

Numbness is not the answer. Action is the answer—honoring those victims by action. That honor is never too soon. That sense of grief will never go away. As much as our hearts and prayers go out to those families, we must also honor them with action.

Our reaction is not necessarily aimed at the last shooting or the last death by gun violence. It should prevent the future ones. The trap of the gun lobbyists is to say: Well, what you are proposing wouldn't have prevented what happened last Sunday in Sutherland Springs, TX. But we do know that 26 people might be alive today if the U.S. Air Force had done its job. Twenty-six people might be alive today if the U.S. Air Force had reported this conviction by court-martial of the shooter to the NICS background system. Twenty-six people might be alive today if the U.S. Air Force had followed the law.

There is a law that requires this reporting. It was passed in 2007. It requires all courts and all jurisdictions to make that reporting.

The law here is also clear that the shooter never should have had access to firearms. There are laws on the books right now specifically designed to help prevent dangerous individuals with criminal records of exactly this kind from getting their hands on guns, and that includes anyone who has a domestic violence conviction in any court, including military court.

As the author of that legislation, Frank Lautenberg, said at the time: It is a very simple principle. Wife beaters and child abusers should not have guns. The statistics bear out that principle now more than they did ever before. The mix of guns and domestic violence is a toxic one. Fifty-five percent of all homicides against women occur during domestic violence disputes, and a woman is five times more likely to die during a domestic violence dispute if there are guns in the house.

The law also prohibits anyone who has been dishonorably discharged from the military or convicted of an offense carrying a sentence of more than 1 year from buying a firearm.

The Department of Defense has a clear legal obligation to have made that report. By the way, that obligation includes military court indictments as well as convictions, because they may disqualify someone from obtaining guns.

We know today that the shooter in Sutherland Springs, TX, also was involuntarily committed to a mental health facility after sneaking guns onto an Air Force base and trying to kill his military superiors. That person should never have been anywhere near a firearm, let alone having the ability to buy one from a licensed firearm dealer, as apparently occurred.

The Air Force's lapse is shocking and inexcusable. It is a lapse that may have contributed to, if not directly caused, that shooting because, otherwise, that shooter would have completely lacked access to the firearms he used so lethally.

The American people deserve to know why the gunman's conviction was not reported in the background check database. The American people also deserve to know what immediate steps the Department of Defense will take to ensure that every court-martial indictment or conviction is reported to the FBI when they disqualify someone from accessing guns.

The American people deserve action. So I have written to the Defense Secretary James Mattis urging him to take immediate action to ensure that guns are prevented from falling into the wrong hands. That means taking specific, concrete steps to identify an individual whose convictions and court-martial disqualify them from obtaining a gun and making sure those records are submitted to the FBI. I want to know what system there will be for identifying those convictions.

I am also planning to introduce legislation because enforcement of that law should be done and reemphasized and reinforced so that there is no question in any mind of anyone in the military about their obligation. They must ensure that people who are convicted of disqualifying offenses in military courts are reported to the national background check database so they are prevented from having access to these firearms by purchasing them from licensed firearms dealers.

As of now, the background check law applies only to those licensed dealers. We need to extend it to include all firearms sales. We need other commonsense measures to prevent and stop gun violence, but at least the military can be compelled to honor this obligation. I know its heart is in the right place, and I know they will diligently reform what they need to do largely on their own because they recognize that obligation.

We have an obligation, as well, to enforce all of these laws more diligently. As a law enforcement person, one who was the State attorney general for 20 years and the U.S. attorney before then, I am proud of the State of Connecticut for classifying domestic offenses so they can be disqualifying under the law. Connecticut is only one of a handful—perhaps three States—that have that disqualifying classification, so the States need to do better as well.

The simple, commonsense fixes to help enforce laws that are already on the books to keep America safe will enable the law to be real and effective. If it is unenforced, it is dead letter. It must be enforced. We need better enforcement, and we also need better laws.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join in this effort, and I hope this new legislation will be bipartisan, just as we grieve together regardless of party.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I first wish to thank my friend, the distinguished Senator from Connecticut, for his very important words.

NOMINATION OF PETER ROBB

Mr. President, I rise at this point to say a few words about one of President Trump's nominees whom we will be voting on in a few minutes.

The National Labor Relations Board is a crucial tool for protecting working men and women in Michigan and across the country. The right to collectively bargain, the freedom to be able to bargain for fair wages, good benefits, retirement security, safe and fair workplaces—all of these things depend on a National Labor Relations Board that works—that works for people.

Perhaps no person at the NLRB is more critical to protecting these rights than is the NLRB's General Counsel. When a worker believes that the law has been violated and brings their concern to the National Labor Relations Board, it is the General Counsel who investigates. If the employee is found to have violated the law or the freedoms and rights of working men and women, it is the General Counsel who takes action to make things right.

Unfortunately, while President Trump talks a lot about having our workers' backs—he certainly said that a lot in Michigan—his actions speak much louder than his words. That is certainly true in the case of his choice for General Counsel, Peter Robb.

Mr. Robb was voted out of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in October without any Democratic support—and there was a reason for that. The reason is that during his career, he has shown so little support for working men and women across our country.

When Dominion Energy's workers at the Millstone Power Station in Connecticut attempted to use their freedom to organize—one of the freedoms in America is to be able to come together, to be able to organize, to be able to collectively bargain on behalf of yourself and others to make sure you are able to get fair pay and a pension and safe working conditions. But when the people at the Millstone Power Station in Connecticut attempted to do that, Mr. Robb, who represented Dominion, delayed the election for more than 2 years. Not only that, he bragged about it on his law firm's website—making people who wanted to exercise their freedom to collectively bargain and to organize wait for 2 years.

Mr. Robb also was lead counsel on the case that led to 11,000 air traffic controllers being fired—people, again, who were part of a union and could collectively bargain for safe conditions and good pay and pensions. They were fired and barred from Federal service. It was a watershed case in the history of union suppression, in taking away people's freedoms.

While he worked for a Reagan-appointed NLRB member, longstanding

policies changed to weaken the government's ability to enforce the rights and freedoms of working men and women.

With stagnant wages and rising healthcare costs and worries about pension cuts and workplace discrimination, frankly, I know working men and women in Michigan and across the country have enough to worry about. They shouldn't have to worry that the person who is supposed to have their back is, instead, looking for ways to strip away their freedom to organize on the job.

That is why I will vote no on Peter Robb, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, I wish to turn now to another very important topic. I have been speaking about workers, and now I wish to speak about our children and standing up for our children.

Every year, 9 million children receive health insurance through a very successful program called the Children's Health Insurance Program. Children from low- and middle-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid—working families—are able to receive healthcare through CHIP, and every year, 25 million people, including 300,000 veterans and 7.5 million children, receive medical care from community health centers in cities and towns and rural communities all across Michigan and across the country. That is 9 million children who can see a doctor when they get sick or hurt, and that is millions of parents who don't have to lie awake at night, worrying about what will happen the next time their child falls, breaks an arm, gets strep throat, or something even worse.

Thanks to Republican inaction, these millions of parents do now have to worry.

It has been 38 days since the Republican leadership let funding expire for the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers—38 days and counting—38 days when we could have been working together to fund these important programs. Yet that didn't happen, even though they have bipartisan support. That is 38 days of telling children and hard-working families who use these programs that they don't matter as much as other things we are doing.

For the longest time, the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers have received strong bipartisan support, and that is true today. If these programs—a bill that came out of the Finance Committee and a bill that Senator Roy BLUNT and I have introduced—were brought to the floor, they would get strong bipartisan support—if we could get them on the floor.

We are hearing from more than 1,000 organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes, and the National Association of Counties, all urging us to take up the CHIP bill and to pass it—the 5-year extension, which is so critical.

Senator HATCH on the Finance Committee, of which I am proud to be a member, has worked with Senator WYDEN, with me, and with others to put together a good bill, a 5-year reauthorization of CHIP, on a bipartisan basis, and 70 Members of this body, led by Senator ROY BLUNT and myself, have signed a letter of support for continuing funding for community health centers. Senator BLUNT and I, with eight other Democrats and eight Republicans, have put in a bill to do that.

We know the support is there. The problem is, we cannot get it brought up on the floor as a priority for the Senate.

As I mentioned, this crucial funding expired 38 days ago—more than a month ago. Over those 38 days, the Senate has taken up 54 record rollcall votes, Republicans passed their budget, and we have considered 16 nominees. But we haven't considered over the past 38 days the 9 million children who depend on the Children's Health Insurance Program to stay healthy and the 25 million patients who use community health centers.

We might be 38 days late, but there is no time like today to make children and families a top priority. These programs are a big deal in my State. Before CHIP, too many hard-working families in Michigan couldn't afford to take their children to the doctor. Now, 97 percent of our children in Michigan can go to the doctor. Moms and dads can take their children to the doctor because of what has been put together around health insurance, making health insurance available in Michigan—the highest percentage ever—97 percent.

Last year, Michigan's community health centers treated more than 680,000 patients, including 12,710 veterans.

Having access to health insurance and healthcare we know is life-changing and even lifesaving.

Just ask Jan of Davison, MI, whose daughter Suzi was covered by MICHild—what we call CHIP, actually MICHild—in Michigan. Suzi was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and later with bipolar disorder. In Jan's words:

Without having access to quality health care, we would have been lost. And thanks to MICHild coverage, we are able to afford the help she so desperately needed.

Today, Suzi is a high school graduate and plans to go to community college.

Albert, a resident of Owosso, MI, knows the value of community health centers. He had graduated from high school and was taking college classes. He had a great full-time job with health benefits. He said that it was like a dream come true—until it stopped. Work dried up. In a matter of months, Albert lost his job, his insurance, and his home.

He fell into a deep depression—and many of us would have done the same. But Albert was lucky. A friend noticed that he was struggling and urged him to visit Great Lakes Bay Health Cen-

ters. Within 2 weeks, he had a medical appointment; 3 days after that, he was speaking with a community health center counselor. As Albert said, "It happened so fast, there was no time for me to fall through the cracks."

Today he is running a local business and has his confidence back. He has lost 50 pounds and stopped drinking. He has rebuilt his relationships with his family. And he is now giving back to the very clinic that changed his life, serving on the board of Great Lakes Bay Health Centers.

All of the children and the people who receive coverage and care from CHIP and community health centers can tell their stories.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, if I might just take 30 seconds to complete my remarks.

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

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Let me just say in conclusion that we can fix this. We don't have to put up one more day on the count chart. Today we can make children and families a priority by passing critical healthcare that has the bipartisan support to get it done, if we have the urgency to do so.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Engel nomination?

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 264 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Perdue
Blunt	Gardner	Portman
Boozman	Graham	Risch
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Capito	Hatch	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Cochran	Hoeben	Sasse
Collins	Inhofe	Scott
Corker	Isakson	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Strange
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	Manchin	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young