

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

unit investigations of Bridgepoint Education and Career Education Corporation have gone dark. The cops are being taken off the beat.

Bridgepoint—owner of the notorious Ashford University—has a long record of abuse. Last year, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau ordered the company to pay \$30 million for deceptive acts and practices, including lying to students about their obligations under student loans. Bridgepoint is currently being sued by the California attorney general for defrauding and deceiving students. It is also facing investigations by State attorneys general in Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has also taken action to withdraw Ashford's eligibility to participate in the GI Bill because of its failure to comply with VA regulations. But, as the New York Times article points out, Bridgepoint has friends in high places when it comes to the Trump administration. A former consultant for Bridgepoint is now the Director of Strategic Communications at the White House.

Then there is Robert Eitel, who was hired by Secretary DeVos in February 2017 as a special assistant. For the first 9 weeks of his Department of Education tenure, Eitel was actually on an unpaid leave of absence from Bridgepoint. You heard that right—he was an employee of the Department of Education and continued as an employee of one of the most predatory for-profit colleges in this country at the same time. ABC News reports Eitel had a hand in dismantling the Department's borrower defense rule, which would have helped students who were defrauded by for-profit colleges like Ashford. How is that for a fox guarding the henhouse?

But we are not done yet. Don't forget about Career Education Corporation, which reports that it is currently under investigation by 23 States attorneys general, including Lisa Madigan of Illinois. In 2013, Career Education Corporation agreed to pay \$10.25 million in a settlement with the New York attorney general over job placement rate inflation, an act of fraud. The company has been investigated by the FTC and the SEC. The Department of Education even placed one of its schools, American Intercontinental University, on heightened cash monitoring for concerns related to its administrative capability. But the enforcement unit's investigation into fraud by the company has come to a screeching halt, according to the New York Times. Who at the Department of Education is connected to Career Education Corporation? Well, in addition to working for Bridgepoint, Mr. Eitel was previously a top lawyer for that company, Career Education Corporation.

Then there is Diane Auer Jones, who was previously a senior vice president for Career Education Corporation and

was hired by Secretary DeVos to be her senior adviser on postsecondary education. Also, the Department's recently confirmed general counsel, Carlos Muniz, previously provided consulting services to the same company.

The DeVos-orchestrated takeover of the Department of Education by the for-profit college industry is an embarrassment. It is an affront to students, their families, and to taxpayers. The Trump administration and Secretary DeVos are more concerned with protecting their rich buddies in the for-profit college industry than protecting America's students and their families. They don't seem to care that taxpayer dollars are being wasted as long as those dollars are going into their friends' pockets. It is shameful. It is scandalous. It has become routine in the U.S. Department of Education.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Democratic leader is recognized.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first let me thank my friend from Georgia for being able to go first and also thank my friend from Illinois, who has been passionate, strong, and effective when it comes to these for-profit colleges. He laid out a strong case.

Let me just make one more point which sometimes my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and the Trump administration and Ms. DeVos seem to forget. Who loses money when these for-profits take advantage of the kids? The Federal taxpayers do because the vast majority, the overwhelming percentage of funds that go to these for-profit colleges are from Federal student loans. So this is a waste of taxpayer money. Somehow our Republican colleagues—not all but some—and the Trump administration are willing to have the Treasury basically, in certain ways, be looted. They shrug their shoulders and let the for-profits keep doing it. It is an amazing contradiction. So I thank my colleague Senator DURBIN.

ZTE

Now, on the issues that I came to speak about here, Mr. President, it was reported by the Wall Street Journal that the Trump administration has agreed to relax sanctions on the Chinese telecom giant ZTE and remove the ban on ZTE from selling components and software in the United States. Instead, ZTE will be required to pay a fine and reorganize its board. It appears that, in exchange, China will lift some tariffs on U.S. agricultural products.

First, let me say this. I said this repeatedly, but I will say it again. I feel much closer in my views on China and how they treat us in terms of economic issues to President Trump and his views than I was to President Obama and President Bush and their views, who I don't think did enough. I had

public arguments with both President Obama and President Bush on this issue.

When Donald Trump started talking about going after China and making them play fair, I felt that was a good thing. When his administration fined ZTE and then put sanctions on them so they couldn't get American components, I said: Finally, we are doing something tough on China.

You can imagine my disappointment with the reports last night that President Trump, being advised so wrongly by people like Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, is backing off on this toughness and just giving them a slap on the wrist, a fine. If the reports are true, the Trump administration will have suffered a great defeat. The fines and board changes do absolutely nothing to protect American national or economic security.

It is my view that China proposed this because they know it doesn't do the real job. When President Trump shows weakness and backs off on the area where he has been toughest with China, it signals to them that they can roll over us issue after issue, where they have been rapacious in terms of how they deal with our economy, our intellectual property, and the ability of great American companies not to sell things in China.

The April 2018 commerce order penalizing ZTE says plainly that past fines have not and will not deter ZTE because they are financially backed by China's government and putting in place board changes doesn't coerce a company that takes its orders from China's Government.

The proposed solution is like a wet noodle. It is outrageous. I hope that Democrats and Republicans will join together in making sure, as House Republicans did in the Appropriations subcommittee, that the proposed sanctions against ZTE of not letting them buy American products and not letting them sell here will stick, but I don't think they will. All the handwriting is on the wall.

I will not divulge anything, but I did have a half-hour conversation with President Trump about this on Friday and with some of his advisers. So I am truly worried.

The penalties that are proposed by Secretary Mnuchin are penalties in name only. They are a diversion from the fact that it seems President Xi has outmaneuvered President Trump and Secretary Mnuchin. It should be President Xi who writes the book "The Art of the Deal" because he has taken us to the cleaners on ZTE.

Let me explain why this is such a bad deal. ZTE was sanctioned in 2016 for violating U.S. sanctions against North Korea and Iran. The company was further sanctioned when the Commerce Department discovered that ZTE had lied to the United States about its plans to rectify the violations. President Trump and Secretary Mnuchin, according to reports, have inexplicably