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Senate

The Senate met at 3 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, as the final game of the National Basketball Association reminded us of redemption, we place our confidence in You, the Redeemer of humanity. Be exalted, O God, above the highest Heaven. May Your splendor shine over all the Earth.

Today, use our Senators to do mighty things for Your glory. May they settle for nothing less than their best efforts to fulfill Your purposes. As they depend on Your strength, do for them more than they can imagine. Empower them to strengthen the foundation of justice, righteousness, and truth, doing their part to accomplish Your will.

Lord, make our lawmakers so sensitive to Your grand vision for our Nation that they will be a conscience for our citizens in calling them back to You.

We pray in Your sacred 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 (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader is recognized.

FIGHTING TERRORISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the terrorist attack that claimed 49 inno-

cent victims in Orlando left families broken and our country shaken. It was a deliberately targeted attack inspired by the hateful ideology of ISIL, and it tragically reminded us of the continuing threat of ISIL-directed and ISIL-inspired attacks right here in our country.

We know that the way to prevent more of these terrorist attacks is to actually defeat ISIL where it trains, operates, and prepares for attacks, like in Iraq and Syria.

The President at least appeared to recognize that this weekend when he said that “we are and we will keep doing everything in our power to stop these kinds of attacks and to ultimately destroy ISIL.”

But as the Nation just learned from CIA Director John Brennan, ISIL remains “a formidable, resilient, and largely cohesive enemy.” Our efforts thus far “have not reduced the group’s terrorism capability and global reach”—this is Brennan—and ISIL is “training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks” in the West.

It is evident that the President’s campaign to contain ISIL has not been sufficient to defeat this group abroad or prevent more ISIL-inspired attacks right here at home. He needs to finally lead a campaign to accomplish this objective or at least prepare the military and intelligence community to help the next President do so if he won’t.

Here in the Senate, we should continue our efforts to fight terror beyond our borders and prevent attacks within them. These have been priorities for Republican Senators for a long time, and they continue to be at the forefront of our efforts now.

We have offered proposals to help connect the dots with respect to terrorist communications. We have offered proposals to help address the threat of lone-wolf attacks like the one we saw in Orlando. And we have offered proposals to help ensure terrorists are not able to purchase weapons.

We will consider two of them today, along with two Democratic alternatives. The first proposal, from Senator CORNYN, would immediately block the sale of a firearm or explosive or explosives to a suspected terrorist and, once probable cause is shown, not only permanently block that sale but also allow the suspected terrorist to be arrested and detained. This would apply to anyone currently investigated as a terrorist suspect as well as to anyone who was investigated within the last 5 years.

Unlike Senator CORNYN’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not—would not—prevent a terrorist from buying explosives as the alternative pertains only to firearms. Unlike Senator CORNYN’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not notify State and local law enforcement when a terrorist tries to buy a weapon nor would the alternative even give authority for that terrorist to be arrested or detained.

Unlike Senator CORNYN’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not ensure due process, protect our constitutional rights, or require the government to periodically review its procedures to ensure it is investigating the right people.

The second proposal, from Senator GRASSLEY, would improve the background check database by helping ensure all levels of government are actually submitting the necessary records, including mental health records. It would also allow for additional resources to update and improve the system further.

Unlike Senator GRASSLEY’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not study the causes of mass shootings.

Unlike Senator GRASSLEY’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not help prevent failed gun walking operations like Fast and Furious.

Unlike Senator GRASSLEY’s proposal, the Democratic alternative would not require the Department of Justice to

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



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explain why it has not been using the gun laws already on the books to prosecute gun cases. We know that weapons-related convictions under the Obama administration are down more than 30 percent compared to a decade ago.

So, look, no one wants terrorists to be able to buy guns or explosives—no one. Instead of using this as an opportunity to push a partisan agenda or craft the next 30-second campaign ad, colleagues like Senator CORNYN and Senator GRASSLEY are pursuing real solutions that can help keep Americans safer from the threat of terrorism. They are approaching this serious topic in a serious and constitutional way. They also understand that ultimately the most important way to prevent more terrorist tragedies at home is by defeating terrorism overseas.

Serious solutions—that is what the American people now demand more than ever. That is where we should keep our focus.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have an epidemic of gun violence. It is here. I wish it weren't, but it is here, and it is getting worse every day.

Last week's attack at a popular night club in Orlando, FL, was the deadliest shooting in modern American history. It was an act of hate and an act of terror. Forty-nine people were killed, and dozens were wounded. Many of those wounded are going to suffer for the rest of their lives from paralysis, blindness, and other maladies caused by the evil of Mr. Mateen.

Sadly, mass shootings are occurring with sickening regularity in our country. Let's just talk about some of them in recent years.

Tucson, AZ, 2011: Six were killed, and a number were injured, one of whom was Gabby Giffords—a wonderful, wonderful human being. She was critically injured. Her good husband, a famous astronaut, is doing everything he can to make her life as normal as possible.

Carson City, NV, 2011: Four were killed in a popular restaurant in Carson City called Heidi's. Three of the dead were National Guardsmen getting ready to do their duty, having a break. In fact, they were having breakfast when they were gunned down by a madman.

Aurora, CO: People there watching a popular movie in 2012 were gunned down in a night of terror.

Newton, CT, 2012: Twenty little kids—20 babies—and six educators were killed.

The Navy Yard, Washington, DC, 2013: Twelve were killed.

Las Vegas, NV, 2014: A couple of people had just left the Bundy domestic

terror situation. I guess they didn't get enough opportunities to do terrible things up there. So they came to Las Vegas and went to a restaurant where two police officers were sitting there having breakfast—two men with families. This man and woman walked up, having left the Bundy enclave, and shot both of them in the head right in front of everybody. They walked out, went next door to Walmart, and killed another unsuspecting shopper.

Charleston, SC, 1 year ago: Nine were killed in a church—praying and singing. That is what you should do in a church, but a murderer was there, and he killed nine of them.

Roseburg, OR, 2015: Nine were killed at a community college.

Colorado Springs, CO: Some crazy person hell-bent on doing something in his own mind—stopping abortion—killed three innocent people. They had nothing to do with abortion. They were just innocent people.

San Bernardino, CA: In a government facility, people there for a holiday celebration were maimed and 14 killed by two domestic terrorists.

Kalamazoo, MI, 2016: An Uber driver picked up a fare, drove around town to kill another one and got six.

So if we add these up, it comes to 100, not counting the 49 who were killed a week or so ago. We add to that the 90 who are killed every day—90 every day—with guns in America. That is a pretty staggering number.

But after the murders I have outlined here—Tucson; Carson City; Aurora; Newton, CT; DC; Las Vegas; Charleston, SC; Roseburg, OR; San Bernardino, CA; Colorado Springs, CO; Kalamazoo, MI—the American people have looked to Congress to stop them. No more, they say. The American people don't feel safe. They want to feel safe. They want the violence to stop. They want it to end. But instead of getting help from their elected officials, our constituents see a disturbing pattern of inaction. It is always the same. After each tragedy, we Democrats try to pass sensible gun safety measures. Sadly, our efforts are blocked by the Republican Congress, which takes its marching orders from the National Rifle Association.

In April 2013, just months after the shootings in Aurora and Newtown, Democrats proposed legislation that would expand background checks and reinstate the assault weapons ban, limit the size of ammunition clips. The man who went into the nightclub a week ago had an assault rifle that would hold a magazine of 30 shells. He could fire that every time he pulled the trigger. It would take him about 3 or 4 seconds to empty the 30 shells. He could reload in 1 or 2 seconds. We don't know for sure, but he had at least two extra clips, so 90 bullets. Does anyone think there is anything you hunt in America that requires 90 bullets? Is there anyone who thinks that in America you need 30 bullets to go hunting—for what? Well, the man in Orlando, FL, went hunting for people.

We tried to limit the size of ammunition clips, to prevent firearms trafficking, but the NRA didn't accept any of our proposals, and so the Senate Republicans didn't accept them and they filibustered and blocked every one of them.

It happened again last December. Following the shooting in San Bernardino, Senator FEINSTEIN proposed legislation to close the so-called terror loophole. Senator FEINSTEIN's bill would have prevented suspected terrorists from legally purchasing firearms and explosives. Keeping terrorists from buying guns should be something upon which every Member of the Senate agrees. Again, the NRA said no, the Republicans said no, and they blocked Senator FEINSTEIN's legislation. That is a pattern we see. We see it repeatedly. It doesn't matter how sensible the legislation or how terrible the tragedy, the Republicans are beholden to the National Rifle Association, the NRA, and not the people who elect them to come here and represent them.

Today I am afraid it will be more of the same. About 2 hours from now, the U.S. Senate will have an opportunity to stop the rampant gun violence that has plagued our Nation. Stop it all? No, but it certainly will do something. So, at 5:30, Senators will vote on four gun-related amendments, two from Democrats, two from Republicans. Two of these amendments—the Murphy and Feinstein amendments—are serious proposals to protect Americans from gun violence. The Murphy-Booker-Schumer amendment would close loopholes in our background check system and ensure that firearms and explosives are kept out of the hands of terrorists and criminals and those who suffer from mental illness.

Senator FEINSTEIN's amendment would close the terror loophole, which allows suspected terrorists to legally purchase weapons and explosives. Both of these proposals are in keeping with what America wants and what America needs. About 90 percent of Americans favor expanded background checks, and more than 80 percent of Americans want to close the terror loophole. These are Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. I might say, as to the National Rifle Association, all NRA Members don't feel the way the leaders of the NRA do. Even though 90 percent of Americans favor expanded background checks and more than 80 percent want to close the terror loophole, Republicans will again, I am confident, reject the voice of the American people. Instead, Republicans are proposing legislation that will actually make it easier for someone who has a mental illness to get a gun. Instead, Republicans are proposing legislation that will actually make it more difficult for law enforcement to keep guns out of the hands of the dangerous.

The first Republican amendment proposed by the senior Senator from Iowa would make it easier for a person with severe mental illness to buy a gun.