

This is a really good deal for businesses. It pays to treat people right, and so we want to share this with our workers.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

The second Tyler company I want to mention briefly is Don's TV & Appliance. The staff there has more than 150 years of combined experience. It buys products direct from manufacturers at the lowest possible cost in order to provide customers with prices that are competitive with national chain stores. Recently, the owner, Don Thedford, and his son Donnie announced they would give their employees raises in 2018, which they were not able to do for the past several years, and they would not have been able to do it but for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Thanks to those reforms, Don has been able to help out his employees to provide them more take-home pay, and I am sure they appreciate the extra money in their paycheck each pay period. They can use these savings to invest, to pay for their children's education, prepare for their retirement, or whatever they find best.

So I just wanted to say to Don and other small employers who are making sure their employees see the benefit of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act reforms: Thank you for paying the savings forward. I can't wait to continue to hear more stories like these two in the months ahead.

FIX NICS BILL

Mr. President, on a final note, I would like to bring up one last topic we have been discussing a lot this last week; that is, ways we can prevent mass shootings from happening in the future. Of course, the most recent one occurred at Parkland, FL, at Stoneman Douglas High School.

Last fall, my State saw another in-sidious shooting at Sutherland Springs near San Antonio, TX. Twenty-six people lost their lives that day worshipping in a small Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, and 20 more were wounded, including a 6-year-old boy named Ryland Ward, who was shot five times. We are ecstatic Ryland survived and is now out of the hospital and has gone home.

What we all learned in the aftermath of that event is that sometimes these horrific crimes are perpetrated by individuals who never should have been able to purchase firearms in the first place. That is because, under current law, convicted felons, like the gunman at Sutherland Springs, are prohibited from legally purchasing firearms. The problem was that his convictions were not uploaded in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, what is commonly referred to as the NICS system operated by the FBI.

I have introduced a bill that has already passed the House that would address this problem and, I believe, would save lives in the future. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation cosponsored by the junior Senator from Connecticut. Senator MURPHY, along with his colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL,

come from the State that saw the horrific killings at Sandy Hook. We added 10 new cosponsors just this week, bringing the total number to 50 cosponsors for this legislation. In my experience, it is rare to see a piece of legislation enjoy such broad, bipartisan support—50 cosponsors.

I have been saying all week that we need to pass this bill now. We should not wait, we should not go home emptyhanded, and we should not have to face the grieving families who lost a child or a loved one as a result of a future shooting that might have been averted had we acted. America is tired of the government's response to these catastrophes which rip families apart, take lives, and pit people against each other. The response of their government has been largely either silence or bickering with no outcome, no result.

There are other proposals we can consider as we continue to grapple with the questions posed in Parkland—questions about failures of local law enforcement, social media platforms, and the FBI. Yesterday, the President hosted an amazing meeting of 17 Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis and brainstormed about other things we might be able to do, but right now—right now—fix NICS is our best and only option to act in response. It is supported by the President, the majority and minority leaders are cosponsors, and it is supported by gun groups like the NRA and Everytown for Gun Safety, which are at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum when it comes to the Second Amendment. As I said, this bill has 50 cosponsors in the Senate and is ready for action, having already passed the House of Representatives.

I pledged to myself, after my wife and I visited Sutherland Springs a week after the terrible shooting there and attended a church service led by the pastor who lost his 14-year-old daughter in that shooting just 1 week before—it was a gut-wrenching, emotional service, but it was inspiring in its own way. I pledged then that I would never face another grieving family with empty hands, saying we could have done something that might have saved your child's life or your loved one's life by fixing the broken background check system. I pledged I would never face them again, saying we didn't try our best to save lives in the future by passing commonsense, bipartisan legislation like the Fix NICS bill.

As I said, there are other things we might do, but, as we all know, the threshold for actually passing legislation is 60 votes. What I don't want us to do is to end up like we did on the DACA debate, where we started with a neutral bill—a shell which really did nothing—and all of the various proposals failed to get 60 votes, so we ended up emptyhanded on the DACA issue. I don't want that to happen again, and I am not going to go home and tell my constituents in Texas I didn't do my very best to make sure we

did something and something meaningful that would save lives in the future. Fix NICS is the best way to do that and do that now.

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

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

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the tragedy in Parkland and the responsibilities of the Senate to try to make our communities safer. I am going to talk very personally about my own experience in confronting gun violence as a mayor of an urban area, Richmond, VA, and as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I will start by saying, I am a gun owner. I am a Second Amendment supporter. When I was an attorney in private practice, I was the lawyer who worked with an effort to amend the Virginia constitution to guarantee Virginians the right to hunt and fish. The Second Amendment and private gun ownership is an important part of our framework. I support it, but I obviously believe that we can do things consistent with the Constitution that will make our Nation safer, and I ask my colleagues to join in that effort.

When I was elected to the Richmond City Council in 1994, Richmond, at that time, was only on one top 10 list that I am aware of. It is not the one you want to be on. We had the second highest homicide rate in the United States. We were not a high-crime area generally, if you looked at all crime, but in homicides and aggravated assaults—assaults committed with weapons—we were unusually high. The weapons of choice in these homicides and aggravated assaults were guns.

I remember very early in my time at the city council getting called to a neighborhood, Gilpin Court, which is a public housing community in my city council district. There had been a gun crime that killed an entire family of five—adults and little children.

Over the course of my 8 years of working in local government, I went to too many crime scenes and funerals and wakes. In some ways, the things that were the most memorable were the meetings in church basements of the families of homicide victims. We embarked upon a set of strategies to make our communities safer. Amidst all the bloodshed and the tears, we actually found strategies—some dealing with reductions in guns, some dealing with law enforcement strategies, some dealing with police and community relations. We found strategies that, over the course of about 8 years, reduced the

homicide rate in Richmond by 60 percent and the aggravated assault rate by an equivalent number.

Out of the pain, what we learned is you can actually take concrete steps that will make your community safer and that will reduce gun violence. You will not eliminate it. That is beyond our power as humble people to do, but you can reduce it. If you know you can, then you must. You have a responsibility to do what you can.

I was elected Governor of Virginia in 2005, and I will never forget April 16, 2007. I had just embarked on a trade mission. I had landed in Japan with a delegation to recruit business to my State. I had gone to the hotel, and I got a call after midnight from my chief of staff, who said: There is a shooting under way at Virginia Tech.

I said: Book me on the next flight home. I have been here for just a few hours on what was going to be a 2-week trade mission, but let me fly back home.

I flew back to what, at the time, was the worst shooting in the history of the United States. In April of 2007, 32 people were gunned down on the campus of Virginia Tech by a deranged youngster who had been adjudicated mentally ill and dangerous and was thus prohibited from having a weapon. But because of glitches and flaws in the background check system, he had been able to purchase multiple weapons, and he committed that horrible crime.

I empaneled a commission. I told them: Let the lawyers and lawsuits be damned. I want to know everything that went wrong, and I want to make public everything that went wrong and everything we can do to fix it. Over the course of a number of months, they produced a report with hundreds of recommendations.

The recommendations were about campus safety. The recommendations were about mental health, but there were also recommendations about fixes to our State and Federal gun laws to reduce the risk of this happening. I was able to make some changes on my own as an executive. I took other changes to my legislature that they rejected.

Again, out of the painful situation—and it is a funny thing to say about your own State, about my State of Virginia, about a place I love like Virginia Tech—I always hoped it would be the worst. I had always hoped that would have been the worst shooting in the history of the United States, but the Pulse nightclub shooting and the Las Vegas shooting now have claimed more victims. Other shootings, like those in Newtown and now Parkland—if the number of victims aren't the same, the tragedy is nevertheless of equal magnitude.

We learn through pain that you can make changes and improve. When I fixed a piece of the background check system flaw, it made us safer. It reduced the risk of gun violence and gun deaths.

My experience as mayor and Governor were painful, but I learned a les-

son in both, which is you can take steps, including steps dealing with the rules about firearms that will make your communities safer. That is a powerful thing. You can take steps that will make communities safer.

I dealt with three lies—three falsehoods—over the course of these efforts as mayor and Governor, as I tried to help us take steps to make us safer.

The first lie was it is not about guns. It is about mental health; it is about other things. But that is just false. Equally false would be if we said that it is only about guns. That would be false as well. To say it is not about guns is a lie perpetrated by an organization headquartered in Virginia, the National Rifle Association. It turned out to be false.

The key to reducing the homicide rate in Virginia ultimately was that we embraced strategies to reduce the gun carry rate. That is a phrase that law enforcement professionals use for the percentage of time where people, in normal interactions with the police, are found to be carrying a weapon. In Virginia, the gun carry rate was unusually high, and that meant when something broke bad or there was an argument, there would often be an aggravated assault or homicide committed with a weapon. We undertook strategies that drove down the gun carry rate. That didn't make bad people good people, but it made it more likely that when things broke bad, there wouldn't be an aggravated assault or a homicide.

So it was about the guns. That is the first lie or falsehood that gets perpetrated: It is not about guns. It is not only about guns, but it is definitely about guns.

A second lie or falsehood perpetrated by the same organization is that they would always say: You can't improve. They would say: That will not solve every problem. You can't solve every bit of gun violence if you do this. They would say this over and over again with any shooting. They would point out the number of things that wouldn't have stopped it, as if not being able to eliminate gun violence means that you shouldn't do anything to try to reduce gun violence. That is just a lie or a falsehood. I have learned from my experiences that if you take steps, you can make communities safer.

The third lie or falsehood we had to confront repeatedly from the National Rifle Association was that gun safety rules violate the Second Amendment. That is just flatout wrong. In fact, the Second Amendment is the only amendment whose text even uses the word regulation. The need for a well-regulated militia gives individuals the right to bear arms.

What does the term "well-regulated" mean? It is not a reference to the length of somebody's beard or the kind of hat they should wear. There is an understanding that firearms are dangerous, and if individuals are to have the right to have them, there also must need to be some appropriate level of

regulation. We are familiar with this in the rest of the Constitution.

I am passionate about the First Amendment. There should be freedom of the press, but you can't just libel or slander without consequence. The Framers, Madison and others, who put these amendments together, understood that the amendments to the Constitution included some limitations because we have to live together, not just as individuals who are free agents, but we have to live together in society.

Those three lies—it is not about guns; we can't do anything about it; and the gun rules violate the Second Amendment—are wrong.

I came to the Senate after the shooting in Sandy Hook. The first meaningful debate we had after I came here was whether we would do something to respond to this horrible carnage of kids in an elementary school.

The Presiding Officer was not in the Senate. I know you followed this as a citizen. I remember standing here in this Chamber in April 2013, casting a vote on a bill that I thought would have been a very good bill to do background record checks. We were surrounded in the Chamber by Sandy Hook families. Many of them were sitting next to Virginia Tech families who had come to be in solidarity with them. There was a feeling of despair, with them around, that was like the great cloud of witnesses referred to in the letter of Paul to the Hebrews. We fell short. They were praying for us to succeed, and we fell short. In the aftermath of that horrible tragedy, this body did precisely nothing.

Well, now we have experienced yet another horrible tragedy. There have been others since Sandy Hook, but it is my deep hope that after this horrible shooting in Parkland, something may be different in this body. The reason I think this one might be different is that these students are standing up and challenging us. The children of our Nation are asking adults to be adults. They are asking us to look in the mirror. They posed the question starkly: What is more important to you, your children or campaign contributions from an interest group?

I think the advocacy of the children of Parkland who suffer, not only their advocacy but the advocacy of students all over the United States—I have held meetings with Moms Demand Action in Richmond and Northern Virginia in the last couple of days, and many students were in these meetings. The advocacy of students and their challenge to us may show us a way.

I will conclude with a story that gives me hope and that suggests there may be some resonance to this moment. Sometimes there is a movement, but there isn't a moment. Sometimes the movement needs a moment to achieve a victory.

Fifty-five years ago, in the spring of 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King was trying to desegregate public accommodations in Birmingham, AL, with the

Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He had been going from community to community. In some places, they were able to desegregate public accommodations relatively easily. Other places were tough but none tougher than Birmingham. At drug stores and department stores, Dr. King and others would have adults go sit in—African Americans and their allies—and be arrested. Yet wave after wave of arrests notwithstanding, including the arrest of Dr. King, the city leaders would not back down. They would not shed the discrimination that violated the equality provisions of the Constitution.

As this was going on, children in the Birmingham schools started to come to Dr. King and say: We want to march too.

Dr. King and his lieutenants really struggled with this. They were parents. They didn't want their kids to be arrested. They didn't want their kids to face guard dogs attacking them. They didn't want their kids to face firehoses directed at them. They had a natural parental reaction: We are going to do this; we want to protect you.

But the children kept coming and saying: We want to march too.

Finally, they said: Isn't this about us? As much as it is about adults, isn't this about us, your children? And if it is about your children, why can't we march?

Dr. King, after a lot of prayer and discussion, finally said: It is about you.

Mr. President, you know this, and for our pages especially, it was those children advocating—and they marched, and they did have firehoses turned on them, and they did have guard dogs released on them. The photos of those children braving that ugly face of discrimination landed on the front pages of papers all over the United States and all over the world, and it was transformative of the civil rights movement.

Adults in the United States knew there was discrimination, but they had become complacent to it or indifferent to it or had even said: I think it is wrong, but it will probably never change. But their children demanded of them: Adults, just be adults. Adults, you say you care about children; prove to us you care about children. And when the adults of America were confronted with the example of their own young people, they had to shake themselves out of their complacency and indifference and shoulder the burden that adults must shoulder.

That is what these students at Parkland are saying to us now. That is what these students all over the country are saying to us now. They are saying: This is about our future. This is about your children. And they are asking us whether children matter more or political contributions matter more.

I urge my colleagues, finally, let's not produce another goose egg in this body. Let's not come together after a horrible tragedy—when there are

meaningful steps, such as background record checks, that we can put on the table to make us safer—and fail them yet again.

I ask my colleagues and especially the majority leader to enable us to have this debate on the floor so that we can take meaningful steps of the kind that we know will make our communities safer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

YEMEN WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, there should be no issue of more importance to Members of Congress than the issue of war and peace and when it is appropriate to send the young people of our country into harm's way, knowing that some of them will not return home alive.

It goes without saying that every armed conflict the United States of America is engaged in must be consistent with the Constitution of the United States and be lawful.

Let's make no mistake about it—article I, section 8 of the Constitution states in no uncertain terms that "Congress shall have the power to . . . declare war." The Founding Fathers gave the power to declare war to Congress because Congress is that body most accountable to the people.

For far too long, Congress—under Democratic and Republican administrations—has abdicated its constitutional role in authorizing war. The time is long overdue for Congress to reassert its constitutional authority. If you think that a military intervention makes sense, then let's have that debate on the floors of the Senate and the House and cast a vote. But that is not what we have been seeing for a number of years.

What Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY and I are doing with privileged resolution S.J. Res. 54 is demanding that Congress once again take its constitutional responsibility for war and peace seriously. I thank Senators DURBIN, WARREN, and BOOKER for coming on board that resolution. I hope this bipartisan resolution will gain more and more support in the coming days.

Many Americans are unaware that the people of Yemen are suffering today in a devastating civil war, with Saudi Arabia and their allies on one side and Houthi rebels on the other.

In November of last year, the United Nations emergency relief coordinator said that Yemen was on the brink of "the largest famine the world has seen for many decades." So far, at least 10,000 civilians have died, 3 million have been displaced, and over 40,000 have been wounded in this war. Fifteen million people lack access to clean water and sanitation. More than 20 million people in Yemen—over two-thirds of that country's population—need some kind of humanitarian support, with nearly 10 million in acute need of assistance. More than 1 million suspected cholera cases have been re-

ported—1 million cholera cases have been reported—representing potentially the worst cholera outbreak in world history.

Many Americans probably are not aware that U.S. forces have been actively engaged in support of the Saudis in this terrible war, providing intelligence and aerial refueling of planes whose bombs have killed thousands of people and made this crisis far worse.

We believe—and I speak for Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY—that as Congress has not declared war or authorized military force in this conflict, U.S. involvement in Yemen is unconstitutional and unauthorized, and U.S. military support of the Saudi coalition must end. Without congressional authorization, our engagement in this war should be restricted to providing desperately needed humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts to put an end to this terrible conflict. That is why yesterday we introduced a joint resolution pursuant to the 1973 War Powers Resolution calling for an end to U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen.

The War Powers Resolution defines the introduction of U.S. Armed Forces to include "the assignment of members of such armed forces to command, coordinate, participate in the movement of, or accompany the regular or irregular military forces of any foreign country or government when such military forces are engaged, or there exists an imminent threat that such forces will become engaged, in hostilities." That is from the War Powers Resolution. Assisting with targeting intelligence and refueling warplanes as they bomb those targets clearly meets this definition.

This is not a partisan issue. Support for the Saudi intervention in Yemen began under a Democratic President and has continued under a Republican one. Senator LEE is a conservative Republican. I am a progressive Independent who caucuses with the Democrats.

In November of last year—and it is important that Members of the Senate hear this—the U.S. House of Representatives, by a vote of 366 to 30, passed a nonbinding resolution stating that U.S. involvement in the Yemen civil war is unauthorized. Every Member of the Democratic leadership voted for this. Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI voted for it. Minority Whip STENY HOYER voted for it. The ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, ELIOT ENGEL, voted for it, as did the Republican chairman of that committee, ED ROYCE.

Here is the bottom line: If the President or Members of Congress believe that support for this war is in the U.S. interest and that we should be involved in it, then let them come to the floor of the House and Senate, make their case, and then let's have a vote.

I believe we have become far too comfortable with the United States engaging in military interventions all over the world. We have now been in