

million to \$22 million for a couple, and then it is permanently repealed by 2023. The corporate rate cut and pass-through cut also stays permanent—a boon to wealthy shareholders. Middle-class tax deductions and credits expire. Deductions for corporations and the wealthiest are permanent or even get better.

As Mark Mazer, the director of the Independent Tax Policy Center, said, “You could create a plan that just cuts taxes for middle-class people. That’s not what this is.” Yet that is how Republicans are selling it.

A few days ago on Hugh Hewitt’s show, my friend the majority leader said that “at the end of the day, nobody in the middle class is going to get a tax increase” under the Republican bill. Again, that was MITCH MCCONNELL: “Nobody in the middle class is going to get a tax increase.” Well, if Leader MCCONNELL was referring to the House bill, that is just a bold-faced lie, and he ought to retract it, but to give the Senator the benefit of the doubt, maybe he is referring to the Senate tax bill still under consideration. Let’s see.

In the Republican bill, will nobody in the middle class get a tax increase? We will wait and see. If past is prologue, I doubt it because the House said no middle-class person would get an increase, then their bill walloped the middle class. One-third get an increase immediately, and then half get an increase over the next 10 years.

I would remind my Senate Republican colleagues that their House Republicans sold their bill as a middle-class bill—a middle-class tax cut—and then put together a plan that raises taxes on millions of middle-class families, one-third of all families making between \$65,000 and \$150,000.

If the Senate bill follows the same path, promising universal, middle-class tax cuts but delivers smoke and mirrors and hidden tax increases, it will get clobbered in the court of public opinion, as it would deserve.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John H. Gibson II, of Texas, to be Deputy Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 60 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, we are grieving yet again today another horrific mass shooting in a church in Texas—over 25 dead, others still clinging to life. We were barely past our stage of grief as more than 50 people were shot dead and 500 were injured at a country music concert in Las Vegas. Of course, every single night in this country, parents and brothers and sisters go to bed having lost their loved ones, and 90 people die every day from guns in this country.

I just think it is worth stating that this happens nowhere else other than in the United States. This is not inevitable. This is not something that we should accept. We are not impotent or helpless to try to change the scope of tragedy that is crippling for families that have to go through this.

I want everyone to take a quick look at this pretty simple chart. The United States has more guns and more gun deaths than any other developed country. It is not close, we are not even in the neighborhood of any of our other G-20 competitor nations. While the President told us the other day that this is a mental illness problem, one cannot explain this outlier status through a story of mental illness because none of these other countries have any lower rate of mental illness. There are just as many people who are mentally ill in these countries as there are in our country.

We cannot explain it by the attention we pay to mental illness. We spend more money on treating mental illness than these countries do. This isn’t a mental illness problem. We have to do better in treating people who have psychological disorders in this country, but the reason that we are an outlier nation when it comes to the number of gun deaths and the epic scale of our mass tragedies is explained by something else.

Here is a quick story. This graphic shows the States that have background check requirements on all gun sales in the private sector, and here are the States that have no background check laws beyond those that are required in Federal law. It is a fundamentally different story when it comes to gun-related homicides. In the States that have background check laws, the average rate of homicide is substantially lower—substantially lower—than in States that haven’t background check laws. That is because in this country, with the loosest, most lax gun laws in the industrialized world, private citi-

zens are able to get their hands on weapons that are designed not for hunting and not for shooting for sport but to kill. These tactical assault-style weapons are being used over and over in these mass tragedies, and more people end up in harm’s way.

Smarter gun laws—just making sure that the right people have guns, not the wrong people—lead to less gun deaths. It is time for us to admit that this is a uniquely American problem and that it deserves our attention rather than our silence, which has been our response every single session that I have been a Member of Congress.

This poster shows but a few of the faces that have been lost to gun violence in this country. My small town of Sandy Hook is a broken community. It is a beautiful, wonderful community, but it is a broken community. The ripples of grief that come with losing that number of children—beautiful children—all at one time never really gets repaired. That small community in Texas, Sutherland Springs, will suffer that same fate. It will be a community that will not ever truly repair itself, having lost so many beautiful people at one moment. You can’t rewind the clock.

It is increasingly impossible for me to continue to go back to Newtown, CT, and tell the people of that community that even after mass murder after mass murder in this country, at a scale that occurs in no other Nation, our response as a body is to do nothing. It is a level of callousness that is frankly unexplainable to the victims of this violence, and this macabre club of families that have had to deal with the consequences of gun violence is getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

Why? Because the number of people who die by guns is not going down. It is not leveling off. It is exploding. Every year, more people—not less people—are killed by guns in this country, and it seems to be the only problem in which there is zero interest in this body to solve. When a terrorist plows into civilians with a truck in New York City, Republicans in this body are talking about policy change within hours, but after somebody walks into a school or a church or a shopping mall, we are told that there has to be a restraining order on policy debate for days. It is ridiculous, and it is offensive to the families who have gone through this.

So, let’s just for a moment set aside the issues that I will admit are unlikely to come up for a vote in this body between now and the end of this session. I think it is unbelievable that universal background checks, supported by 90 percent of Americans, can’t get a vote here. I don’t think there is another issue like that in the American public, where 90 percent of Americans agree on something and Congress can’t even conceive of getting it done.

The only place where background checks is controversial is in the Congress. Every single gun owner I talk to

in my State wants to make sure that criminals and people who are seriously mentally ill can't buy guns.

Similarly, let's admit what is happening here. It is not a coincidence that the same kind of weapon is used every single time in these shootings. These are copycat shootings in which people see the kind of destruction that comes with an AR-15-style weapon, and they use it again in order to maximize the lethality.

Wake up. Wake up to the reality that these weapons are being used to murder with speed and power, and the killers are watching what happens in Sandy Hook, what happens in Texas, what happens in Orlando, what happens in Las Vegas, and they are repeating the process. They are replicating the weapon. They shouldn't be in the hands of civilians. You can have plenty of fun hunting without an AR-15 or AR-15-style weapon. So let's set aside universal background checks and assault weapons for a moment. I get the politics of this place. I understand those are unlikely to pass.

Why, then, can't we work on the things that we know we agree on? I have listened to dozens of Republicans in the House and the Senate claim that they are for making real the prohibition on automatic weapons. People shouldn't have fully automatic weapons in this country. Nobody should be able to do what that guy did at an upper story window in a hotel in Las Vegas, and the law that we all passed is being ignored by companies that are selling these aftermarket modifications that turn semiautomatic weapons into automatic weapons. The company that sold the modification took it off the market, but only for a couple of weeks. They are back to selling bump stocks again because we have signaled that we are not going to do anything about it.

It is not enough to just tell the ATF to do it. Why? Because the law is vague. The ATF said it was vague in 2010. All we have to do is clarify it, but aftermarket modifications that turn semiautomatic weapons into automatic weapons shouldn't be legal. It seems we have agreement on that because I have listened to many Republicans saying they are willing to take that step. Let's take it and stop talking about it. Put legislation on the floor that says you cannot have an automatic weapon in this country. Let's do it. We agree on it.

I didn't agree with the President yesterday when he said it is a mental illness problem, but similarly we could work together to make sure that people who are seriously mentally ill don't buy weapons. That is the second non-controversial policy proposal on which we could work together. Let's just admit we are going the wrong way, not the right way.

Earlier this year, Republicans passed a piece of legislation that allowed for 75,000 people in this country who have serious mental illness to be able to get

off the list of prohibited purchasers and start buying guns again. These are people who were judged to be so mentally ill that they couldn't deposit a check. They were given conservator status for Social Security purposes. These are people who were so mentally ill, so limited in their cognitive abilities that they couldn't take a Social Security check and deposit it. Those people were prohibited from buying guns. This Congress passed a law earlier this year to say that those people who can't deposit a check should be able to go buy an assault weapon.

If we are serious about trying to stop people with mental illness from getting weapons, let's work together on that instead of moving backward.

Finally, it is an open secret that the existing background check system is broken. Let's not pretend we just woke up yesterday in amazement that the records of people who are seriously mentally ill or have been convicted of crimes aren't ending up on the background checklist.

I am holding in my hand the data that is available to every single one of us about the records that are being uploaded onto the background check system. For the Department of Defense, it is a whole bunch of zeros. The Army, the Navy, the Air Force—zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero.

Similarly, States aren't doing their part either. Connecticut uploaded 363,000 felony records onto the NICS system over the course of 2016. Colorado uploaded 10 felony records in 2016. New York uploaded 57,000 domestic violence records in 2016. North Carolina uploaded 261. There weren't 261 people in North Carolina who were convicted of domestic violence crimes in 2016; it is just that only 261 people went up on the list. Many other States, like the Department of Defense, have zeros in all of these columns. Many States are uploading no records onto the system.

Now, admittedly, NICS tries to get those records through other means when States don't give it to them, but it is an open secret that the NICS system is broken. Congress at least tried to make some changes. After the Virginia Tech shooting, Congress did pass a NICS improvement bill, but it has not worked. It gave the Department of Justice the power to withhold Federal funding if States don't upload records. Despite the fact that there are a handful of States that have uploaded no records to NICS—zero—no State has been penalized under that 2007 law. That is not a Republican or a Democratic problem. The Obama administration didn't penalize States, and Republican Presidents didn't penalize States. Why don't we work together on that?

A couple of years ago, the House passed additional funding to help States, other jurisdictions, upload records. Why don't we find a way to work together to at least make the existing background check system work?

This feeling of helplessness that people have in this country, this feeling of

impotence that nothing can be done to change the trajectory of violence in this country, the regular scroll across the bottom of your TV screen telling you news of the latest mass shootings where little kids and senior citizens are being gunned down in churches and schools—that sense of helplessness isn't real; it is a fiction, an invention of the gun lobby designed to make this place feel as if there is nothing that can be done in order to make sure that they can continue to make these obscene amounts of profits. There are things we can do.

I understand that despite the popularity of background checks with the public, we are probably not going to get a vote on that, but let's work together to make sure that automatic weapons can't be in the hands of civilians. Let's make real the very simple premise that seriously mentally ill people shouldn't be able to buy guns. Let's fix the background check system so that, as Republicans tell us over and over again, at least we can enforce existing law. There are ways that we can stop this slaughter, and I don't know how we live with ourselves, how we sleep at night as a body if, in the face of these massacres, we don't even do the stuff we all agree on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS CHURCH MASS SHOOTING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I come before this body a second day in a row to talk about an event that the Senator from Connecticut has been referring to that has shocked all of us. It has rattled us to the very core and shocked the conscience of the entire Nation.

I didn't get a chance to hear everything he said about this today, but I was encouraged to hear him make comments about fixing the background check system, which I think failed us terribly here, and it failed, of course, the 26 people who lost their lives and the 20 more who were injured in this terrible shooting in Sutherland Springs, TX, during a Sunday morning church service at First Baptist Church.

Of course, at times like these, we need to respect the right and the need of people to mourn and to grieve their loss and to express our solidarity with those families who were torn apart. One woman who has lived in Sutherland Springs for nearly 70 years described the community as a place where "everybody knew everybody." She said that before Sunday, most people didn't even keep their doors locked because the town never experienced any significant crime. Well, now that has changed.

Sutherland Springs has suffered at the hands of a man whom initial reports have described as having a known history of violence, a man whose victims included his own grandmother-in-law as well as the visiting pastor of the church. No community finds it easy to deal with unexpected heartbreaking