional rights. If the Second Amend-

ment isn’t strong enough to withstand this so-called presumption, neither is the freedom to worship according to the dictates of your conscience, the First Amendment rights to free speech and freedom of association. You get my drift.

Rather than address the real problem, which flowed from another speech the President gave a few years ago out of the Oval Office where he announced the precipitous withdrawal of our troops in Iraq that created the vacuum that is now being filled by ISIS and Al Qaeda—rather than talk about the lessons learned and how a new and different strategy was going to be employed after consultation with our military leadership and members of the intelligence community, the President and his supporters decided to try to change the subject and produce a red herring that has nothing to do with the fight to degrade and defeat ISIS. Of course the threat is not only about people traveling from abroad to our country, it is about Americans here and other people on visas, perhaps from visa waiver countries, traveling from the Middle East to the United States. Perhaps the most dangerous of all is the radicalization of people already in the United States. If the preliminary indications prove to be true, that seems to be the thread that connects so many of these attacks, whether it is in San Bernardino or Garland, TX, a short time back, or MAJ Nidal Hasan at Fort Hood back in 2009.

What we need and what the American people deserve from their Commander in Chief is candor and the willingness to show a little humility and say: You know what. The way we have been handling things really isn’t working very well. Instead, the President tries to play partisan politics, and he tries to distract the American people by suggesting that our Constitution is too generous when it comes to the right to keep and bear arms.

For the sake of all Americans, I hope the President reconsiders his flawed strategy and produces a more effective one to eradicate ISIS soon because the safety of the American people is clearly at stake.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we are on the downward trajectory of this year’s Congress, the 114th Congress, and I thought it would be appropriate to take a few minutes to talk about what this Chamber has been able to accomplish since we convened in January. I know there is a lot of cynicism and indeed outright fear about the way the Federal Government has been operating, and unfortunately I think a lot of that is attributable to the fact that this President has shown a complete unwillingness to work with Congress in many areas; for example, such as immigration reform. So when people see the President acting unilaterally—thank goodness the courts have stopped it,