

and counsel to the Assistant Attorney General. He obviously has a lot of experience advising senior policymakers on a wide variety of legal issues facing the executive branch. That is good because the role he has been nominated to has the responsibility for providing legal advice to the executive branch on all constitutional questions and reviewing pending legislation for constitutionality.

I look forward to advancing Mr. Engel's nomination tomorrow so that he can begin putting his experience to work for our country as soon as possible, and then we will turn to the various other nominees before us so they can begin doing the same. Confirming the President's nominees is an important part of the Senate's business, and I urge all of our colleagues to work together so we can get this done.

TAX REFORM

Now on one final matter, Mr. President, today our colleagues on the House Ways and Means Committee began marking up the tax reform legislation they unveiled last week. Under Chairman BRADY's leadership, the committee is continuing its work to get our economy reaching again for its true potential. This is yet more momentum for our country's once-in-a-generation opportunity to update the tax system, deliver relief to hard-working American families, and get our economy creating more opportunities and prosperity.

Under Chairman HATCH's leadership, the Senate Finance Committee is continuing to move forward on its own legislation to increase opportunity and to provide more take-home pay for American families. In an open process through regular order, members of the committee will continue to have input in the writing of this tax reform legislation.

Both Chambers are working with the President and his team to overhaul our country's complex and outdated tax system. We are united around a commonsense set of goals to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer; take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more money in the pockets of America's middle class; and level the playing field for American workers and businesses so they can compete against foreign competitors on an equal footing and not only create more jobs in America but keep them here too. These are goals shared by so many across our country regardless of party.

It is time to deliver real tax relief for hard-working families, and we are going to keep working together to do just that.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TEXAS CHURCH MASS SHOOTING

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the mass shooting in Texas yesterday—the latest mass shooting in what seems like never-ending gun violence in our country. My heart breaks for the victims and their families and for the community of Sutherland Springs in Texas.

We are still gathering all the facts about this specific crime. We are still learning about what happened, how this murderer was able to purchase a gun, whatever his twisted rationale was for walking into a house of worship in a small town and slaughtering more than 20 people, including young children, with an assault weapon. Our incredible law enforcement officials are working hard to answer all of that, but the most important fact of all is something we already know very well. This was yet another case where someone on American soil who had absolutely no business getting his hands on a weapon of war was able to get one and use it to commit heinous mass murder.

Of the five worst mass shootings in our history, three of them have occurred in just the past 17 months. Think about that. In a small town in America, nearly 7 percent of the town's population was slaughtered just because they went to church that day. The weapon he used was based on a military weapon designed for a war zone, but this was not a war zone. It was a church. People were singing and praying and savoring life.

I reject the notion that it is too soon to act. If not now, then when? We should ban assault weapons and bump stocks today. People who don't want to have an honest conversation say we need to wait. Well, for how long? Because we wait, and we wait, and we will see evil rear its ugly head over and over again, and we are told to wait again.

We have enough information today for Congress to do its job and try to keep our constituents safe from gun violence. We had enough information before yesterday to act, but what Congress does not have is the political will to act. My friends, this must change. Thoughts and prayers are not going to stop the next mass shooting. Merely talking about doing something about the mentally ill obtaining guns isn't going to stop the next deranged person with hate in their soul from committing yet another mass murder. The Second Amendment does not mean that Americans should have to risk getting shot because they walked down the wrong street in a city or decided to go to a music festival in Las Vegas or a night club in Orlando or an elementary school in Newtown or a movie theater in Aurora or a church on Sunday in Texas.

After each of these horrific acts of violence, what happened here in Congress? Nothing. More than a month after Las Vegas, we still can't even tackle the most obvious fixes like banning bump stocks. Plain and simple,

Americans are being slaughtered and Congress is refusing to protect them.

I hear my colleagues who rightly say we can't pass laws to stop every instance of a deranged gunman who wants to kill innocent men, women, and children, just like our other criminal laws will not necessarily stop every instance of crime, but there is no excuse for not even trying. Everyone in this Chamber knows that a shooting in a church is something that should never happen in this country. Mr. President, I think you would agree with that. I think everyone who serves in this Chamber would agree with that. So then why aren't we doing anything to stop this violence? Why aren't we making it harder for a crazed, evil person to get their hands on a weapon of war?

It makes me wonder what our colleagues are waiting for. Are they waiting for the NRA to come in and give them cover and tell them it is OK to act? Are they waiting for the NRA to give them permission to stand up and do something? If the NRA said today assault rifles or bump stocks should be banned, it would be done tomorrow. That is the sad truth of this place, but we know the NRA will not say that because they want to keep selling these weapons of war to anyone who is willing to buy them, no matter how unsafe it makes it for the rest of us.

Congress has caved in over and over again to the enormous pressure by the NRA and the gun industry—which just wants to protect their profits—and has ignored the vast majority of Americans. Gun owners and nongun owners alike support commonsense measures to keep their fellow Americans safe.

These mass slaughters continue, and Congress has done nothing—absolutely nothing. To me, this is a monumental failure of leadership, and it is no wonder that gun violence and mass shootings happen here at a higher rate than any other developed country in the world. This has to change. It is not enough to solve the individual crime after the fact. We have to take meaningful, real action to prevent the next one. This is what has to happen. To those who doubt that Congress can actually get something done, we already know that, depending on the motivation, depending on whom Congress is actually listening to, Congress is fully capable of moving quickly to enact change. Instead of acting like its hands are tied and refusing to do anything—which is what is happening right now—far more often than not, Congress listens to the special interests instead of the people who actually elect them to keep them safe.

Look at the shameful state of our gun laws now and tell me if you think these laws came about because families in our States demanded them or was it because the NRA demanded them? Congress has turned a collective back on strengthening and expanding our national background check system. We should be fixing the holes in the system—whatever is necessary—not just

shrugging our shoulders and saying there is nothing that can be done. Who do you think demanded that we don't fix the background check system? Was it families in your State or was it the NRA? Congress refuses to ban high-capacity magazines, which are literally made for war, and let killers fire dozens of rounds without having to stop and reload. Who do you think demanded that, families or the NRA?

Congress still refuses to ban assault weapons, which are designed for war—designed to kill as many people as possible as rapidly as possible but are given different names so they can be sold in the civilian world. Who do you think demanded that, our families or the NRA?

Congress is on the verge of passing legislation to make it easier right now for killers to buy suppressers, known by many of us as silencers, to attach to their weapons and make it harder for the police to do their jobs and catch violent criminals. Who do you think demanded that? Certainly not the police and not our families—the NRA.

Congress is dragging its feet on banning bump stocks, the inexpensive piece of equipment the killer in Las Vegas used to turn its already-powerful firearm into an automatic weapon capable of firing hundreds of rounds per minute. Who do you think demanded that, families or the NRA?

Just this February, Congress overturned a rule that had prevented people who were so incapacitated that they could no longer handle their own finances from getting their hands on a gun. Who do you think demanded that, families or the NRA?

Congress even went so far as to pass a law that blocked the Centers for Disease Control from studying the issue of gun deaths the way they are allowed to study any other cause of death in this country. Why? Because it is an attempt to hide the overwhelming data showing that keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people would decrease gun crime. Who do you think demanded that? Who do you think demanded that Congress suppress the facts and the alarming data about gun violence? Do you think it was families or the NRA?

This really has to change. Congress needs to start protecting the people we were elected to represent. Their voices matter, and it really does matter whom you are listening to. Their voices matter, and they must be heard. We must listen and enact change that would actually help to keep our States safer from gun violence. We are the ones who need to act. We can't ignore our responsibility to keep our country safe from this kind of violence.

To all the people who are watching us right now, I would say this: After all these massacres, pay attention to what your elected leaders are saying. Pay attention to what they are actually doing. Watch how they react. Look closely at how they use their time here. Listen to what they say or don't say. After these mass shootings, did

they tell you we were going to bow our heads for a moment of silence and leave it there or did they tell you we were going to fight with every bit of energy to actually fix these broken gun laws and protect our American citizens?

Democracy only works when regular people stand up and demand action. I urge everyone listening today to demand that action and to hold elected leaders accountable and to ask them to pass meaningful gun reform now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today we join the stunned community of Sutherland Springs, TX—a small town near San Antonio—in mourning the loss of too many innocent lives. One innocent life is too many.

I listened to the impassioned comments of our colleague from New York asking us to do something, but I actually think it is important we understand exactly what did happen, and once the fog of this terrible tragic event lifts, after the law enforcement agencies can do the appropriate investigation, then I think it is appropriate for us to ask: What can we do, consistent with the Constitution and laws of the United States—what can we do to make something like this less likely?

I wish I was optimistic there was some magic wand we could wave and that we could prevent terrible tragedies like this, but in a free and open society, unfortunately, we don't have that magic wand.

On the other hand, we have arrived at a consensus, I think, in this country, that background checks, for example, are appropriate for people suffering from mental illness, people who committed previous felonies. Those people are banned from possessing or purchasing firearms, and there is a consensus that they should be banned.

There are some early reports—and, again, the fog of this terrible tragedy has not yet lifted. We need clarity in order to know what did and did not happen and where we might be able to act to make a difference. There is some indication by some news reports that this individual had committed domestic violence and had been convicted of that by a court-martial. That, too, would likely have been a disqualifying factor in his ability to possess or purchase firearms. So we need to know exactly what the facts are.

I appreciate the passion of our colleague from New York. We are all stunned by what happened, but I think being rational people, we ought to want to know exactly what the facts are before we decide what the best course of action might be. It may be that, like we saw a few years back at Virginia Tech, an individual who had previously been adjudicated mentally ill, that determination, that judgment was not entered into the National Instant Background Checks System run

by the FBI, and because it wasn't—because of a failure of communication between the State and Federal authorities—he was able to purchase a firearm when he was legally disqualified from being able to do so.

So those are the sorts of things I think we could work together on. I know, for example, after the terrible shooting in Las Vegas, I was shocked, like so many others were, that somebody could essentially bypass the prohibition against making a semiautomatic weapon into an automatic weapon by the use of the so-called bump stock. As somebody who enjoys the outdoors and is a hunter and enjoys recreational shooting, I can tell you I know of no sportsman, no hunter, who uses a bump stock. It seems to me the sole purpose of this is to bypass the prohibition about turning semiautomatic weapons into automatic weapons. That is something I hope the Senate Judiciary Committee will continue to look into and determine whether the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms ought to be extended the authority to regulate the so-called bump stocks.

Back when President Obama was President of the United States, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms said they did not believe they had the authority, but several of us have written to them and asked them to clarify for us just where they think they do have authority and where they feel they need additional authority so we can work with them, hopefully, to prevent terrible tragedies like that from occurring in the future.

Yesterday we all received the news that a gunman opened fire on parishioners at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX, killing at least 26 people during the Sunday morning church service. I can't imagine a more vulnerable time. People were sitting in the pews with their heads bowed and their eyes closed and then were exposed to this madman unleashing death in that house of worship. The victims included young children and a pregnant woman, among others. All 26 of them are now gone, aged 18 months to 72 years old.

This small community and an entire Nation must now bind its wounds as we mourn the dead and meet the face of evil with moral clarity and a newfound determination to stem the violence that continues to plague the United States of the America.

We saw in New York that somebody used a vehicle—a car—to mow down people and to kill people as an act of terrorism.

We are vulnerable in so many ways because we are an open society. Unfortunately, these sorts of tragedies seem to come back to us time and again, and we in Texas are not immune.

We remember the knife attack at the University of Texas in Austin earlier this year. We remember the shooting of police officers in downtown Dallas last year, where five police officers perished, and at Fort Hood in 2009. Each of

these events has been shocking, inexplicable, and, certainly, reprehensible.

This tragedy may be the worst of all. That this event occurred in a house of worship makes it all the more grotesque and despicable. Hymns of praise were silenced, and those led to cries for help.

The shooting in Sutherland Springs has been called the deadliest mass shooting in Texas history. It is perhaps better understood by the words of one man whose mother and father were both killed yesterday. He was sitting on the curb, outside the emergency room, at Connally Memorial Medical Center in Floresville, a town nearby. Shaken to the core, he called the events of yesterday "unimaginable." It is impossible to comprehend what it must have felt like to wake up this morning in Sutherland Springs—a small, tight-knit, rural community that is roughly 35 miles southeast of San Antonio—with so many neighbors lost and the sound of yesterday's gunfire and sirens still ringing in the air.

One of the people who lost her life was Crystal Holcombe, who died with her unborn child and several relatives. Another was Annabelle Pomeroy, a shy 14-year-old girl, whose uncle describes her as an "angel in the flesh."

We know, thankfully, that two Good Samaritans turned on and pursued the shooter and may have prevented this nightmare from lasting even longer. We are grateful for the heroism and the quick decisive action of these two men. We know that about 20 injured remain in hospitals, including a 5-year-old, Ryland Ward, who was shot multiple times.

Yesterday I spoke with Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Wilson County Sheriff Joe Tackitt, Jr., and offered not only my condolences but my unequivocal and complete support. Sheriff Tackitt said that the bloody scene inside First Baptist was horrific, but that the response to the tragedy was instantaneous. First responders from the surrounding area, as well as State and Federal officials, inundated Sutherland Springs with logistical resources and personnel, offering their love and compassion, as well—a proud display of what I often see, which is an attitude that being a Texan doesn't describe just where you are from. It describes who your family is.

Today I join the sheriff, as well as Governor Abbott, and my friend Representative HENRY CUELLAR, in whose congressional district this tragedy occurred, my colleague in the Senate, Senator CRUZ, and so many other Texans in asking God for healing and for understanding.

We know the investigation into exactly what happened and why is ongoing, and it is important that we allow this investigation to be completed so we can know what happened and exactly what we might be able to do to prevent tragedies like this from occurring in the future.

I hope that Texans who call Sutherland Springs and First Baptist Church

home will soon have some answers. I send my thoughts and prayers to those who lost parents, children, friends, and relatives in this outrageous and inhuman act. I hope each of us will pledge to be a light in the darkness. To the families whose lives are forever changed by this atrocity, let us provide a strong shoulder of support.

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.

Ms. COLLINS. 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.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO pertaining to the introduction of S. 2076 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. 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. DAINES. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, today the U.S. House of Representatives begins marking up H.R. 1, the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, and as the U.S. Senate continues to debate tax cuts, I am reminded of a speech that former Democratic President John F. Kennedy delivered in New York City in 1962. In fact, it was in December of 1962, when he said:

In short, it is a paradoxical truth that tax rates are too high today and tax revenues are too low and the soundest way to raise the revenues in the long run is to cut the rates now. The experience of a number of European countries and Japan have borne this out. This country's own experience with tax reduction in 1954 has borne this out. And the reason is that only full employment can balance the budget, and tax reduction can pave the way to that employment. The purpose of cutting taxes now is not to incur a budget deficit, but to achieve the more prosperous, expanding economy which can bring a budget surplus.

President Kennedy went on to say:

I repeat: our practical choice is not between a tax-cut deficit and a budgetary surplus. It is between two kinds of deficits: a chronic deficit of inertia, as the unwanted result of inadequate revenues and a restricted economy; or a temporary deficit of transition, resulting from a tax cut designed to boost the economy, increase tax revenues, and achieve—and I believe this can be done—a budget surplus. The first type of deficit is a sign of waste and weakness; the second reflects an investment in the future.

If someone had just tuned in, they might think I was quoting, perhaps, President Reagan or perhaps some

other Republican leader. This was President John F. Kennedy in 1962.

We need to cut taxes once again and put money back into the pockets of the American people. I can state that Montanans need more jobs, but, importantly, we need better paying jobs. Most importantly, they need bigger paychecks. The best way to give Montanans a pay raise—how about cutting their taxes? We need tax cuts.

TEXAS CHURCH MASS SHOOTING

Madam President, separately, I just want to express my sincere and heartfelt sympathies to the people of Sutherland Springs, TX. What a devastating turn of events there—men, women, and children showing up for worship on a Sunday in a church. This was an act of pure evil.

My wife Cindy and I are praying for the victims, their families, and the community that has been changed forever.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATURAL GAS LIQUID STORAGE

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I would like to talk about an issue in my State of West Virginia—really my region—that is becoming very important, I think, to this country's energy security and prosperity.

As we know, West Virginia has extensive natural gas liquid resources. Nearly a century ago, when these resources were discovered, the rapid growth that followed turned Central West Virginia into a national hub for the petrochemical industry. You know what, we have never looked back.

Today, chemistry remains our State's second largest industry and directly impacts other major sectors like energy, biomedical engineering, and manufacturing. West Virginia is home to 140 different chemical companies that employ nearly 13,000 workers. West Virginia's share of GDP from the chemical industry is the sixth largest in the country, and these products are about one-quarter of our State's major international exports. We still have one of the highest concentrations of chemical, polymer, and resin manufacturers in the world.

The sector is sort of a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities facing this important American industry during a time of fierce international competition. Estimates show, more than 100,000 workers in West Virginia already have the industrial skills to fill jobs in this sector, and there are thousands more who could easily be retrained to fill these jobs in this important industry. With our region's abundance of natural gas from Marcellus