

His customers will also likely be breathing easier. Tax reform is enabling farmers and ranchers across America to immediately expense the cost of important investments, and it is taking a big bite—a big bite—out of the death tax.

Senators heard stories just like these during last week's State work period. Just ask Senator TOOMEY what tax reform is doing in Pennsylvania. He stopped by New Hudson Facades, a manufacturer in Linwood. Tax reform enabled them to increase wages by 5 percent, and a partner company is contributing \$3,000 to every factory worker's 401(k).

How about in Montana? Senator DAINES' trip across his State took him to Pacific Steel in Great Falls, where sales are up 25 percent—sales are up 25 percent—since tax reform passed.

In West Virginia, Senator CAPITO joined a roundtable at the Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce. She heard from local business leaders about "increased optimism."

In Nevada, 90 percent of the small business owners Senator HELLER recently spoke with said they plan to raise wages, increase benefits, award bonuses, hire more workers, or invest in their operations.

It is a shame our Democratic colleagues still haven't been able to extract themselves from their lockstep opposition to this historic law. If they had gotten their way, none of this good news would have happened—none of it. Only one of the Senators from Pennsylvania voted for the law that is allowing that Linwood manufacturer to expand. Only one Senator from Ohio voted for the new law that is helping those workers in North Lima. Only one Senator from Nevada voted to give small businesses the flexibility to invest more in their employees. Only one Senator from West Virginia and one Senator from Montana voted to take money out of Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of the middle class.

Every single Senate Democrat—every one of them—did all they could to block tax reform. Fortunately, every Republican voted to pass it. And because Congress passed tax reform and the President signed it into law, workers and small business owners are already reaping the benefits.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on Friday, I visited Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, which is located in Howard County, MD, between Washington and Baltimore. I wanted to talk to students about the tragic Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas

High School, in Parkland, FL, which left 17 students and faculty members dead. This is the deadliest high school shooting in American history. I went to Wilde Lake because one of their own teachers, Laura Wallen, was shot to death in September 2017, and her former boyfriend is now on trial for her murder.

I was extremely impressed by the passion of these students. They had a great deal of interest in the subject matter; they were extremely articulate; and they asked great questions. I found it extremely encouraging for the future of Howard County, MD, and this Nation. These students are rightfully concerned about their safety and the safety of their classmates. It has been 2 weeks since a disturbed young man invaded Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The reaction seems to be like clockwork after each shooting. There is bipartisan shock, anger, and horror. Predictably, the question comes out: Will this time be different? The answer for the Republican leaders in Congress has always been "no" as the outrage and call to act quickly falls back to NRA talking points versus reality. This time, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and the students in Maryland and across the country are not taking "no" as the final word. This time, the survivors are leading the way and are speaking out in a forceful way like we have not heard before.

Students like Ryan Deitsch, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, want to know why these students—the children—need to be the ones to speak out "just to save innocent lives," he said. He wants to know why the adults cannot be the adults and do what is necessary to protect children.

I think the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have had a clear, articulate message that this carnage needs to stop. They want to feel safe in their schools again. Armed with their cell phones and their stories, they have taken up the banner of hashtag "never again" and are changing the face of this debate to make this country safer from gun violence.

Alex Wind, another survivor from Stoneman Douglas, laid out the larger problem of why students are mobilizing:

We're marching because it's not just schools. It's movie theaters, it's concerts, it's nightclubs. This kind of stuff can't just happen. You know, we are marching for our lives, we're marching for the 17 lives we lost. And we're marching for our children's lives and our children's children and their children.

So what can we do?

There are several pieces of legislation that are ready to go. The Democrats and some Republicans have been willing and ready to act. Leader MCCONNELL could move any one of these bills right now. Let's start by

making it clear that weapons of war are not needed by civilians of any age. I have cosponsored S. 2095, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2017, offered by Senator FEINSTEIN.

This legislation would, one, ban the sale, manufacture, transfer, and importation of military style assault weapons; two, ban any assault weapon that accepts a detachable ammunition magazine and has one or more military characteristics; three, ban magazines and other ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition, which allow shooters to quickly fire many rounds without needing to reload.

The bill also requires a background check on any future sale, trade, or gifting of an assault weapon that is covered by the bill, and it prohibits the transfer of high-capacity ammunition magazines. It also bans bump fire stocks and other devices that allow semiautomatic weapons to fire at fully automatic rates. Congress should also pass the Background Check Expansion Act, S. 2009, which I have cosponsored and has been offered by Senator MURPHY.

This bill would expand Federal background check requirements to include the sale or transfer of all firearms by private sellers, just as licensed dealers are required to conduct checks for sales under the existing Brady Law. The bill requires background checks for the sales or transfers of all firearms from one private party to another even if either party is not a federally licensed dealer. This requirement extends to all unlicensed sellers whether they do business online, at gun shows, or out of their homes.

According to a recent poll, a record 97 percent of those surveyed said that they support requiring background checks for gun buyers—97 percent. Why can't we get this done? It is not a heavy lift. Americans are with us on this. We need to recognize that saving children's lives is more important than the National Rifle Association.

Congress also should ease restrictions on gun violence research and prevention efforts by removing onerous restrictions on the Centers for Disease Control research. We can improve States' sharing of information with Federal databases that screen gun buyers.

At a townhall last week, Senator RUBIO, when questioned by an audience of students and parents from Stoneman Douglas, said that "the problems we are facing here today cannot be solved by gun laws alone." With that, I agree, but these gun laws will make a difference. Yes, there is no single solution, but we should be united in our willingness to do what we can to save lives.

I agree with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that we must devote more resources to mental health priorities to identify young people who may be about to cause harm to themselves or others.

Let's attack this problem from multiple directions. We cannot raise our hands in the air and give up because there is no one law that can solve the problem. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option when our children are being killed, sometimes by other children, and surrendering to the false logic that the problem is too big to address falls well short of what the American people deserve. We were sent here to our Nation's Capitol to make the tough decisions and to do the right thing.

I agree with Alex Wind that this problem we need to tackle is larger than simply school safety, but I would like to talk about that specifically for one moment.

In an effort to turn the conversation away from an assault weapons ban or closing loopholes in background checks, the President decided to latch on to this idea that we should arm teachers and educators in our schools. We do not need, as President Trump has suggested, more guns in the schools, and we do not need teachers carrying guns. We do know that teachers are hired to teach, not to be security guards.

Let's listen to our educators and say no to this proposal. The answer to keeping guns and gun violence out of our schools is not to bring more guns into the school. The students I talked to at Wilde Lake High School in Columbia, MD, understood that adding more guns would not help the situation and could lead to more problems in the schools themselves. They certainly want to see their buildings more secure, but we can do that through infrastructure improvements, technology, and school resource officers.

Why are these things happening in the United States with such alarming frequency and not elsewhere around the world? Gun-related deaths unfold in tragic circumstances across this country daily, with more than 1,800 people killed by guns this year alone, according to the Gun Violence Archive, a not-for-profit group. Mass shootings often shine the spotlight on the United States and its position as a global outlier.

The number of firearms available to American civilians is estimated to be around 310 million, according to the 2009 National Institute of Justice report.

According to the Small Arms Survey, the exact number of civilian-owned firearms is impossible to pinpoint because of a variety of factors, including arms that go unregistered due to illegal trade and global conflict. Estimates indicate that Americans own nearly half of the 650 million civilian-owned guns in the world today, which is nearly one gun for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Our Nation is well armed. India is home to the second-largest civilian firearm stockpile, estimated at 46 million.

Americans own the most guns per person in the world, with about 4 in 10

saying they either own a gun or live in a home where there is a gun, according to the 2017 Pew Center study. Forty-eight percent of Americans said they grew up in a house with guns. According to the survey, a majority—66 percent—of U.S. gun owners own multiple firearms. The No. 2 country in the world for the largest number of guns per capita is Yemen—a country that is in the throes of a 3-year-old civil war. They trail significantly behind us. They have 54 guns per 100 in Yemen; we have 88 guns per 100 in the United States.

When it comes to gun massacres, the United States is an anomaly. There are more public mass shootings in America than in any other country in the world. The United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population but holds 31 percent of global mass shooters. In Australia, for example, four mass shootings occurred between 1987 and 1996. After those instances, public opinion turned against gun violence, and Parliament passed stricter gun safety laws. Australia hasn't had a mass shooting since.

Gun safety laws work. The public demands that we take action to make our communities safer.

Gun homicide rates are about 25 times higher in the United States than in other developed countries. The United States has one of the highest rates of death by firearms in the developed world, according to World Health Organization data. The calculations based on OECD data from 2010 show that Americans are 51 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than people in the UK.

Most American gun owners say that a major reason they own a gun is for personal protection, according to the Pew study. However, the majority of firearms-related deaths are attributable to self-harm. Gun-related suicides are eight times higher in the United States than in other high-income nations.

Thinking of Stoneman Douglas High School, we all wonder out loud, what drove this young man to kill indiscriminantly? There is no one single reason, but that is no excuse for Congress and lawmakers in all of our States to remain frozen and fail to act to try to stop a future shooting from happening. If anything, it should be the impetus for us to move forward on many fronts and to take many actions to support our children and support our communities so more lives are not lost in such a violent way.

We cannot allow the story of this shooting to end like all the others in recent history. We should have taken action after three students were killed and five wounded in December 1997 at a high school in West Paducah, KY. We should have taken action after two students opened fire on April 20, 1999, in Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, killing 12 classmates and a teacher and wounding 26 others. We should have taken action after a gunman fa-

tally shot 32 people in a dorm and classrooms at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, on April 16, 2007.

Columbine, Virginia Tech—for a period, these names became a code for some of the worst killings in our history. Nearly 5 years later, it happened again. Three students were killed and two wounded in a shooting on February 27, 2012, that started in a school cafeteria in Chardon, OH, as students waited for buses to other schools. Then there was Sandy Hook. I know we all remember a 20-year-old gunman, in December of 2012, killing 20 first grade children and 6 educators inside Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT—elementary school students. These were first graders, for goodness' sake, young children who should clearly have moved us to action. But no. The killings continued because the Republican leadership has been unwilling to budge from the NRA-approved message.

We have had bipartisan support for some of this legislation, as we do today, but too many are so afraid of the NRA response that they lose sight of the fact that children are being killed right before our eyes.

On September 8, 2016, a 14-year-old girl died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after shooting and killing another female student at Alpine High School in West Texas.

Just 20 days later, on September 28, a 6-year-old boy was fatally shot on the playground of Townville Elementary School in South Carolina by a 14-year-old boy who had just killed his father. Another child and a teacher were struck by bullets but survived.

I know some of you are thinking: I haven't heard about these shootings. That is a problem in and of itself. School shootings have become so commonplace and so much a part of our lives that children dying in our schools may not make it into the paper. We might miss it. We cannot let this become commonplace. It cannot be the new norm.

Another incident you may not have heard of happened last April. A gunman opened fire in the special education classroom of his estranged wife at North Park Elementary School in San Bernardino, CA, killing her and an 8-year-old boy and wounding another child.

In September of last year, in Rockford, WA, a 15-year-old boy was killed at Freeman High School and three female students were wounded when authorities say another 15-year-old boy opened fire with a handgun.

In December of last year, two students at Aztec High School in New Mexico were killed by a gunman disguised as a student.

Barely a month ago, in January, 2 students were killed and 14 wounded by gunfire when a student opened fire before classes began at Marshall County High School in West Kentucky. A 15-year-old—a 15-year-old—is being charged for this crime.

This time, the survivors are speaking out in a forceful way like we have not

heard before. I think the students speaking out have had a clear, articulate message that this carnage needs to stop. I am not sure I know any lawmaker or American who would disagree with the idea that our students need to be safe in their schools. It means that we need to act—really act this time.

Setting aside the outrageous idea of arming teachers, it has been heartening to see the President move in the direction of legislative solutions, such as expanding background checks and banning bump stocks. The devil is always in the details, and we will see how far the President is willing to stray from the NRA and whether the Republican leadership will back the President or remain on the sidelines of protecting the American people and especially our children.

On that Valentine's Day, February 14, when I heard about the shooting in Parkland, FL, my immediate reaction was horror, pain, and outrage. How could we allow this to happen yet again? Schools should be a safe harbor for our children, not a place of killing and terror. I was in my office thinking about how tragic this is, not only for those who were killed but for all the children who were there. I am as frustrated as the people across this country. I want to pass commonsense gun safety legislation. Why shouldn't we get these military-style weapons off the streets?

It is hard to know what will motivate the congressional leadership to bring up this issue, what will jar them to action. I want action. We may not solve the problem entirely, but we need to try. We need to do something.

A new CNN poll released just this Sunday finds that 70 percent of Americans now back tougher gun laws. This is a huge jump from 52 percent after the tragic, horrific October shootings in Las Vegas. This number includes 49 percent of Republicans, which I think is encouraging. Saving lives should not be a partisan issue. Commonsense gun safety legislation should not be a partisan issue.

Public opinion polls may not be perfect, but they are generally helpful to show trends. Americans are getting it. It is time that we do. This trend toward protecting the American people, and especially our children, is moving in the right direction. The American people are letting their voices be heard on this issue.

Thoughts and prayers might console the grieving for a moment, but action speaks louder and will have a lasting impact. From my hometown of Baltimore to the many towns across America that have had their names in the headlines because of gun-related tragedies or mass shootings, people are calling upon Congress to act.

I don't care what the reasons are for a change of heart, but let's get bills on the floor. What we are proposing are logical next steps to address the deadly problem that has been festering in this country for too long. Too many young

lives have been lost. Will this time be different?

Mr. President, in honor of the victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, I ask unanimous consent that their names be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Alyssa Alhadeff, 14; Scott Beigel, 35; Martin Duque Anguiano, 14; Nicholas Dworet, 17; Aaron Feis, 37; Jaime Guttenberg, 14; Chris Hixon, 49; Luke Hoyer, 15; Cara Loughran, 14; Gina Montalto, 14; Joaquin Oliver, 17; Alaina Petty, 14; Meadow Pollack, 18; Helena Ramsay, 17; Alex Schachter, 14; Carmen Schentrup, 16; Peter Wang, 15.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, to all the victims of gun violence who have preceded them, let's make the answer a resounding yes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this morning, I would like to start off speaking about a very important day in the history of my State, a day that inspires pride in the hearts of all those who were born in Texas. I am here to commemorate Texas Independence Day, which will be celebrated tomorrow.

On March 2, 1836, Texas adopted its Declaration of Independence from Mexico. It is worth reading, and I would recommend it to anyone. This happened in the context of a struggle that is perhaps best remembered by the Battle of the Alamo, which laid some of the groundwork for Texans' eventual victory.

On February 24 of that year, with his position under siege, an important figure named William Barret Travis wrote a letter, which I would like to read. He was a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army, and during the battle, his fellow soldiers were outnumbered nearly 10 to 1 by the forces of the Mexican dictator Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Here in the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats have had the honor of reading the fabled Travis letter since 1961, when then-Texas Senator John Tower started that tradition. The letter was addressed "To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World." Travis wrote:

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man—The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own

honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

Signed, "William Barret Travis."

What a letter it is. It is a reminder for all of us that the 189 defenders of the Alamo lost their lives, but they did not die in vain. In fact, Texans wouldn't be around today if it weren't for them.

The Battle of the Alamo bought precious time for the Texas revolutionaries, allowing General Sam Houston to maneuver his army into a position for the decisive victory at the Battle of San Jacinto. I would just note that I am honored to occupy the same Senate seat first occupied by Sam Houston when he became a U.S. Senator after Texas became annexed to the United States in 1845.

With that victory at the Battle of San Jacinto, Texas became a sovereign nation—the Republic of Texas—for 9 years. For 9 years, it thrived as a separate nation, and then in 1845 it was annexed to the United States as the 28th State.

Many Texas patriots who fought in the revolution went on to serve in the U.S. Congress—Sam Houston being one of them. Every single day, I am honored to have the opportunity to serve 28 million Texans—a chance I wouldn't have had without the sacrifices made by the brave men like William Barrett Travis 182 years ago.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on another matter, we have come a long way since the days of the Texas revolution, but Texas remains a place of optimism, fortitude, and dedication to worthy causes. It is also a bustling State, full of entrepreneurs, investors, and risk-takers who have created jobs and opportunities for the people who live there. I would like to mention briefly two iconic companies that are showing their devotion to Texas in a much different but important manner.

In Tyler, they are spreading the good news of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the law we passed in December, which overhauled our Tax Code. For those not familiar with where Tyler is, it is out in East Texas. We sometimes refer to that as "behind the pine curtain." The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act effects have been far-reaching. They have positively affected communities all across the country for the past 2 months, and Tyler is no exception.

The first company I would like to mention is Greenberg Turkeys, a family-owned operation that sells the famous Thanksgiving bird to around 200,000 customers each holiday season. Four generations of the Greenberg family have worked in the company since the 1940s, and its turkeys have been featured on Oprah Winfrey's website as one of her favorite things—twice, in fact. As a result of the tax reforms we have passed, the company plans to refurbish its plant and give hourly employees a raise. Sam Greenberg, the president, said: