

debate on regulating assault weapons, which are often the weapon of choice in the most deadly mass shootings.

In the wake of Parkland, it looked like President Trump would finally get religion on this issue. He promised a serious debate on gun violence, but as soon as the NRA and their special interest cronies closed ranks around him, he backed off. That seems to be the pattern of this administration. The President says something one day, and then some powerful interest says: Don't do it, and he backs right off. That is not the kind of strength he wishes to show, and he sure hasn't shown it on this issue.

After this most recent tragedy in Santa Fe, we have heard no new calls for commonsense gun safety from the White House, but this Chamber can still act. I implore my friends across the aisle to take up this debate. We owe it to the people of Santa Fe, TX, to the people of Parkland, FL, and to every other community that lives at the mercy of the gaping loopholes in our gun laws.

TRADE WITH CHINA

Mr. President, on the matter of ongoing trade negotiations with China, as I have said many times, when it comes to being tough on China's trading practices, I am closer to President Trump than to either President Obama or President Bush. I think the President recognized that fact in a tweet this morning.

When President Trump threatened tariffs and investment restrictions in the face of China's blatant theft and extortion of our intellectual property, I gave the President a pat on the back. Our companies need to be able to sell our goods and services in China without having to turn over intellectual property.

I have mentioned this before, but here is one example that pains me, and it is so typical. GE employs thousands in Schenectady. They have intellectual property and know-how to make turbines spin very fast and not overheat, but China wouldn't let them sell them. So what did they do? The Chinese blackmailed them, and GE went along. There is a 51-49 company that now makes those turbines in China. That is great for the heads of GE, great for their board, and great for the stock for a few years. But after that, once China—now in this 51-49 company—has learned how to make these turbines themselves, we are gone. More good-paying jobs could be lost in upstate New York, as they have been throughout America.

President Trump's actions at first helped bring China to the table, but now President Trump and his team have to stick with it, be strong, and negotiate a strong, concrete agreement. The worst thing to do would be to sell out for a one-time, temporary purchase of goods without addressing the real issue: the theft of intellectual property and know-how, which costs us millions of American jobs.

Unfortunately, it seems too strong a possibility that President Trump is headed down the road of not being strong. The President said this morning: "China has agreed to buy massive amounts of ADDITIONAL Farm/Agricultural products." Secretary Mnuchin, hardly a tower of strength on this issue, has said that the administration would "follow this up" on this vague commitment and that \$150 billion in proposed tariffs would be put "on hold."

It is deeply disappointing that thus far President Trump has won no concessions on intellectual property and has locked in no new market access. In reality, there were not even specific commitments of U.S. good purchases, not that such a commitment would undo the damage China continues to do to us in its other activities.

If nothing else changes, this deal is a win-win for China. They avoid tough actions on intellectual property and give us some temporary and relatively small relief by buying some goods. China's trade negotiators must be laughing themselves all the way back to Beijing. They know what they are doing. They are playing us for fools. A temporary purchase of some goods, while China continues to steal our family jewels, the things that have made America great, the intellectual property, the know-how in the highest end industries—it makes no sense. China is pushing the President around, and he seems to accept it.

Worse still, the President's team is still talking about giving relief to China's state-backed telecommunications giant, ZTE, a company that violated our sanctions laws and is considered a national security threat. It is totally backward. The way to win real concessions from China is to stay tough, not to bluster and then back off at the first sign of friction.

So I say to President Trump, who knows I genuinely want him to succeed with China: Stay strong. Don't back off sanctions on ZTE. You have to pursue the course, or China will continue to enjoy the upper hand.

Congress also has a say on this issue. I was gratified to see that last week, Democrats and Republicans, in a House Appropriations subcommittee, approved a measure that would block the President from weakening sanctions on ZTE. Senate Democrats will also consider additional measures, if necessary, to block relief for ZTE, and we hope our Republican colleagues will join us in that effort.

The United States cannot let China continue to steal America's lifeblood, our intellectual property, and flout international trade laws. If President Trump doesn't get tough with them now, China will know he is willing to back down at the first sign of resistance. It will be a sad day for America—for America's workers, for our future wealth, and for our future prosperity. It will help make China replace us as No. 1. It is crucial.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Finally, Mr. President, on the probe into Putin's interference in our elections, in a series of tweets yesterday, President Trump demanded that the Justice Department start a counterinvestigation of the Russia investigation itself. That he would issue such an absurd and abusive demand based on no evidence shows just how little regard the President has for the rule of law.

President Trump seems to have the terribly misguided view that the Department of Justice is there to protect his political interests and prosecute his enemies. It is not. The Department of Justice is required to follow the law, not the political bidding of the President's, particularly when they are investigating him.

The President's demand is a blatant abuse of Executive power, an ill-informed, sloppy attempt to discredit a duly-constituted investigation led by the special counsel. As we speak, the President is reportedly meeting with Justice Department officials to press his case, even after they have already called on the inspector general to look into this matter. The President's behavior is the kind of grossly autocratic behavior we would expect in a banana republic, not a mature democracy. By now, we should all recognize that President Trump's latest demand is just another example of a relentless campaign to distract from the serious wrongdoing being uncovered by the Russia probe.

This weekend, it was reported that members of President Trump's inner circle met with emissaries and companies from several other foreign countries during the campaign to discuss manipulation of American voters in order to sway the election. This is exactly what our Founding Fathers feared—attempts by foreign capitals to influence American elections. As a reaction, the President does what he always does when faced with alarming news about the conduct of his campaign and the people in it: He kicks up dust. He tries to distract. He issues a flurry of tweets pointing people in every direction. That is all this demand for a counterinvestigation is—another distraction.

With sadness and some reluctance, I must add that a good deal of the blame for the President's undemocratic behavior lies with congressional Republicans who have engaged in a scorched-earth campaign to discredit the Justice Department broadly and the special investigation specifically. Representative NUNES has been at the center of much of this campaign, but the circle of blame is widening. PAUL RYAN is not doing his duty when he just stands aside and lets NUNES and his cohorts do what they are doing.

Members of the majority here in the Senate have recently demanded that the DOJ hand over copious amounts of information and documents—including potential evidence—about an ongoing criminal investigation. Any prosecutor

would tell you that is not how criminal investigations operate. It is hard to view these requests as anything but a coordinated campaign with the White House to interfere with or impede Mr. Mueller's investigation. Frankly, these kinds of actions are enabling and encouraging the President to test the bounds of the rule of law in this country. When the President sees Republicans in Congress go after the special counsel investigation, he feels even more emboldened, and that is a shame for our country, broadly defined in history.

There is a disturbing trend emerging. Chairman NUNES and the Republicans on the Hill concoct a plan to tear down the chain of command of the Mueller investigation. They feed it to the right-wing press, which churns out innuendo-laden and often factually inaccurate story after story. The President tweets, and the fringe conspiracy theories of far-right Republicans in Congress land themselves on the front pages of mainstream media outlets, all in the service of the President's despicable attempt to distract and deflect from the legitimate probe into Russia's interference in our elections.

Republican, Democrat, Independent—it shouldn't matter—all Americans should want Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein and Special Counsel Mueller to continue the Russia probe and follow the facts to their conclusion without interference and without intimidation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, to my shock and surprise, 10 people were killed Friday in a little town outside of Houston known as Santa Fe, at Santa Fe High School, about 20 miles northwest of Galveston, TX. As we know now, a male student walked into an art class with a pistol and a shotgun that he got from his parents, perhaps without their knowledge. After stashing makeshift explosives elsewhere, he then engaged in a killing spree. The dead included eight students and two teachers. A brave police officer was among the 13 wounded.

When I heard of the shooting, I made plans to immediately go to Santa Fe, where I met with Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Senator CRUZ, and others, and we spoke to the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the FBI representatives, as well as the Santa Fe Independent School District officials to find out what happened. The families there, of

course, remain in shock that something so terrible could happen in their small, tucked away little community—one that was recently shaken by Hurricane Harvey last fall and had previously seemed far removed from the violence that has touched other parts of the country.

As I said last Friday, we have seen this before. Just last fall, we saw a similar story unfold in Sutherland Springs, outside of San Antonio, when a man opened fire at a Sunday church service. Then we saw it in Florida earlier this year at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland. Unfortunately, in recent years there have been plenty of examples—too many examples, actually—with too many lives lost and far too few solutions for families reeling from the aftermath.

There are two things that strike me are clear, though. The first is that we need to better protect our students, secure our schools, and keep weapons out of the hands of those who are a danger to themselves and others. The second thing is to acknowledge that we haven't yet been able to do this effectively. Something is wrong, because these school shootings keep happening.

It is no coincidence that these shootings mostly happen at public schools—or soft targets—and the shooters are usually male teenagers who attended these schools. These young people, I should add, are surrounded by a culture that condemns violence, on one hand, excoriating public officials for not doing more to prevent it, but celebrating violence on television, in movies, and in video games, which at least has the potential to desensitize especially vulnerable young people.

Many proposals on how to address this pervasive problem focus on the guns themselves, not on the individuals who actually use them. They focus on restricting access to guns or banning specific firearm components for even law-abiding citizens. But any proposed fixes must also consider the root nature of the problem; that is, the deranged minds, the twisted rationalizations, and the tragic decisions of the people who commit these terrible acts of violence.

These shooters are obviously incapable of self-regulating their own behavior. How could we possibly address that? That is part of what we need to be thinking about. A gun can kill someone only if a person—a very sick or a very bad person—pulls the trigger.

So what have we done here in Congress to try to respond, as incompletely as I know we have? Well, last year, we introduced a bill called the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, which was signed by President Obama in 2016. It is part of the answer. It provides more resources for communities and schools and mental health providers to deal with people before they become a danger to themselves or others. But there is more we can do, certainly in that space. The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Cen-

ter has expanded the use of technology that can help us better utilize telemedicine to reach out to those in a mental health crisis and offer them an alternative course of treatment when they don't otherwise have access. We should consider that and other ideas in the days ahead.

The parents that lost their sons and daughters at Santa Fe High School are obviously still grieving today, and we should be grieving as well, not only for the people who lost their lives but also for the state of our Nation—one that continues to watch its young people self-destruct, engaging in violence that takes the lives of brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends, and classmates.

We have been told in recent days that grief and prayers are not enough. I agree. It is not enough to send our condolences to communities like Santa Fe. We need to look the families of the victims in the eyes and say: Here are the concrete steps we have taken and intend to take to make sure something like this never happens again.

I believe we did that earlier this year on a broad, bipartisan basis by passing legislation called the Fix NICS Act. Passing that bill was important because the last time I saw a major shooting in my State, it was at Sutherland Springs, where a man who had been discharged less than honorably from the Air Force for domestic violence convictions fell through the cracks of our background check system. He was able to lie and buy a firearm, even though, under existing law, he was disqualified and prohibited from doing so. But because of the broken background check system, he was able to get away with it. Our Fix NICS Act will help to fix that broken background check system. It was widely supported by Republicans and Democrats. We had 78 cosponsors in the Senate alone, demonstrating that solutions can enjoy broad bipartisan support if they actually make sense as opposed to engaging in ideological battles.

I am glad Congress worked together also to pass the STOP School Violence Act earlier this year, which I was proud to cosponsor. This legislation will help to provide our schools with the tools and resources they need to prevent violence through better equipment, planning, training, safety infrastructure, and law enforcement presence on campus. In this year's appropriations bill, we were able to allocate \$75 million to start getting this initiative off the ground.

Now, people wonder: Can we possibly do this? Can we succeed in making our schools a safe place for mothers and fathers to send their children and where they are confident that everything humanly possible is being done to protect them? Well, I am not suggesting that we turn them into an airport, but my colleagues will recall that post-9/11, we have hardened our airports and our Nation's air travel in such a way as to make it virtually impervious to terrorist attacks. I think given the proper