

by a group of brave high school students, the friends and classmates of the fallen, whom I will be sitting down with tomorrow. Their passion and eloquence have been a moral course for change.

Thank God for these students. They are urging us now to have a debate in Congress about something very straightforward: What can we do to stop very dangerous guns from getting into the hands of very dangerous people? How can we keep Americans safe at our movie theaters, at night clubs, at concerts and churches, and above all, at our schools?

We need to get something real and significant accomplished. The problem of gun violence in this country is too immediate for another delay, too severe for half measures.

President Trump has been talking about comprehensive background checks. We are glad to hear that. We are glad that folks are finally starting to talk about the real issues of gun safety again. Democrats believe that, at the very least, in the wake of Parkland, we should strive for comprehensive background checks—closing the loopholes that allow anyone, regardless of a violent history or a history of mental illness, to walk into a gun show or go on the internet and purchase a gun. More than 90 percent of Americans and the vast majority of gun owners support comprehensive background checks. What are we waiting for?

There seems to be a discussion about a more limited proposal, the Fix NICS bill, sponsored by Senators CORNYN and MURPHY, which improves the existing background check system in a few ways. I support the bill and I am a co-sponsor, but the Fix NICS bill is not what President Trump has been talking about this afternoon and at other times when he says “comprehensive background checks.” Fix NICS was written to address one specific issue that was brought to light after the horrific shooting in a church in Sutherland Springs, TX. It is a proposal to address that specific problem, but it leaves unaddressed a host of crucial gun safety issues, including, and especially, the loopholes in our background check system. If we only pass Fix NICS, we will be right back here after the next shooting in nearly the same place. If all Congress does in response to the Parkland shooting is to pass Fix NICS, we will not be doing our job. We must do much more than that.

This week, the Democratic caucus will discuss what policies we believe will most effectively curb the uniquely American epidemic of gun violence. We will propose them and work with our Republican colleagues to perfect and, hopefully, enact them. I sincerely believe we can make progress even on an issue as fraught as this one, but it will require our Republican friends to break free from the iron grip of the NRA.

Our Republican friends face a simple choice: Do something real on guns or please the NRA. Doing both is impossible.

The NRA's No. 1 goal is to make sure nothing meaningful on gun safety ever happens. When there are national issues, when there are horrible shootings, they make a feint as if they might try to do something, but then they pull right back because they want nothing to be done.

As an example, after the shooting in Las Vegas, Senators tried to do something here in the Senate about bump stocks, the modification that allowed the perpetrator to automatically fire his arsenal of assault weapons. The NRA and many Republicans said that they would be willing to work on it, but then what? The NRA pushed the weakest possible measure—a simple review of the issue by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, which had already said that they couldn't do anything about the bill. And then what happened? Nothing.

Now the NRA has pushed the House Republicans to attach the Fix NICS bill—the Cornyn-Murphy bill, a very modest improvement focused on one issue that happened in Texas, but it was not relevant to what happened here in Parkland. They tried to attach that to the NRA's No. 1 legislative priority, concealed carry reciprocity, a bill that undermines our existing gun laws, defeating the entire purpose of the legislation.

Even when it comes to the most modest improvements to gun safety laws, the NRA always finds a way to stand in the way of progress. If we are going to get something significant done to keep our schools and our kids safe from gun violence, for the first time in a very long time, President Trump and congressional Republicans will have to buck the NRA.

It is our hope that Republican leaders will work with us in a bipartisan way to pass legislation that makes a real difference—not half measures, not baby steps, and certainly not attaching good legislation to legislation that would make the overall problem even worse.

We hope Republicans will work with us to pass serious changes to our gun laws, whether the NRA supports them or not. That is the only way we will make progress on an issue that has frustrated Congress and the vast majority of the American people for far too long.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, last week the Republican-led FCC formally published a rule reversing net neutrality—the legal infrastructure that kept the internet free and open to all Americans. The FCC's rule will give the ISP—the internet service providers—the authority to restrict customers' access to their favorite websites by forcing consumers to buy internet packages, such as cable, and pay more for premium access.

In this new universe, big companies that can pay to play could get faster

internet service while startups and everyday Americans are stuck in the slow lane. It will mean the end of the free and open internet as we know it. The way the internet has driven innovation and entrepreneurship and the way it has provided unprecedented opportunities for Americans to learn and connect with one another could all change, with a profit-making organization at the toll booth deciding who pays what.

We have an opportunity to save the internet by undoing the FCC's ruling through the Congressional Review Act. All 49 Democrats have already signed on to the bill, and one Republican, SUSAN COLLINS, has joined us. We now need only one more vote, one more Republican, to reverse the FCC's ruling here in the Senate.

When we force a vote on this bill, for the first time, Republicans in Congress will have the opportunity to right the administration's wrong and show the American people whose side they are on—the average consumer or once again side with big corporate interests. Are they on the side of big internet service providers and corporations, or are they on the side of consumers, entrepreneurs, startups, and small business owners?

Tomorrow there will be a net neutrality day of action here on the Hill that I hope will focus the Senate's attention on the issue. We have 60 legislative days to pass the CRA, and I urge every single one of my Republican colleagues to join us and help save the internet.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth L. Branch, of Georgia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARIAN BENTON TASCO

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate Black History Month and to pay tribute to a Pennsylvanian who has dedicated her life to public service.

Today, we honor former Philadelphia councilwoman Marian Benton Tasco, whose 50-year career in public service has improved the lives of countless people in our State. Throughout her career, Marian Tasco consistently fought for the people of her community. From her first days as a typist working in the city of Philadelphia to the end of her seventh term serving on

the city council, Marian Tasco's life has been dedicated to helping people. Today we celebrate Marian's commitment to public service.

Born during the days of segregation in Greensboro, NC, Marian Tasco was joyfully raised through the love and care of her mother, Mazie Benton; her great-grandmother, Susie Short; and her grandparents, Alice and Thomas Benton. At an early age, Marian expressed an interest in community service through volunteer activities with the Brownies and Girl Scouts of America. Even as a child, Marian Tasco was inspired to help others.

It was at this point in her life that Marian imagined that she would go on to become an educator. With that goal in mind, she began her education at Bennett College, a historically Black liberal arts college for women, which is located in Greensboro. Marian worked during the summers to pay for her tuition. After 2 years, Marian had to leave Bennett when she could no longer afford to pay the cost of tuition. Later in life, Marian would return to Bennett College as a member of the board of trustees and actively work to support the growth of the college.

After leaving Bennett, Marian Tasco moved to Philadelphia to be with her family and to continue her education at Temple University. Again working to pay her way through school, she attended classes at night until her graduation.

While she maintained a strong interest in serving others, she decided that, rather than education, politics and government would be her venue for service. In 1959, Marian began her work for the city of Philadelphia as a clerk typist I in the Philadelphia Police Department's Pawn Brokers Division. As a result of her diligent work, not long thereafter, she was promoted to clerk typist II. In this new role, she was reassigned to the registrar's office of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Like many others who have served the public, Marian Tasco's story in politics began on the frontlines of the community—the community she would later go on to serve.

Under the leadership of a distinguished lawyer, Charles Bowser, Marian served as a task force coordinator for the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition. This is an organization that she continues to serve today as a board member. One of Marian's greatest accomplishments was the creation of a youth-focused summer work program that still exists today. Her experience at the Urban Affairs Coalition affirmed her interest in public affairs and community outreach and helped increase her understanding of the needs of the African-American community in Philadelphia.

As her career progressed and new opportunities emerged, Marian Tasco remained committed to the path of service. Following her work as an assistant to the former secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, C. Delores

Tucker, Marian brought her passion for service to the office of the late U.S. Congressman William H. Gray III. He also, of course, served as House majority whip and chairman of the Budget Committee. She worked as both campaign manager and director of constituent services for Congressman Gray.

Serving with Secretary Tucker and Congressman Gray made Marian Tasco worthy of recognition, but Marian wanted to do more. She decided that with her years of experience in community activism and public service, she would seek elected office. It was at the urging of Marian's mentor, former Representative, City Councilman, and Secretary of Public Welfare John White, Jr., that she made the decision to seek elected office.

In 1983, Marian became the first African American elected Philadelphia city commissioner. Instantly, she helped develop voter education and registration programs in the city and worked to grow civic education focusing on Philadelphia's young people.

In 1988, Marian began her first term on the Philadelphia City Council as a representative for the ninth district of the city. For over 27 years, she served in a number of communities, including East Oak Lane, West Oak Lane, Mount Airy, Olney, Logan, Lawncrest, and Oxford Circle. She would go on to be re-elected seven times and pioneer initiatives to improve the quality of life for Philadelphians young and old.

Throughout her tenure in office, Councilwoman Tasco's role continued to grow in responsibility and scope. She eventually rose to serve as Philadelphia City Council's majority leader, as well as majority whip.

Marian Tasco has served as ward leader for the 50th Ward of Philadelphia for the last three decades. She was also unanimously elected by the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee to represent Pennsylvania on the Democratic National Committee. In this DNC role, Councilwoman Tasco's reach grew beyond Philadelphia into the national political arena.

She helped institute meaningful change in Philadelphia and literally across the Nation. Among other issues, she worked to fight predatory lending, and her work in that area positively impacted the lives of many Philadelphians. Her commitment to "protect Americans from unscrupulous dealings of financial institutions" spanned both Broad Street and Wall Street and helped inspire some of President Barack Obama's work. Her advocacy on this issue dates back to the early 1990s, when she worked with community organizations to alert Philadelphia residents about the potential harm of money offered by loan sharks. In 2004, she briefed then-State Senator Obama on the issue during his campaign for the U.S. Senate. In commemoration of her efforts, President Obama invited Councilwoman Tasco to join him for the signing of the historic Dodd-Frank legislation.

Marian Tasco's accomplishments in public office made Philadelphia a better place to live and work, and the people of Pennsylvania's largest city remembered. Her retirement celebrations had over 1,200 attendees, including elected officials, labor leaders, community leaders, clergy, and, of course, constituents—the people she served. Councilwoman Tasco is a beloved figure throughout the city of Philadelphia and beyond. She is beloved by her peers and those she represented as a councilwoman.

Marian's work in public service was a shining example for others to follow. Philadelphia mayor and former city council member Jim Kenney and former mayor and councilman Michael Nutter have both cited the councilwoman as a mentor. In fact, Mayor Kenney even noted that Councilwoman Tasco "raised him" from the age of 32, when he was a new council member.

She also has a proven legacy of recognizing and developing young talent on her own team. Two current members of the Philadelphia City Council, Derrick Green and Cherelle Parker, and the late Judge Brenda Frazier-Clemons all served as members of her staff.

Councilwoman Marian Tasco's lifetime of service has been the subject of commendation. She has received a notable list of awards and honors, including an honorary doctorate of laws degree from Lincoln University. Her years of work to improve the city of Philadelphia resulted in a lifetime appointment to the Board of Directors of City Trusts, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, and the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority Board, just to name a few. For her advocacy on behalf of behavioral health programs and work to push local healthcare reforms, the former Lindley Court senior living apartments were renamed in her honor.

Marian Tasco has spent the better part of her life working to improve her community, and she has inspired the next generation of public servants. As we celebrate this Black History Month, we honor those who have made a real commitment to serve others. Marian Tasco has always honored that commitment.

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the city of Philadelphia, and all those whose lives have been impacted and inspired by her work, it is my privilege on this day to pay tribute to Marian Tasco, a former member and leader of the City Council of Philadelphia and a devoted public servant who worked her way from clerk typist I to citywide leader with national impact.

Well done, Marian. Your adopted city and our Commonwealth are proud of your noble work.

Thank you.

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

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

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today marks nearly 2 weeks since the murder of 17 students and staff in Parkland, FL. May today also mark the moment that we resolved to do something about school violence. May it mark the moment that left and right determined to lay aside their differences and work together to prevent future tragedies.

To keep our children safe from harm, there is no panacea, no one legislative solution, and it disheartens me when I hear talk about what can't be done. It is time to focus on what can be done.

Fortunately, solutions on the State level—including in my home State of Utah—can help show us the way forward. Working in the realm of the possible, Utah State legislators have come together to forge bipartisan solutions to stop school violence. When I was in Salt Lake last week, I learned firsthand about the Safe Utah smartphone app. The Safe Utah crisis text and tip line is a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to use through texting and a confidential tip program. Licensed clinicians from the University Neuropsychiatric Institute at the University of Utah Health respond to all incoming chats, texts, and calls 24/7 by providing supporting or crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and referral services.

The Safe Utah Program—developed with funding from the Utah State Legislature in collaboration with the University Neuropsychiatric Institute, the Utah State Office of Education, the Utah Office of the Attorney General, and the Utah Anti-Bullying Coalition—is a testament to what can be done when mental health, education, and law enforcement agencies work together to prevent student violence.

Not only is the app innovative, it works. Since the app was unveiled in 2016, 86 planned school attacks have been stopped. Think about that, 86 school attacks stopped in a relatively small State. That number translates to dozens of lives saved and hundreds of heartbreaks spared. For thousands of families across the State, this simple app made a world of difference. Imagine the potential if these kinds of technologies were available to students across the country. We could quickly get help for those who need it and, in the process, save countless lives.

That is why, later this week, I will introduce the Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Act, or the STOP School Violence Act. My bill makes Department of Justice grants available to States to fund programs designed to reduce school violence.

To that end, the STOP School Violence Act will fund four initiatives. First, it will provide grant funding for evidence-based training to prevent stu-

dent violence against others and self, including training for local law enforcement officers, school personnel, and students. This is not just active shooter training but training designed to give students and teachers the knowledge to recognize and properly respond to warning signals or signals to stop school violence before it occurs.

Second, the bill will fund evidence-based technology and equipment to improve security and prevent school violence. This includes the development and operation of anonymous reporting systems like the Safe Utah app, as well as improvements to school security infrastructure to deter and respond to threats of school violence, and, when prevention efforts fall short—as they unfortunately will in some cases—locks on classroom doors, reinforced entryways, and other commonsense security infrastructure improvements will help.

Third, the bill will provide funding for the development and operation of evidence-based school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams, which may include evidence-based training for school officials in responding to mental health crises. Again, school personnel need the tools to assess and respond to threats before they materialize, including those threats that originate from individuals struggling with mental health issues.

Finally, the bill will provide funding for continued coordination with local law enforcement. Law enforcement alone cannot prevent school violence—just as no amount of prevention training, security infrastructure improvements, or mental health resources would be able to singularly prevent tragedies like that in Parkland, but law enforcement, and in particular those officers who already staff schools, have an important role to play in any comprehensive solution to prevent school violence.

Now, some of you may point out something my bill will not address, and that is guns. On this issue, many reforms have been proposed over the last 12 days—some old and some new. I believe we can find common ground here, too, such as that outlined in the bipartisan Fix NICS Act, which ensures that our background check system is operating as designed.

A background check is only as good as the records in the database. The FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System is currently incomplete because many Federal agencies and States have not provided all records that establish someone as prohibited from owning a firearm under current law, especially those related to mental health adjudications and involuntary commitment orders.

The bipartisan Fix NICS Act will ensure more of those records make it into the database by holding Federal agencies accountable for uploading relevant records and incentivizing States to upload all relevant information. Including these missing records will help

ensure more accurate and complete background checks, thereby keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of felons, fugitives, drug addicts, persons with serious mental illness, and other prohibited persons.

I will be the first to admit there is no single, perfect solution—not the STOP School Violence Act and not the Fix NICS Act, but both of these bills can help save lives. Remember the 86 planned school attacks since the Save Utah app was unveiled and remember the 26 lives that might have been spared if the domestic violence offense of the shooter in Sutherland Springs, TX, had been properly entered into the FBI background check database.

Now is not the time for argument but for action. Rather than letting the perfect be the enemy of the good, I implore my friends on both sides of the aisle to come together for the safety of our children. Rather than resorting to recycled talking points, I ask my colleagues to heed Minority Leader SCHUMER's call to "pass real legislation that makes a difference." Rather than retreating to our partisan foxholes, I call on Republicans and Democrats alike to surrender their rhetorical weapons. For the good of the Nation, and the good of our children, all of us must look beyond the horizon of our political differences to find common ground.

Is this legislation enough to solve the problem of school violence? No. Quite frankly, it is not enough, but it is a start, and it is a start upon which we can all agree. We will not solve the problem of school violence overnight, but with incremental efforts—such as the legislation I have proposed—we can make a lasting difference and even save thousands of lives.

So let's not delay any further. We owe it to our children, and to all of those affected by gun violence, to take decisive action in those areas where we do agree. This is important stuff. We can't just throw in the sponge and act like we have this problem solved when we still have work to do. So I hope we will take heed to what I have just suggested—I think it can be very helpful to us—and we follow the suggestions I have made here today.

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

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

PARKLAND, FLORIDA, SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I bring a report to the Senate from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, a suburb of Ft. Lauderdale. The teachers and staff of the school returned to work today, which is less than 2 weeks after a former student walked on to the campus with an AR-15 and opened fire on all three floors of a classroom building.