

does. Now, that may give him a temporary little high, but it is not what the American people want. It is not leadership and, in my judgment at least, that is why the President is down so much in the polls no matter what he does. That is why even a race in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania, in a district he won by 20 points, is a nail-biter.

I hope the President will change, I hope he will become a leader, and I hope he will stop just focusing on the show but actually get things done. So far, the American people, not just us, are disappointed.

Now, Democrats in the Senate are going to keep fighting to go much further than the President's proposal. We are going to fight to pass universal background checks, to actually get Federal legislation on protection orders, and to start debating banning assault weapons. This is the conversation the country needs to have. We will keep pushing our Senate colleagues and President Trump to do something real, not just something they think they can talk about that the NRA rubberstamps approval of.

RUSSIAN ELECTION INTERFERENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on a different subject—Russia. Despite heaps of evidence Russia interfered in our election, President Trump has hardly lifted a finger to punish Russia or safeguard future elections. This is a dereliction of duty.

Over the last few weeks, the Senate has heard testimony from the DNI—the Director of National Intelligence—and the head of the U.S. Cyber Command. Neither had been directed by the administration to counter Russia's continued efforts to undermine our democracy. A report in the New York Times last week documented how President Trump's State Department "has yet to spend any of the \$120 million it has allocated since late 2016 to counter foreign efforts to meddle in elections or sow distrust in democracy." Still, the Trump administration has not fully implemented the sanctions Congress passed to punish Putin.

Meanwhile, Russia-linked bots continue to sow division and inflame political tensions on social media. Multiple officials from the intelligence community have warned that Russia will try to interfere in our elections again. We have done nothing to harden our election security in anticipation of the midterms.

Our democracy is under attack, and the President of the United States seems unwilling to punch back or even harden our defenses. It is as if an enemy naval flotilla were headed to our shores, and we didn't put up any defense. That is exactly what is happening. It is a new world. It is not a flotilla of a navy or planes buzzing along our coasts, but it is these cyber attacks and social media attacks on

our election system, but they are every much as vital to America as our physical defense. Yet we hear nothing, nothing, nothing out of the White House.

You only have to look to our ally, the United Kingdom, for an example of how a nation should respond to the threat from Russia. Just today, Prime Minister Theresa May went to the House of Commons to expose a likely Russian attack against two people in her country using a nerve agent. She demanded a response from President Putin and promised appropriate countermeasures if he refuses or the answer is insufficient.

Prime Minister May's quick and decisive action is exactly what is missing from President Trump when it comes to cyber security in our elections.

President Trump still has an opportunity. Over the weekend, President Putin rather ridiculously blamed Ukrainians, Jews, or other minorities for the attack on our election in 2016—another attempt, of course, at misdirection and distraction. In reality, Special Counsel Mueller's investigation has charged 13 Russian nationals with subverting the 2016 elections—not Ukrainians, not Tatars, not Jews but 13 Russian nationals.

Today Leader PELOSI and I, alongside Senator FEINSTEIN and Congressman NADLER, sent President Trump a letter urging him to use all available resources to extradite the 13 Russian nationals named in the special counsel's investigation to stand trial here in the United States. Ensuring these Russian nationals stand trial in the United States would be a clear signal to those who seek to meddle with our elections that their actions are not without consequences. This is imperative to deter Russia and any other nation in the future from attacking our democracy. This is another test of President Trump's leadership and another test he is failing miserably.

If President Trump really cared about our country, he would expand every resource in his possession to bring justice to these foreign actors who meddled with our country's most sacred democratic process—the one enshrined by the Founding Fathers, embraced and even worshiped by Americans over the centuries with good reason.

Now there is meddling in this sacred process and President Trump does nothing? Why are we not hearing anything from those on the other side of the aisle about that? You can be sure that if it were another President—particularly a Democratic one—we would hear howls, but this is not about Democrats or Republicans. This is about our democracy, and Americans inevitably ask the question, Why is President Trump so afraid to do anything about Putin?

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2155, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2155) to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) modified amendment No. 2151, in the nature of a substitute. Crapo amendment No. 2152 (to amendment No. 2151), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this week, we will complete work on an important bipartisan bill. Thanks to the leadership of the Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAPO, who is chairman of the Banking Committee, they passed it out of the Banking Committee, and now it is time for us to do our job and pass it out of the Senate. Last week, we voted to proceed, and we will vote to pass it out of the Senate in the next few days.

Senator CRAPO explained why this work is so important. Since the passage of the Dodd-Frank legislation in 2010—as we all recall, after the great recession of 2008, when Wall Street melted down together with our financial institutions, there were reform efforts undertaken known as Dodd-Frank—Senator Dodd and Congressman Frank—which imposed regulatory requirements on banks large and small. The problem is, the small community banks—the ones that are disproportionately harmed by this overregulation—weren't the cause of the great recession, the financial meltdown of 2010 and 2009, but they are the collateral damage. What has happened is, there has been a lot of consolidation. Many small community banks and credit unions have simply had to close or been consolidated with other larger banks and institutions. It has taken a toll on our economy, and it has taken a toll on our communities across the country. What happens is, these community banks have less money to loan because they have had to use the money they would loan to hire more people to help them comply with all the unnecessary redtape because of the Dodd-Frank overregulation. Some have had to basically defer that sort of investment in their communities and

others have had to shutter completely because of the financial burden.

The second-order effect is, some people don't have access to capital; that is, to loans they need. They can't get credit they need in order to start a small business, grow an existing business, or even get a mortgage to buy their first home.

Let's be clear, though, about which financial institutions this bill is tailored toward helping. It is small community banks, midsized regional ones, as well as credit unions. The bill we are considering somehow does not exempt large banks from those regulations, and saying it does, which some have said, doesn't make it so. It is a claim too eagerly peddled by those who want to maintain the status quo, to the detriment of our smaller communities and small businesses. Large banks are still subject to measures designed to protect the stability of the overall economy, like rigorous stress testing.

After all, this bill is called the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act. What it actually does is rightsize those regulations. It does this by providing targeted exemptions from risk-weighted capital requirements, for example, and the Volcker rule. It also provides a qualified mortgage safe harbor for small banks and raises the SIFI threshold so community banks are not lumped into the same overall category as giant financial institutions operating on Wall Street.

The majority leader recently said: "In an era of online banking and multinational corporations, smaller institutions remain uniquely able to build community connections," and that is important to our civic fabric as well as the economies in rural and smalltown America.

Based on research, community banks provide more than half of all small business loans. That could translate into small banks getting to know their customers on a personal level and then extending credit to entrepreneurs and families who might not have access otherwise.

That is certainly the situation in parts of my State, the State of Texas. I have heard from banks and communities there that are more than ready to finally be freed of the shackles of Dodd-Frank.

As the chief executive officer of the Independent Bankers Association of Texas put it, "Congress holds the key to unchain community banks from the burden pushing them toward consolidation"—in other words, mergers, forcing them to become big banks, which seems to me to be an odd way to deal with this problem, to be sure, or putting them out of business altogether.

In the IBAT's view—Independent Bankers Association of Texas—rules meant to curb the abuses of banks deemed too big to fail have instead trickled down to harm their much smaller counterparts. Because of this effect, in essence, community banks

have become too small to survive as mergers and acquisitions have occurred all over the map.

Independent bankers have reported that since 2009, Texas has lost nearly one-third of its banks—one-third of its banks. They have said that based on Federal data on rural counties, approximately one-third don't have a local credit union or bank at all. This bill addresses that situation. It enjoys wide bipartisan support, and I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting passage before the end of the week.

FIX NICS BILL

Madam President, on another matter, I want to emphasize another point and talk about a new milestone reached and announce some good news.

We have now reached 64 total cosponsors for a bill I have introduced with the junior Senator from Connecticut, Mr. MURPHY, called the Fix NICS, which is the background check reform bill we cosponsored together.

In an institution like this, during polarized times, it is pretty remarkable that you have 64 Senators—32 Democrats and 32 Republicans—coming together and saying: Yes, we have a problem, and, yes, we want to work together to fix it.

This is the kind of legislation the Nation has been waiting for, as people continue to be frustrated, frightened, and depressed by random acts of violence that have broken out in and around some of our churches, our cities, and our schools. I am talking about shootings like those that occurred at Sutherland Springs, TX, outside of San Antonio, in Las Vegas, and, of course, Parkland, FL. With Fix NICS, we are saying the status quo is not acceptable.

I am happy to hear my friend the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, say there are other things he and his colleagues on the other side of the aisle would like to do. I would just quote to him some ancient wisdom; that "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." We ought to take that first step and do what we can do today and do what is achievable in order to make our communities safer.

I have talked about it before, but if the background check system had been working the way Congress intended, the shooter who murdered 26 people as they worshiped on Sunday morning in Sutherland Springs, outside of San Antonio, and injured 20 more would not have been able to legally purchase firearms because the background check system would have reflected the fact that he was a convicted felon, he had been convicted of domestic violence, and he had been in a mental institution. All three of those things are disqualifiers from being able to legally purchase firearms under current law, but if the background system isn't uploaded with the appropriate information for the FBI to maintain, then those convictions will never be discovered, and someone can merely lie their way into purchasing firearms and committing atrocities like we saw in Sutherland Springs.

Fix NICS is designed to make sure convicted felons can't get access to firearms because, under current law, they are disallowed from doing so. It is designed to make sure people who commit domestic violence can't buy a firearm because they are currently prohibited by law from doing so. It is designed to make sure people who are dishonorably discharged from the military can't legally get a firearm because the current law prohibits them from doing so.

Sometimes criminals with domestic abuse convictions, records of mental illness, and violent erratic behavior slip through the cracks and get their hands on guns, despite what the law already prohibits. That is why it is so important for us to pass this legislation now—again, with 64 cosponsors of the legislation, evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

The effectiveness of doing this sort of background check system has been confirmed by academic research. A recent study by RAND Corporation found evidence that dealer background checks may decrease firearm homicides by as much as 20 percent or more. In other words, it saves lives. One specific part of that study further suggested that enforcing background checks for felony records may have a similar diminishing effect. In other words, enforcement matters, and enforcement is what we are trying to ensure.

We have learned from Sutherland Springs that the NICS system is not operating as Congress intended and that the military, in this instance, was not uploading certain records, but they are not alone. Recent news reports out of places like Ohio have shown it is often the case at the State level as well. We know, a few years back, the shooter at Virginia Tech, near Washington, DC, had been adjudicated mentally ill by the State of Virginia, but the State had never uploaded that information on the background check system, so he was able to purchase a firearm.

This bill will save lives. I know my friend the Democratic leader, the minority leader, has said: Well, it is not enough, but if it saves lives, isn't it a good start? I am grateful to him for cosponsoring the legislation. You couldn't tell he cosponsored the legislation by his comments here, acting like this is somehow not a very important step, but it is because it will save lives.

This bill has the backing of the President as well, whom I have spoken to personally, and the minority and majority leaders in the Senate and is supported by gun groups across the spectrum from—yes, the National Rifle Association but also Everytown for Gun Safety. They are at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum when it comes to the Second Amendment. It is not just them. It is others like the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Sandy Hook Promise, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the

National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the National Sheriffs' Association.

It really is remarkable when you have groups with such widely divergent views, when it comes to the Second Amendment, come together and say: Well, this is where we can find common ground. This is where we can actually do something. That is reflected in the 64 bipartisan cosponsors we have for the bill.

The bill would do this: First, it would require Federal agencies and States to produce NICS implementation plans, in other words, to fix what is broken, including measures to verify the accuracy of the records.

It would hold Federal agencies accountable if they fail to upload the relevant information.

I think it is accurate information, but I have heard that after the shooting in Sutherland Springs, the military has now gone back and uploaded 4,000 additional records into the NICS background check system that weren't previously loaded. Those are 4,000 people now in the system who, if they attempted to buy a firearm legally through a gun store or Federal licensed firearm dealer, would not be able to do so because there would be a hit on the FBI background check system.

I think if we provided similar incentives to the States, we would see a similar increase in compliance and public safety continue to be enhanced.

This bill would reward States that comply with their NICS implementation plan through Federal grants incentives. It would reauthorize and improve law enforcement programs to help State governments share relevant criminal record information. Let's not forget, this is not just a Federal problem.

Finally, the bill would provide important technical assistance to Federal agencies and States that are working to comply with NICS record-sharing requirements.

We have all the support we need. What we need is a vote. I know that despite the minority leader's comments here today, he does not oppose this bill. He says it is merely not enough, but why can't we pass this bill that we all agree on and then build from there? I am not afraid of having any debate or any vote on any matter related to the Second Amendment. That is why our constituents sent us here, to debate and to vote and to be held accountable for those votes.

I know there is pressure from those who want more controversial measures to be added, but frankly they are ones that can't pass the Senate, much less the House, or be signed into the law. I would hope we focus—focus our attention on what is achievable, what is bipartisan, what brings people together at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum and pass the Fix NICS bill. Again, NICS is the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. It will improve our background check system and in the process save lives.

If we did nothing else—and I am not advocating that for a moment, but if we did nothing else in this space other than pass this background check reform system, we would save lives. I don't know why that is not compelling enough to everyone to actually get it done. I hope it is, and I hope we do so without further delay.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. WARREN. Thank you, Madam President.

Ten years ago today, at breakfast tables all around the country, Americans read a shocking headline: "Fed assumes the role of lender of last resort." The biggest investment banks on Wall Street were getting their first taxpayer bailout, but some of the banks were so addicted to poisonous scam mortgages that even that bailout wasn't enough. Within a week, Bear Stearns—an 85-year-old fixture on Wall Street—would fall, and the financial crisis would begin.

Within a year, American workers' retirement accounts had lost \$2.7 trillion, almost one-third of their value. No one bailed them out. Within 2 years, 8.8 million Americans had lost their jobs. No one bailed them out. Within 3 years, more than 4 million homes had been lost to foreclosures, and millions more were in danger. No one bailed the homeowners out. Now, to mark the 10th anniversary of that devastating crisis, the Senate is on the verge of rolling back the rules on the big banks again.

Last week I talked about how this bill guts important consumer protections, how it weakens the oversight of banks with up to a quarter of a trillion dollars in assets, and how it could set the stage for another financial crisis, just like past bipartisan bills to roll back the financial rules. But the bill will also roll back the rules on the very biggest banks in the country, the true Wall Street banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, and the rest—banks that taxpayers spent \$180 billion bailing out in 2008. And no matter what the supporters of this bill say, there are three glaring parts of this bill that without question help the very biggest Wall Street banks.

First, this bill opens the door to easing up on big banks' stress tests. Right now, about 40 of the biggest banks go through stress tests every year, simulating a financial crisis and making sure that if it happened, they could survive. This bill says that 25 of them can just skip the hard test from now on, and the remaining 15 or so—well, they don't necessarily have to do those

tests every single year. For the banks that are still going to be doing stress tests, they can now be done, under this bill, "periodically." Who decides what "periodically" means—the former investment bankers Donald Trump has nominated to lead the Fed and to head up the Fed's supervisory work? Does that make you feel safe?

Second, the bill gives the biggest banks a new legal tool to fight for weaker rules. Right now, the law says that the Fed "may" tailor capital and other rules for the biggest banks. This bill says the Fed "shall" tailor the rules for the banks with more than \$250 billion in assets—the very biggest banks in this country. That one word—the switch from "may" to "shall"—may not seem like much, but it means everything to the high-priced lawyers who represent these banks.

Here is what Jeffrey Gordon, a professor at Columbia Law School, had to say about that one-word change:

This apparently minor change is likely to produce significant degradation of financial stability, especially over the long run. The change would expose the Fed to litigation challenges to its enhanced standards, in particular whether they are already adequately tailored. . . . The statute thus empowers the largest firms which pose the biggest risks to bargain with the Fed for laxer standards with the threat of a well-resourced litigation challenge in the background. Over time this bargaining for laxity will produce a race-to-the-bottom dynamic that will dramatically increase the chance of another financial crisis.

Professor Gordon of Columbia Law School says that will dramatically increase the chance of another financial crisis.

If you think the one-word change from "may" to "shall" won't change much, consider this: Opponents to the bill have been pointing out this problem loudly and publicly, but the bill's sponsors won't change it. They won't change that one word. Why? Because the giant banks want the change.

The third bank giveaway in this bill undercuts capital requirements for the biggest banks. The best way to stop another taxpayer bailout of the big banks is to make sure they have enough capital on hand to withstand a crisis. That is why Congress and the regulators established tougher capital requirements for the big banks after the last financial crisis. This bill reverses direction, opening the door to big banks like JPMorgan and Citigroup facing much lower capital requirements than they do now. In fact, the independent Congressional Budget Office says there is a 50-percent chance that JPMorgan and Citigroup can take advantage of a provision in the bill to reduce their capital requirements.

The Wall Street Journal editorial board—no fan of tough regulation—wrote that the change proposed in the banking bill is dangerous and "will make the financial system more vulnerable in a panic." The Bloomberg editorial board says the bill "chip[s] away at the bedrock of financial resilience—the equity capital that allows

banks to absorb losses and keep on lending in bad times.” And the consequences could be huge. According to the FDIC, this provision could lower capital requirements for JPMorgan by \$21.4 billion and for Citigroup by \$8.6 billion.

At the end of last week, the supporters of the bill introduced a new amendment that they claimed would address the problems in this bill, but that amendment did nothing to address these three glaring big-bank giveaways: The stress test provision is unchanged, the litigation provision is unchanged, and the capital requirements provision is unchanged. Victories for the big banks have been preserved 100 percent.

But it is not just the big-bank giveaways that remain unaddressed in this new amendment. Over the last week, we have heard a lot of criticism about this bill from experts and from civil rights groups and from consumer advocates and from former regulators, and, most importantly, from our constituents back home. They don't like it. This banking bill undermines civil rights laws. It weakens consumers protections on mortgages and mobile home purchases. It rolls back rules on 25 of the 40 largest banks in the country. It does almost nothing to protect consumers. Let me be perfectly clear about this. The new amendment does not address a single one of these legitimate criticisms. It is a bunch of fig leaves designed to let supporters of the bill pretend that they have addressed those criticisms without actually addressing them. In some cases, these little fig leaves actually make things worse.

Let's start with the fake fixes—first, mortgage discrimination. Mortgage discrimination is real in America. Some banks charge African Americans more for loans than they charge Whites with similar credit. Some deny loans to Latinos or to single women. How do we know that? Because banks have to disclose information about the loans they provide under something called the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, or HMDA. Using HMDA data, a new report shows that in 61 different cities around the country, minority borrowers were more likely to be denied a mortgage than White borrowers with the same income. But this bill—the bill that is pending on the floor of the Senate—now exempts 85 percent of banks from reporting any HMDA data, making it much harder to discover and stamp out discrimination.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO had a great idea for fixing this: Take the HMDA provision out of the pending bill. Leave HMDA alone. If the authors of this bill really wanted to fix this problem, they would support her amendment and insist that without that amendment, they would withdraw their support for the bill. But now the bill's supporters have a fig leaf. They say that of the 85 percent of banks that no longer will have to report information about dis-

crimination, if one of those banks flunks two consecutive examinations under the Community Reinvestment Act, those banks will have to start reporting discrimination data. If that looks like a tiny little fig leaf, consider this: Banks get tested at most every 3 years, which means it would take 6 years of discrimination to flunk twice. This fig leaf is so small, it is basically invisible.

Now, for some of these so-called consumer protection fig leaves—the problems are real; it is just the solutions that are fake. For example, there is a provision to deal with private student loans from banks. It says that if a student loan borrower dies, then the bank can't go after the cosigner of the loan for the full balance. That sounds really good—at least until you read the fine print. It turns out that spouses don't count. So the bank will still be free to hound widows and widowers for the balances of their deceased spouses. And the loan isn't actually forgiven. That means the bank can still go after the dead borrower's estate for the loan, maybe take half of the house or take whatever is in the checking account or savings account. It is a nightmare for a grieving family—and it is also perfectly OK under this fig leaf amendment.

In some places, it isn't even a fig leaf that pretends to address problems with the bill; it is just new provisions to create new problems—like a section that blows a hole in regulators' ability to require banks to hold capital for commercial real estate. Does anyone remember that risky commercial real estate investments were a factor in Bear Stearns' failure 10 years ago this week? Does anyone remember that 6 months later, commercial real estate losses would help blow up Lehman Brothers? I guess not—at least not right here in Congress, because 10 years later—right now, this week—Congress wants to let banks take one more commercial real estate fix with less oversight.

Banks of all sizes are making record profits. Only in Washington would people think it is time to scrap the protections that have kept us safe for a decade, all so that these same profitable banks can make even more money. It is the same mindset that set the stage for the savings and loan crisis in the late 1980s and the financial crisis of 2008.

America's working families will pay the price if we make the same mistakes again. It isn't too late. We should stop this bill from becoming law.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, so many are still grieving from the atrocious killing of 17 people at the high school in Florida. Indeed, our entire State is grieving. Broward County is grieving. Parkland is grieving. I think we are going to find on March 24, in the rallies and the marches that will occur

in 500 cities around this country and will have a focus of the main one in Washington, that a lot of people are grieving, because a lot of people all across this country have been touched by these massacres that continue to occur, starting almost three decades ago at Columbine in Colorado. We have certainly had our fill of it in Florida just in the last 2 years: 49 people gunned down with an assault rifle, a Sig Sauer MCX, at the Pulse nightclub; another assault pistol used to gun down 5 people in the Fort Lauderdale Airport; and now an AR-15 used to gun down 17. He would have gotten a lot more had he been able to open the third-story window overlooking the courtyard from a perch as the students fled across the courtyard to get out of the schoolyard. He couldn't get the window open. He tried to shoot it open, but it was hurricane-proof glass, and it only shattered; it didn't break.

It has been almost 1 month since the tragic shooting. Those 17 families—14 students and 3 adults—are certainly grieving, and we have seen in the last few weeks many of the parents, students, families, and community leaders stand up to say that enough is enough. They are asking us, the U.S. Congress, to enact meaningful legislation to reduce gun violence.

The action starts in Tallahassee, and the students are going there while the State legislature is still in session, talking about commonsense solutions, such as enacting universal background checks in the purchase of a gun; not allowing a gun show loophole or a private transaction loophole; not allowing a loophole for orders on the internet; universal background checks that would include mental problems; if you have been on the terrorist watch list, that would include, of course, criminal records but also mentally adjudicated records; universal background checks in the acquisition of a gun, particularly an assault rifle. But we can't get that passed here because some folks aren't listening.

Take, for example, what was said at the White House just last night. Giving in to the will of the NRA, the White House announced that it would provide Federal funding for firearms training for teachers and other school personnel. This Senator thinks that arming teachers is a terrible idea. It is not what the students are asking for. It is not what the teachers are asking for. It is not what the American people want us to do.

Just last week, the Florida legislature passed and the Governor signed into law a bill—a watered-down version, but it is still arming school personnel, and it falls short on what is really needed to reduce gun violence and especially the massacres that are occurring. While what Florida has done is a step in the right direction, particularly with regard to mandating 3-day waiting periods in the purchase of an assault rifle, we are far from where we need to be in addressing gun violence if

we are talking about putting more guns in our schools, and if—as the President suggested last night—we arm teachers. The teachers don't want it, and I can tell you who else doesn't want it. The SWAT teams that have to storm the building looking for the shooter don't want to encounter a teacher with a gun and mistakenly think that teacher is the shooter. It is common sense.

What studies do supporters of this idea cite, suggesting that arming teachers will reduce gun violence at schools? Why even propose this solution before seeing what policies are proposed by a new Federal commission on school safety, which has now been developed? Why don't we at least see what they are proposing? No, this is to sell more guns by arming teachers.

I have spoken to many teachers, students, and families. I haven't found one person who wants teachers to be armed, including the teachers themselves. There is near universal agreement that arming teachers is a terrible idea. Yet such an idea continues to direct Congress's attention away from obvious and commonsense solutions supported by most Americans, which are universal background checks and getting the assault rifles and banana clips that have 30 rounds off the streets.

I have supported several bipartisan bills—some with my colleague from Florida, Senator RUBIO—that address background check issues and seek to make sure our schools have the resources to keep our students safe.

Senator RUBIO and I announced last week that if there are red flags, they need to be brought to the attention of law enforcement. We are offering in our bill a Federal incentive program to the States to get those red flags about a problem person to the authorities before it is too late. But ideas like arming teachers and putting more guns in our schools are just plain dangerous.

Mr. President, I know you have backed off of certain things because the NRA wanted you to, and I know you are now proposing arming teachers. Let's get down to some real commonsense solutions. Let's work on how to prevent assault weapons from getting into the wrong hands and to stop the massacres that continue to plague this country. The people of America want no less.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to complete my remarks and for the Senator from Arizona to follow me.

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

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the role of nutrition in the health and wellness of our Nation and the development of our children. Arkansas' agricultural producers play a vital role in providing affordable, nutritious food, not only for our State and country but for the entire world.

March is recognized as National Nutrition Month. This is a time to focus attention on the importance of a balanced diet and healthy eating choices. As a cochair of the Senate Hunger Caucus, I am committed to supporting and raising awareness of efforts that provide nutritious, healthy meals; creating policies that fight hunger; and supporting programs that have proven successful.

The Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program is a unique effort that uses public-private partnerships to meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable children and adults. This has become a critical tool in the fight against hunger.

Senator KLOBUCHAR and I recently introduced a resolution designating this week as National Child and Adult Care Food Program Week to honor and raise awareness of the important role the Child and Adult Care Food Program plays in the health of those in Arkansas, Minnesota, and throughout the country. Through this program, more than 4 million children and 130,000 adults in childcare centers, adult daycare homes, and afterschool programs receive nutritious meals and snacks daily.

Studies show that access to the Child and Adult Care Food Program can measurably and positively impact the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical health and development of children, leading to more favorable outcomes, such as decreased likelihood of being hospitalized, an increased likelihood of healthy weight gain, and an increased likelihood of a more varied diet.

As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I will be working to ensure that individuals who need food assistance are able to access affordable, nutritious meals. I will also continue to press for flexibility in the Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program so children who rely on school meals when class is in session can access healthy, nutritious meals during the summer in order to have a seamless transition from the school year to the summer programs.

In Arkansas, more than 50,000 children receive nutritious meals through this program. For many rural areas of the country, like the Natural State, this one-size-fits-all approach fails to meet the needs of communities and the children who are most in need.

More than 60 percent of Arkansas' children rely on free or reduced meals during the school year, so we need to modernize the program so that summer meal sites are available to children no matter where they live. Arkansas is

blessed to have the support of schools, churches, Boys & Girls Clubs, libraries, and other organizations that serve as host sites for summer meal programs, and we need to allow them the flexibility that is necessary to reach the students in their communities. It is time that Federal policy responds to this need.

I have seen how community involvement in Arkansas is fighting food insecurity. Efforts like the Cooking Matters at the Store Initiative, launched by the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, teaches families who are on budgets to compare prices, read food labels, and buy fruits and vegetables.

This month is recognized as School Breakfast Month in Arkansas. State educators have seen how essential breakfast is to students' progress, so they have instituted programs to promote breakfast and are helping to grow gardens where the food produced is used in school lunches. Grocery stores are allowing SNAP beneficiaries to purchase locally grown produce at a discount. Proper nutrition is crucial to our well-being.

Creating opportunities to access healthy, nutritious food is also important to our State's and the Nation's economic development. In order to break the cycle of food insecurity, we must work together. Hunger knows no boundaries, but it is preventable, and we have the tools to help fight it. We have made significant gains in Arkansas, across the country, and throughout the world to improve nutrition for the most vulnerable in our society, and I will continue to be a champion of efforts to improve access to healthy nutritious foods.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

(The remarks of Mr. FLAKE pertaining to the introduction of S. 2538 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. FLAKE. I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 2151, as modified, to Calendar No. 287, S. 2155, a bill to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, Mike Crapo, Deb Fischer, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Rounds, Jeff Flake, John Kennedy, Johnny Isakson, James Lankford, Bill Cassidy, John Cornyn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on amendment No. 2151, as modified, offered by the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL, to S. 2155, a bill to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 66, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 50 Leg.]

YEAS—66

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Barrasso	Gardner	Nelson
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Peters
Boozman	Hassan	Portman
Burr	Hatch	Risch
Capito	Heitkamp	Roberts
Carper	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Coons	Johnson	Shaheen
Corker	Jones	Shelby
Cornyn	Kaine	Stabenow
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	King	Tester
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Donnelly	Manchin	Toomey
Enzi	McCaskill	Warner
Ernst	McConnell	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Young

NAYS—30

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Reed
Blumenthal	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Smith
Cardin	Markey	Udall
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Duckworth	McCain
Heinrich	Paul

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 66, the nays are 30.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, when you went to a local bank in Mansfield, OH, to buy a house 30, 40, or 50 years ago, you knew the lender, and the lender knew you. You saw him or her at the grocery store. Maybe they went to your church or synagogue. Your kids probably went to the same school. You knew that your deposits at the bank helped fund your neighbor's house or the hardware store down the street. A lot of banks and credit unions don't work this way.

The 2008 crisis taught us that finance has changed. Now a mortgage in Zanesville, OH, is diced and sliced and sold to an investor in Zurich, Switzerland. Banks in Frankfurt place bets on loans in Fostoria.

When the system went bust a decade ago and predatory loans began to fail, Ohio taxpayers picked up the tab, including for foreign banks headquartered an ocean away. The Federal Reserve opened up a spigot of cheap money to keep the global economy from tanking. Banks in Spain, France, Japan, Canada, and Korea all came to the United States for help to weather the financial storm.

Think about this. An analysis of the Fed's lending from February 2008 to 2009 showed that the vast majority of loans went to foreign banks. After the crisis, records released to the public showed that foreign banks took more than 70 percent of the Fed's loans during the crisis and 65 percent of loans from other emergency programs.

Under one bailout scheme, British Barclays alone borrowed \$232 billion from the Fed at a sweetheart interest rate—the kind of rate a hardware store in Hillsboro, OH, could never get on a loan to keep them afloat back in 2008. Think about that. British Barclays got a sweetheart deal, a better deal than a hardware store in Ohio could get from a bank.

After the crisis, Congress responded with a law, the Wall Street reform act, to ensure that taxpayers would never again have to send bailout money to British and Swiss megabanks. We ordered the Fed to keep a closer eye on the big banks—to use their power to make sure the largest global banks did not again crash the economy.

Congress instructed that the Fed apply the strictest protections to the biggest banks—those with more than \$50 billion in assets. We know that.

When the Fed implemented these rules, they applied some standards to banks that have more than \$50 billion across the globe, but for global banks that have more than \$50 billion in the United States, the Fed applied the strongest standards. For foreign banks with not only trillions worldwide but systemic operations in the United States, the Fed wrote rules that are as strict as those for our domestic megabanks, standards that former Fed Governor Dan Tarullo called “special prudential measures.” They are standards that ensure that we only import Swiss chocolate, not Swiss bank failures. These special measures are important.

Last year, the Office of Financial Research released a report showing that foreign banks in the United States are riskier than similarly sized U.S. regional banks. Hear that again. Foreign banks in the United States are riskier than similarly sized U.S. regional banks. Think of that in terms of what this bill that we just voted cloture on actually does.

This legislation threatens to undo important rules protecting us from

risk. The legislation puts taxpayers on the hook for bailouts. That is what the Congressional Budget Office said.

Under this bill, foreign banks that took billions in bailouts would be able to take more risk under a less watchful eye. Who are some of them? Deutsche Bank, Santander, and UBS would all be treated more like they were an Ohio regional bank. Deutsche Bank, the Trump family's personal business bank; Santander, the bank in Spain that repossessed the cars of hundreds of service men and women cars while those service men and women were serving our country overseas; UBS, the Swiss bank that illegally financed Iranian activities—they would all be treated more like they were Huntington in Columbus, or Fifth Third in Cincinnati, or KeyBank in Cleveland. What is right about that? What is fair about that? What is smart about that?

Don't take my word for it. Secretary Mnuchin sat right in front of the Banking Committee; Senator CRAPO, the chairman, and I, as the ranking member, looked straight at him just a few weeks ago. He confirmed that this bill would treat foreign banks with up to \$250 billion in assets the same as U.S. regional banks. So they are up to \$250 billion, just like Huntington, just like KeyCorp, just like Fifth Third in Ohio. Secretary Mnuchin said: We are going to treat those foreign banks the same if they are up to \$250 billion in assets. That may be the first direct answer I have ever heard from Secretary Mnuchin. I sit on the Finance Committee and the Banking Committee, and he has trouble giving direct answers. He did at least that time.

It makes sense because he was just confirming his intention. From what he and the Treasury Department wrote in a report last year, that is precisely what this administration wants to do. That is what they said in this report that we should do—deregulate these foreign banks that have assets under \$250 billion in the United States. They wrote it into their banking deregulation blueprint back in June.

I give credit to Secretary Mnuchin, and I give credit to the Trump administration. While I don't give them credit for the White House looking like a retreat for Wall Street executives, I do give them credit for at least finally owning up in that report, in the legislation, and in his answer to my question in the Banking Committee hearing that, yes, they are going to deregulate these foreign, huge megabanks—Deutsche, Santander, UBS, and Barclays—as long as they have under \$250 billion of assets in the United States, and they do.

Paul Volcker, former Chairman of the Fed, is worried, as I am, that this bill deregulates the U.S. operations of foreign banks. Sarah Bloom Raskin, former Fed Governor and Deputy Treasury Secretary, said this bill “removes necessary guardrails that were installed to reduce the chances of foreign megabanks drawing on U.S. bailout funds.”

I have watched the Presiding Officer—the junior Senator from Oklahoma—serve with integrity and honesty. I don't think you, any of my colleagues on this side of the aisle, or anybody else wants to face the voters 5 years from now, 10 years from now if what we voted on today and will vote on this week results in our bailing out foreign banks. Americans were angry that we bailed out the big U.S. megabanks. Imagine the anger if the story is focused more precisely on the fact that we bailed out foreign banks—which we actually did—but the story was more about Wall Street. Imagine if that were the story.

Former Treasury officials Michael Barr and Antonio Weiss are worried that this bill is rolling back rules that protect the U.S. economy from foreign bank risk. The former CFTC Chairman, Gary Gensler, thinks we need to amend this bill to make sure that foreign banks don't get a windfall. These are across-the-board regulators, present, past, Republicans, Democrats. That is quite a list of watchdogs, but what is most interesting: Do you know who else is under the impression this bill helps foreign banks? Foreign bank lobbyists.

I offered an amendment during the committee markup to close the loophole. I am offering it again on the Senate floor if Republican leadership allows amendments on the Senate floor. My amendment would have ensured that foreign megabanks in the United States are watched over just as closely as Wall Street banks. They are roughly the same size; some are bigger, but because their assets are smaller in the United States, we are going to treat them like Huntington and Key and Fifth Third rather than treating them like JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America and Wells Fargo.

Foreign bank lobbyists—they are American citizens. They are lobbyists for foreign banks; they are not foreign lobbyists, a difference. These lobbyists for foreign banks, representing Deutsche and UBS—most of them—wrote a letter opposing my amendment, saying it was unfair for me to try to keep these rules in place. They said their banks should be treated like U.S. regional banks, not like the global giants they are. That amendment was defeated in the committee; we will leave it at that.

Now, why is that such a problem? Let's look at the rap sheet on some of these foreign banks. Santander, a Spanish bank, failed a stress test 3 years in a row. It would have its rules rolled back under this bill. Stress tests are exercises, as my colleagues know, to ensure that a bank can survive an economic downturn without a bailout. So this Spanish bank, Santander, failed not once, not twice but three times. What that failure means—most people, if they fail three times, they flunk out. If they fail three times, they get in this bill, and they get a potential bailout. What is smart about that? What is hon-

orable about that? What is good economic policy about that? What is fair about that? What is just about that?

In addition to failing its stress test, it is a bank that illegally repossessed cars from 1,100 American service men and women while they were serving our country. I spend a lot of time at the Wright Patterson Air Force Base, the largest employer in Ohio. I see all kinds of financial institutions that prey on those young airmen and their families. Airmen and women, young Americans serving in the Air Force—particularly when they are 18, 19, 20, 21 years old—are more financially vulnerable. They are a little less sophisticated than somebody 10 years older. They don't make much money. Their families are always anxious when their husband or wife or mother or father serve overseas. This Spanish bank repossessed the cars of 1,100 American service men and women while they were serving our country. We are going to give them a break?

This is a bank that overcharged racial and ethnic minorities for car loans. It is a bank that violated a Federal order to keep more capital and instead improperly paid out money to its shareholders, and we are going to give them a break? I don't pretend to understand the thinking of that.

This bill helps Deutsche Bank, which the IMF called “the most important net contributor to systemic risks” of all worldwide banks. Deutsche Bank, a German bank, one of the biggest banks in the world, the International Monetary Fund called it “the most important net contributor to systemic risks” of all worldwide banks.

Deutsche Bank is the only bank that would lend to the Trump family economic empire. Even after all of its failed business deals, they kept lending, for whatever reason, to businessman Trump and the family. This is a bank that every week is met with a new request for information on shady financial arrangements with people in the White House.

I don't think my colleagues and I were sent here to serve Deutsche Bank. I am thinking none of us goes back in our campaigns—I am on the ballot this year. I am not going to go back and say: Please reelect me so I can help Deutsche Bank, so I can bail them out, so I can pass a bill that will actually give them something they don't deserve.

This bill would also help banks like Barclays and UBS and BNP Paribas—banks that have rigged interest rates, helped people avoid paying taxes, violated U.S. sanctions against Iran and Sudan, and manipulated energy markets. These aren't banks down the street lending to homeowners in Sandusky or businesses in Findlay or small companies in my hometown of Mansfield; these are some of the most complex global banks. They hold \$1.4 trillion in assets. That is \$1,400 billion—\$1.4 trillion—in assets in the United States and more than \$14 trillion in assets abroad.

Listen to Paul Volker, listen to Sarah Bloom Raskin, listen to Gary Gensler, listen to Michael Barr and Antonio Weiss. Believe Secretary Mnuchin when he tells you what he wants to do. Believe the lobbyists for these foreign banks when they say that is what they want. That is why they oppose this amendment. This bill gives them exactly what they want.

Let me talk about one change made to the substitute amendment. Because I have come to this floor and some others have joined me in objecting to this foreign bank provision, the leadership—Senator McConnell and his office, I assume, down the way—I assume they huddled and thought: We have to answer this somehow; we have to at least look like we care about prohibiting a bailout of foreign banks. So they made a change in the substitute. The new version of the bill came out last week. There is a new provision that provides some window dressing. It is a figleaf protection to try to convince the public that this bill doesn't do what it actually does. It doesn't actually help Santander; it doesn't actually help UBS; it doesn't actually help Barclays; it doesn't actually help the President's bank, Deutsche Bank—but it actually does. The provision provides some vague, ambiguous language and puts the question to the Fed: You can regulate the foreign banks or not; it is your choice. It doesn't require the Fed to deregulate. It doesn't stop the foreign banks from suing if the Fed doesn't obey their requests.

Why not just prohibit? Why not just say: No, we are not going to do it. But they don't want to do that. They want to keep that door open because they know the regulators on FSOC, whether it is the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Jay Clayton, whether it is Mr. Otting of the SEC, whether it is Secretary Mnuchin, or whomever they put at any of these, we know what they are going to do. They have already said what they are growing to do.

Even a writer at the Wall Street Journal agrees, saying it will be up to the Fed to decide whether Deutsche Bank “deserves a tighter leash.”

So we are expected—we, in a pretty much party-line vote, because most Democrats think you don't want Wall Street people in these positions regulating the banks, in a party-line vote, Randal Quarles was confirmed. His job is to be the Director of Supervision at the Federal Reserve. So we are expected to trust Randal Quarles not to weaken the rules in the foreign banks—to trust Quarles, even though he himself missed the last crisis. He predicted as late as, I believe, 2007, as a member of the Bush administration, that the economy was great, the banks weren't under duress, any of that. It might have been 2006, but I think 2007. He missed the last crisis and, I might add, he personally profited from Wall Street malfeasance. I am not saying he did it on purpose, but he personally profited because of Wall Street malfeasance.

We are supposed to trust Quarles, even though just last week he spoke at an international bankers conference, where a lot of those foreign bank representatives and lobbyists were in attendance, including CEOs and other executives, and he promised those bankers regulatory relief.

So we have the head of supervision at the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States—one of the most powerful people in this country—speaking to an international bankers group saying: Yes, we are going to give you regulatory relief. Aren't you lucky you came to this conference because I am in charge of these issues at the Federal Reserve, and I am going to help you get regulatory relief as a foreign bank. Congratulations.

Finally, this last point is technical, but it is important. The bills make sure that a globally systemic U.S. bank will not benefit from any deregulation, even if it has fewer than \$250 billion in assets, but the bill doesn't even do the same for foreign banks.

Let me repeat. State Street has fewer than \$250 billion in assets. State Street is called a custodial bank, located in Boston, as the Presiding Officer knows. It has fewer than \$250 billion in assets. The bill says, because that bank is systematically significant, it doesn't get a free pass. This legislation says that about State Street, but it doesn't say the same for similarly—or, I would argue, way more—risky foreign banks in the United States.

My amendment would close that loophole. It treats systemically risky foreign banks like systemically risky U.S. banks. Why? Because why treat Barclays and Santander and UBS and Deutsche Bank better than we treat Huntington or Fifth Third or Key or Regents in Alabama or any of these regional banks—many of which we want to help. If we want to help community banks and credit unions and our regional banks to do the right thing, let's help them. Foreign megabanks shouldn't get another chance of a hand-out from American taxpayers—never.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, across America, nearly 100,000 public schools

open the door of opportunity to more than 50 million students from kindergarten through high school. In honor of this remarkable national accomplishment, I rise today to join Senator TESTER in recognizing March 12 through 16 as Public Schools Week.

I have visited more than 200 schools throughout my home State of Maine, and I have seen firsthand an inspiring commitment to excellence. It is a commitment that is shared by dedicated educators and staff, involved parents and community members, and enthusiastic students.

Public education has had a profound impact on our Nation's history and continues to shape our future. Nine out of 10 students in the United States attend public schools. Last year, our public high schools achieved an alltime high graduation rate of 83 percent, and nearly 70 percent of our high school graduates went on to higher education. Public schools both inspire students and give them tools to achieve their dreams.

Not only do our public schools create lifelong learners, but they also help to foster active citizenship. In addition to academics, athletics, and the arts, schools throughout Maine offer programs to encourage environmental responsibility, civic engagement, and community service. I am so proud that every Veterans Day and Memorial Day, schools throughout my State hold assemblies to honor the men and women of their communities who served our Nation and defended our freedom.

Our schools have become so much more than places where children are taught. From nutritious meals to health and emotional support services, public schools play a vital role in the lives of our young people.

Education has been described as “not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a flame.” We are fortunate to have many keepers of the precious flame of learning throughout our Nation, and I urge my colleagues to join Senator TESTER and me in recognizing them during Public Schools Week.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of the founding of the International Baccalaureate, which has made significant contributions to educating students around the world.

In 2018, the IB celebrates 50 years of a curriculum that prioritizes critical thinking skills with a focus on international mindfulness. This organization pioneered a movement of international education in 1968 that now offers four high-quality, diverse and challenging educational program for students aged 3 to 19 years old. Through a unique curriculum of high academic standards, the IB program emphasizes critical thinking and flexibility of learning by intertwining disciplines across cultural and national bound-

aries. The IB currently works with more than 1.4 million students in over 4,775 schools in 153 countries.

The IB's founders sought to create a program with a multinational approach to scholarship that would help young people develop the skills, values, and knowledge necessary to build a more peaceful future. The program inspires young people to become lifelong learners, using their energy, conviction, and positivity to engage with increasingly complex and interconnected global issues. Its program is highly respected, as the best universities in the world actively seek out IB students because of their experience with IB's crossdisciplinary and crosscultural approach. IB alumni are equipped with the skills and mindset needed to succeed and to approach challenges in innovative and effective ways.

The International Baccalaureate is one of the world's leading educational initiatives. I am honored that the IB Global Centre is located in Maryland and am delighted to recognize IB's achievements and the profound contributions it has made to education throughout the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING CARMEN RODRIGUEZ

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today, with a heavy heart, I wish to pay tribute to Carmen Rodriguez, a wonderful leader, role model, and family woman. Sadly, Mrs. Rodriguez passed away on January 22, 2018—her 83rd birthday. She will be remembered for her outstanding public service, particularly her advocacy of Hartford's Puerto Rican community.

Mrs. Rodriguez was born in Aguirre, PR, where she lived until she moved to Buffalo, NY, with her husband, Faustino, and their seven children. She became an active member of the Puerto Rican community there, serving as a member of the Puerto Rican Center, as well as the director of bilingual education at Public School 76, now known as the Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy. During her time in Buffalo, Carmen worked tirelessly on her own education, obtaining her GED, a bachelor's degree from Rosary Hill College, a master's in education from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and began her PhD.

She took her passion for learning and educating to Hartford, CT, in 1979, where she managed the Work Places program at the Hartford Board of Education, which helped students learn specific trades. Soon after, she began working for the deputy mayor to measure the efficiency of the program. Subsequently, she supervised Hartford Housing Authority's tenant education program for a decade. For 3 years, Carmen served as the executive director of La Casa de Puerto Rico, until retiring in 1994.