

searing mark on my heart and on my conscience, so it became for me the passion and priority it is today, and I will not rest as a Member of this body and as a human being until this Nation does better to make America safer and to prevent the kind of tragedy we saw on that day.

I will never forget being at that firehouse on that afternoon, but I will also never forget that evening at St. Rose of Lima Church when the community came together to light a candle rather than curse the darkness.

I had a conversation with one of the parents who lost a child. It was either that night or in the grief-filled days thereafter, when I said to her at some point: When you are ready, I would like to talk to you about what we can do about this. She said to me: I am ready now.

That is the courage we have seen in the last 3 years from those families. It is the courage we saw this morning at an event in the Capitol. It is the courage we have seen again and again from Newtown, from all over the country, loved ones and victims of all of the places—they become kind of landmarks that we recite. There are 30,000 deaths every year from places whose names we could never recite here because it would be too long and because they are the mundane places that all of us go.

As my colleague Senator MURPHY said this morning, all of us are just one second away from becoming victims. The fact is we are all touched by gun violence and we are all harmed and hurt by it.

I will never forget that evening. I will never forget also the day on the floor of this House when the Senate failed to approve a commonsense package of gun violence prevention measures, universal background checks, banning illegal trafficking, a ban on assault weapons, the mental health initiative, and from the Gallery someone shouted down: Shame. They may have said: Shame on you. There is no record of it because we record only what happens on the floor, but on that day the most profound and eloquent comment was those three words: “Shame on you.”

Shame on us in the U.S. Senate. We are complicit by our inaction. Congress is complicit by its silence. Moments of silence have their place, but silence by inaction here is complicity. It is not only the failure to act, it is also the obstruction that has been placed in the way of knowledge and research. The so-called rider—nobody outside the U.S. Capitol would talk about riders, an amendment that stops the government from doing research—literally research, fact gathering, investigation on gun violence. The cause of 30,000 deaths every year in this country cannot be researched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In fact, we face a public health crisis in this country. If it were Ebola or influenza or polio, facing these kinds of epidemics or feared epidemics in this

country, we would react with drastic and effective measures, including quarantine, that would mobilize this Nation. The response of the Congress to the epidemic of gun violence is to bar research by the CDC and other public health authorities. The very same public health community that could help us understand and take action is gagged and straitjacketed by the U.S. Congress. Even the initial author of that amendment restricting research, former Congressman Jay Dickey, a Republican from Arkansas, said he has regrets. “I wish we had started the proper research and kept it going all the time,” he said.

The Congress owes the American people more, but this promise I can make. We are not going away. We are not abandoning this effort. We will not be silenced. We will not be inactive. We are not giving up.

Twelve years it took to pass the Brady bill, after the President of the United States was almost assassinated just a few miles from here and his Press Secretary, Jim Brady, was paralyzed. It took 12 years to pass, with the support of President Reagan, and we need to be prepared for that kind of marathon.

President Reagan famously said: “Facts are stubborn things.” We cannot deny the facts that drive this debate because laws do work. We come here every day with the presumption that what we do makes a difference, that the laws we pass make a difference. Gun violence prevention laws do work.

When the shooter at Sandy Hook had to change magazines, children succeeded in escaping. If he had been barred from having the assault weapon, had it been banned, unable to bring it to the site of that horrific tragedy, it might have made a difference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for just 1 minute.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. If the shooter in Charleston had been barred, as he should have been because he was ineligible, rather than having the opportunity to purchase weapons as a result of the 72-hour rule loophole, it might have made a difference there. We can't say for certain.

We know there is no panacea, no magic solution, but the loved ones of the families of Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, Colorado Springs, Roseburg, Roanoke, Charleston, and Lafayette have to make a difference here. Honor them with action is what we should do; inaction is complicity. We owe the American people better. We need to keep faith with its values and keep faith with America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to honor Iowa Governor Terry Branstad on a very historic milestone. On December 14 of this year, Governor Branstad will become the longest serving Governor in the Nation's history. He breaks a record set by Governor Clinton of New York in the early days of our country, even before the Constitution of our country was established, between the Articles of Confederation into the early years of New York as a State in the United States of America. That is a very large feather in the cap of a farm kid from the town of Leland, population 289, in Winnebago County in northern Iowa.

In many ways, a smalltown farm background prepared Terry Branstad for his success as a State house member, Lieutenant Governor, and then Governor on two separate occasions. If he finishes this term—and he will—it will add up to 24 years as Governor.

The farm crisis of the 1980s hit every farm State hard, and Iowa, at the heart of the Nation's breadbasket, suffered deeply. All of us who lived in Iowa at that time saw friends and neighbors lose their family farms and struggle with what to do next for a living. The State needed men and women with vision and ambition to pull the economy out of the doldrums. It needed people who could see the potential for farmers to add value to their operations and for Iowa to diversify its economy, which it has now done.

Of all the people out there, Terry Branstad stood out as Governor. He was at the forefront of creating a new environment to do business. He welcomed and actively encouraged innovation that would capitalize on Iowa's bedrock work ethic and our strong schools. As a result, agriculture was and continues to be a mainstream of Iowa's economy. But agriculture more than ever is an engine for many other employment sectors: renewable energy, manufacturing, crop research, insurance and financial services, and, of course, as we Iowans know, much more.

As Governor from 1983 to 1999, Terry Branstad took the helm during some of the State's worst economic turmoil in decades and steered the ship toward impressive economic growth. The unemployment rate went from 8.5 percent to a record low of 2.5 percent. The Governor could have rested on those laurels and continued to work outside of State government after he retired after those first 16 years, but he again answered the call when the State needed him again in 2010. He put the State of Iowa's interests ahead of his own and went to work for Iowans this second time, bringing his valuable leadership to the Governor's office for another round. That, in a nutshell, tells you everything you need to know about Terry Branstad.

The State of Iowa comes first for him. Iowans are well acquainted with

Terry Branstad's accomplishments and work ethic. It is gratifying to see those attributes get attention on a national scale and in the history books. He has earned his place in history.

Of course, First Lady Christine Branstad ought to be complimented too. We thank her for her public service and, most importantly, for sharing her family with all Iowans.

We are lucky to have had Governor Terry Branstad for these years as chief executive in Iowa, and, of course, I am lucky to call him a friend.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Senator from Maryland.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that some of my colleagues want to talk about our visit to Paris, but I understand Senator HATCH will be on the floor at 2:45 p.m. and we are recessing at 3 o'clock.

Mr President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Members be recognized for up to 5 minutes between now and 2:45 p.m., but it may not be in this order: Senator CARDIN, Senator SCHATZ, Senator UDALL, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator MERKLEY, Senator MARKEY, and Senator COONS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I had the opportunity of heading a delegation this past weekend of 10 Senators who went to Paris for the COP21 talks, the climate change talks taking place in Paris. I was very proud of our delegation consisting of Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator FRANKEN, Senator MARKEY, Senator MERKLEY, Senator UDALL, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator COONS, Senator BOOKER, and Senator SCHATZ. All of us participated in the meetings that took place in Paris. We were impressed that 150 leaders of the world were in Paris at one time to show their support for a successful outcome on climate change and to express their urgency for dealing with this issue. I think it was a strong followup to the challenge Pope Francis gave all of us as to the moral challenge of our time to protect our planet for future generations.

At the meeting in Paris, we recognized that our global health is at stake. Whether we are talking about our individual States—and I could talk about the people on Smith Island, as their island is disappearing, or the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and my colleagues in the western part of this country could talk about the wildfires and what is happening there. In Asia, we see climate migrants as a result of climate change. In Greenland, we see the glaciers disappearing. Every nation is at risk as a result of global climate change, and that is why 150 leaders went to Paris.

The objective is clear. We had a chance to talk to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. He made it clear that our goal at a minimum should be to reduce the increase in warming by 2 degrees Celsius. That is doable. The scientists tell us we can do it. And if we do, we will have a healthier planet, we will create more jobs, and not only America but the world will be more secure.

It was clear that U.S. leadership was critically important to that moment in Paris. President Obama, in getting China and other countries to submit action plans, encouraged over 180 countries that are participating in the Paris talks to submit their own action plans to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. That represents over 97 percent of the world's emitters.

As I mentioned, we met with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. We all met with former Vice President Al Gore. I think we all were inspired by his lifelong dedication to this issue. We had a chance to meet with U.S. lead negotiator Todd Stern, who updated us on what was happening.

We were particularly impressed with Secretary Moniz, our Secretary of Energy. He had earlier announced, with other world energy leaders, an innovation initiative showing how we can use U.S. technology to make it easier for the world to meet their goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time create more jobs in America. It was an impressive display.

We had a chance to meet with local leaders. Mayor Bloomberg convened a summit of mayors. I was proud that my mayor from Baltimore City, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, was there.

My colleagues participated in bilateral meetings of other countries to encourage them to be aggressive in submitting their obligations and how we could follow up and make sure we achieve our goals.

It was clear that Paris is heading toward a successful agreement, and it will have U.S. support. We mentioned our commitment to carry not just our individual commitment but to be part of the global agreements in Paris.

We pointed out that in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was ratified by the U.S. Senate. This is the legal basis for moving forward. We also pointed out that our obligations to comply with our own commitments are controlled by the Clean Air Act, which is the law of our country. We pointed out the actions taken by the Obama administration. We also pointed out that 69 percent of Americans agree that we should have a multilateral commitment to reduce our carbon emissions.

It was clear to us that by working together, we can have a healthier planet for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to Senator UDALL, one of the great leaders on the environment and a very active member of our delegation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I wish to first say to Senator CARDIN, who led our delegation—Senator CARDIN is the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee. Foreign relations has a lot to do with this issue. He showed great leadership, and I believe he is passionate about this issue and finding solutions.

So we were somewhat disappointed, the 10 of us who went—all Democrats—that Republicans didn't join us. This is an issue that needs bipartisanship. We need to join—Republicans and Democrats—on an issue that threatens our national security, threatens our economy, and threatens our environment. It is an issue that is looming out there and needs attention. So we look forward to working with our friends on the other side of the aisle to move forward on this issue.

As I looked over there and saw what was happening, I remembered many of the briefings we have had. Everyone who has looked at this challenge of global warming and climate change says that we need to do two things. First, we need to drive capital to new energy sources, to clean energy sources. We need to innovate is what they are talking about. If you get the capital there and you get the private sector working, you can come up with the solutions. Secondly, we need to put a signal in the marketplace to invest in clean energy and renewable energy.

I was so proud of what happened over there in terms of the world joining together. More than 184 countries came together, and we are going to see the conclusion of their action this week. They have stepped forward and said: We are going to have targets, we are going to have goals, and we are going to be transparent. We are going to let people know we are moving in the direction of solutions and doing something about this immense problem.

So it was a major step forward to see those 184 countries step up and decide to do something.

In addition, Bill Gates led a group of entrepreneurs over to Paris to announce and to challenge the world about energy research and development. As everyone knows, Bill Gates is one of our great entrepreneurs. He and his wife are also philanthropists. He stepped up with 27 other billionaires to say: We are going to put billions into research and development, and we are going to put it into innovation. They called this project Mission Innovation, and they challenged other countries around the world to do the same thing—double their energy research and budget.

So seeing 184 countries step up to the plate and say “We are going to do this”—and I think we will see those announcements in the next couple of days—and seeing these entrepreneurs step forward I think was a signal—and a bold signal—to the marketplace that we are changing and moving in a new