

judge executive Wade White and my colleagues in the Kentucky and Tennessee congressional delegations to put a stop to this government interference. We introduced legislation to prevent the Army Corps from robbing our fishers and anglers of this beloved pastime and damaging this key component of the local economy. The measure passed with overwhelming support and was signed into law. It has been successful, but its provisions are set to expire soon.

That is why I worked with Chairman BARRASSO, Ranking Member CARPER, and the committee to secure a new 5-year extension of the Freedom to Fish Act in this year's water infrastructure bill. It is just another achievement among the many victories this bill will deliver for communities across the country.

I am grateful to the supporters of this legislation, such as the National League of Cities and the National Rural Water Association, and the bipartisan coalition of Senators who worked to craft it. I look forward to the committee's vote today and to supporting this bill once it reaches the Senate floor.

#### JOB GROWTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, one final matter. This week, survey data showed that more Americans say it is a good time to find a quality job than at any point in the last 17 years.

Let me say that again. More Americans say it is a good time to find a quality job than at any point in the last 17 years.

Under President Obama, this number got as low as 8 percent. It never broke 50 percent during his administration, but today 67 percent of Americans say it is a good time to find a quality job.

Optimism has taken off for all groups since this President was elected and the Republican Congress was sworn in, but the injection of new hope has been felt the most among working-class Americans. This is a major distinction between the economic policies Democrats spent years putting in place and the new approach this Republican government has taken.

For nearly a decade, Democrats followed the standard liberal playbook: tax more, regulate more, and pile up more money and power right here in Washington. They cracked down on American businesses, imposed one new regulation after another, and looked to the Federal Government to pick winners and losers.

It is a familiar, old set of ideas. Here is what it produces: an economy that works very well for a few but leaves many more behind.

The Obama era was just fine for our Nation's biggest coastal cities. Roughly, three-quarters of all the new jobs created between 2010 and 2016 poured into the country's largest metropolitan areas, but outside of these places, taxes

and regulations created an anti-business climate that hurt American manufacturing, American coal communities, and small- and medium-sized businesses throughout our country.

So Republicans charted a new course. We understand that middle-class families know how to spend their own money better than the government; that American workers thrive when American job creators are expanding, hiring, and raising wages. We passed once-in-a-generation tax relief for American families and small businesses and are working at every turn to roll back runaway regulations. The result is an economic comeback that is reaching all kinds of communities, not just a favored few.

A record-high percentage of American manufacturers have said they have a positive economic outlook for their enterprises. Rural communities outpaced everywhere else in relative job creation last year. The total amount spent on employee compensation grew faster in 2017 than in any calendar year under President Obama.

This is what happens when Republicans implement a pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda that gets Washington out of the way. Everyone shares in the prosperity.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Dana Baiocco, of Ohio, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2017.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

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

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

#### SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last Friday, America watched in horror as the news story broke of yet another school shooting, this time at Santa Fe High School in Texas.

Eight students and two teachers were fatally shot. Thirteen victims were

wounded in another devastating tragedy. The alleged gunman was a student who came into the school with his parents' shotgun and handgun and used them to commit mass murder.

Of course, we grieve for the families and victims in Santa Fe, and, of course, we are grateful for first responders who ran toward the sound of gunfire. But let's be honest—the shooting in Santa Fe High was, by one count, the 22nd school shooting in America this year. We are in the 21st week of this year. We have had more than one school shooting a week in the United States of America. America's schoolchildren, sadly, now go to school expecting that there will be a shooter on the premises.

After the Santa Fe High School shooting, a reporter interviewed a student named Paige Curry at the school. The reporter asked: "Was there a part of you that was like, this isn't real, this could not happen at my school?"

Paige Curry replied: "There wasn't."

When the reporter asked why so, she said: "It's been happening everywhere. I've always felt it would eventually happen here too."

Can you imagine we have reached this point in America if that is how many of our Nation's high schoolers think? Sadly, in Paige Curry's case, she was right. Her school was the target last week.

On Sunday, the New York Times posted an article titled "New Reality for High School Students: Calculating the Risk of Getting Shot."

The article discussed how students across America, from Iowa to Oklahoma, from Illinois to Mississippi, from Seattle to New York, are now forced to go through their day planning what they would do if the shooting starts in their school.

The article quotes one student, a sophomore in a New York high school, describing how vulnerable her desks were in each class where she sat.

She started making mental calculations about when the gunman came to the door whether she would be in the line of fire. She said her English class is the safest class for her each day because it is down a hallway, and it makes it hard for the shooter to find it, but her math class makes her particularly vulnerable because she said she sits in the second desk in the second row in a direct path from the door. The student, whose name is Emily Rubenstein, said:

It's like the front lines of a war. Being seated in front of the classroom could be what makes you live and what makes you die.

It is not just high schoolers who think this way; my 6-year-old granddaughter came home and told her mom recently that she had been warned that if there is a shooter in the school—she is a first-grader—if there is a shooter in the school, stay away from the windows and get down on the floor as quickly as possible.

Is there any sane person in America who thinks our kids should be going

through this? Is there any sane person in America who believes this is expected by the Second Amendment to our Bill of Rights?

Let's be clear. Addressing our Nation's epidemic of gun violence and school shootings should be a top priority. About 300 Americans are shot every day, a third of them fatally. Gun violence is a public health crisis. It is traumatizing an entire generation of America's kids.

In recent weeks, students across the country have marched in the streets, walked out of their classrooms to call on us—elected leaders—to step up and do something to reduce gun violence. The students are having an impact. At least 15 States have passed legislation to close gaps in their State gun laws since February 14, which was the date of the Parkland shooting in Florida. Four States—Maryland, Florida, Vermont, and Washington—have passed bills to ban bump stocks. Congress has not. Seven States have passed bills to make it harder for domestic violence abusers to get guns—Kansas, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington. Congress has not. Three States have passed red flag laws to temporarily remove guns from people who pose extreme risks—Florida, Maryland, and Vermont.

These State-level reforms are significant, and they are even happening in States such as Florida and Kansas, which have a reputation of being friendly to the gun lobby. I hope my State of Illinois will soon join the ranks of the States that have passed meaningful State-level gun measures this year. We came close in Illinois when the General Assembly passed a landmark, bipartisan bill to provide more accountability for gun dealers' sales. Governor Bruce Rauner unfortunately vetoed that bill, but the General Assembly is working hard to put a revised bill back on his desk.

In addition to these State law reforms, the student movement has brought major changes in corporate behavior. Major gun retailers, such as Dick's Sporting Goods and Walmart, have voluntarily changed their sales practices. Companies such as Delta, United, Hertz, and Avis ended affinity relationships with the National Rifle Association. Institutional investors and financial companies are now pressuring the gun industry to change its behavior. These businesses understand that inaction is not an option. The student movement for gun safety has helped them realize this.

Unfortunately, it is extremely unlikely that this Congress will take any meaningful action this year to reduce gun violence in America. Why? Because President Trump and the Republican majority in Congress still won't push for any gun reforms that the gun lobby opposes. They are letting the gun lobby dictate Federal policy. That is a mistake. It is disgraceful. The gun lobby cares about one thing above all else: selling guns. They are not going to sup-

port any reforms that might reduce their sales.

On Sunday, the incoming president of the National Rifle Association, Oliver North—you may remember him from the Iran-Contra controversy—blamed everything from video games to Ritalin for our epidemic of school shootings. He blamed everything except guns.

In fact, rather than support efforts to strengthen our gun laws, the gun lobby is gearing up for their last big push this year to urge Congress to weaken our gun laws even further. On April 16, the Washington Examiner reported that longtime NRA board member Grover Norquist "said he has received assurance from the Republican leadership" that Congress will put the NRA's concealed carry reciprocity bill on the agenda this year before the August recess.

Make no mistake—as appropriations bills and the Defense authorization bill move through Congress, the gun lobby and their allies are looking to weaken the gun laws on the books even more than they already have. America, keep your eye on Congress.

To all the students and young people across America who are asking for leadership when it comes to reducing gun violence, many of us hear you loud and clear, and we are not giving up. Congress may not get the job done this year when it comes to closing the enormous gaps in our gun laws, but this movement of young people is making incredible things happen in statehouses across America. They are rapidly becoming a major force for change in corporate behavior, and they are soon-to-be voters. This movement is getting results, and Congress is going to have to choose whom it will listen to—the students who are spending their class time thinking about whether their desks are in the line of fire or the gun lobbyists who want to further weaken gun laws on the books so they can make more gun sales.

I know where I stand. I am going to keep doing everything I can to put the safety of my granddaughter, my grandson, and kids in our neighborhoods across America ahead of the gun lobby's agenda of selling more guns. We may not be able to stop every shooting in our schools and in our streets, but if Congress takes meaningful action to close the gaps in our gun laws, we will save lives.

#### FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES

Madam President, I would like to bring the Senate's attention to an article that appeared recently in the New York Times entitled "Education Department Unwinds Unit Investigating Fraud at For-Profits." That is right. Even while tens of thousands of students are still waiting for the Federal student loan discharges to which they are entitled under law because they were defrauded by for-profit colleges, such as Corinthian and ITT Tech, the Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, is dismantling the enforcement unit that was set up to prevent future fraud.

Corinthian and ITT Tech have become the most infamous examples of for-profit college predatory practices, but they are hardly unique in the industry. I have often said on the floor of the Senate—and the numbers have changed slightly over the years—that you can tell the story of for-profit colleges and universities if you know two numbers. This will be on the final. The first number: 9 percent of all post-secondary students go to for-profit colleges and universities—University of Phoenix, DeVry, Kaplan, similar universities. Nine percent go to for-profit colleges and universities, and 33 percent of all the federal student loan defaults are students from for-profit colleges and universities. Nine percent. Thirty-three percent. Why? Why is there such a dramatic difference between the percentage of students going to these schools and those who default on student debt, 33 percent of whom went to the same schools? There are two reasons. For-profit colleges and universities overcharge the students and produce a diploma that is virtually worthless when it comes to finding a job and paying off their student loan debt. That is the reality.

In the last 5 years, nearly every major for-profit college has been investigated or sued by more than one State attorney general and Federal agency for unfair, deceptive, and abusive practices. Thanks to Secretary DeVos, they don't need to worry about the Department of Education anymore. The writing has been on the wall for some time.

Last summer, Secretary DeVos hired former DeVry dean Julian Schmoke to be chief enforcement officer, where he would oversee the enforcement unit. I noted at the time that this was a particularly troubling decision given the enforcement unit's reported ongoing investigation into DeVry. The Times story confirmed my fears. They note that members of the enforcement unit have been marginalized, reassigned, and instructed to focus on other matters. What had expanded under President Obama to include around a dozen lawyers and investigators has now been reduced to three employees. According to the New York Times, the downsizing effectively killed investigations into several large for-profit colleges, including—you guessed it—DeVry.

In 2016, DeVry, which is based out of Chicago, agreed to pay \$100 million to settle a lawsuit with the Federal Trade Commission related to misleading advertising when it came to college students. Around the same time, DeVry agreed to a limited settlement with the Department of Education, but an enforcement unit investigation continued. According to the Times, the investigation became a point of contention between the Department staff and the new Trump administration.

DeVry isn't the only former employer of a top DeVos adviser to escape Department scrutiny. The Times article also reports that the enforcement