

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

REMEMBERING EMILY FAY REESE

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise to honor a dear friend. Her name was Emily Fay Reese, who passed away on November 3 at the young age of 44 after 8 years of battling colon cancer.

Emily was a source of strength and a beacon of light in the Reno community. She radiated love and kindness to every person she met, and her loss will be felt by every single person whose life she touched.

She loved and adored her three children, Madeline, KJ, and Thomas, who are living legacies and testaments to the amazing person that Emily was.

“Live life, love life, and impact others,” these are the words Emily lived by and wanted to share with the rest of the world. During her life, she embodied this simple message—giving life and love, doing all she could to make a difference in the lives of others. She did this first as a public school teacher, and after her cancer diagnosis she became a person on a mission to educate us all about the importance of accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare for everyone.

Before her passing, Emily wished for her friends and family to honor her by voting. She recognized how consequential elections were to building a better future for her children and her country. Emily was proud that she was able to vote early and cast her ballot to make sure her voice was heard in Nevada. Even in the final days of her life, she continued to fight for all of us.

Her advocacy was one way for her to impact others, and she fought to protect the healthcare of Nevadans by using her diagnosis to openly talk about what it was like to live with a terminal diagnosis and the difference that the Affordable Care Act had made in extending and improving the quality of her life. She reminded us that the ACA meant that she could spend her time with her children instead of worrying about bills and bankruptcy.

The last time I saw Emily was here, on Capitol Hill, just a few months ago. She was advocating on behalf of our fellow Nevadans who rely on Medicaid to get the care they need. She was here to oppose massive funding cuts to the program that she said was saving her life. She was here to speak out against a lawsuit that would take away protections from Americans with preexisting conditions and to fight for people like her who didn't have a voice. She was a “Battle Born” woman, and with grace,

dignity, and courage, she bore her fight against cancer and for healthcare for every American.

Emily was a fighter; she was a mother; and she was a friend. I will be forever grateful for the time she spent in giving voice to the voiceless and for her commitment to bettering the lives of those who, like her, need their healthcare protected.

Today and every day, I honor Emily's memory and continue to fight to protect healthcare for every Nevadan so that those who are struggling with illness can focus on their fights to get better, can spend time with their families, and live out their lives with dignity.

Emily's legacy lives on through every life she has touched, including mine. Emily's legacy will continue to live on through each of us and through her beautiful family. I know she will continue to bless us with her profound light, which will guide us and give us strength through the good times and the bad. Knowing Emily was a blessing, and I thank her for her friendship.

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

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

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor, as I have many times in the last several years—and I know I am not alone in this—to talk about, unfortunately, yet another mass shooting. This one occurred in my home State—in Allegheny County, PA, in the southwestern corner of our State, in the city of Pittsburgh, in a community known as Squirrel Hill.

I come here to do a couple of things—to honor the victims of this mass shooting and the individuals who were injured, of course; to offer condolences to the grieving families again; to express gratitude for the law enforcement and medical professionals who responded to the scene; and, of course, to stand with the community in the face of hate and terror.

On this occasion, this deadly mass shooting occurred in one community, but it also occurred in a house of worship. It resulted in the deaths of 11 innocent Pennsylvanians. It left six people injured, including four law enforcement officers who were responding to the scene. It was a targeted, hateful attack on the Jewish community within the Squirrel Hill community in the city of Pittsburgh. It was an act of violence that we must work to ensure never happens again.

It was just a couple of weeks ago, long before election day, on Saturday, October 27, that three congregations—the Tree of Life, the Dor Hadash, and the New Light—were engaged in Shabbat morning services at the Tree of Life Synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood, which is a residential part of the city of Pittsburgh. As these worshippers were engaged in services, what played out was the most deadly act of violence against the Jewish community in American history. These congregants were targeted for one reason—because of their religious beliefs, because they happened to be Jewish. Their lives were changed forever by one hateful act of terror, as were the lives of those who were injured.

So our deepest condolences are with the 11 families of the victims of this attack. Here are the names of the 11: Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal and his brother David Rosenthal, Bernice and Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax, and Irving Younger. May their memories be blessings to their families and community. It is difficult to even begin to adequately express the hurt that this community has endured, the horror that these families have endured, and the hurt that is still part of this community.

Maybe one of the best ways to convey not just our condolences and our sympathy but also our solidarity with those who faced that horror and that danger and that hate is to talk about what those folks did in that dark, dark hour. It literally was about an hour, maybe a little more than that, on that Saturday morning.

We, of course, at this time—and so many have since that date—pay tribute to those in law enforcement who confronted the murderer with uncommon valor. We pay tribute, as well, to the emergency service professionals—nurses and doctors and others—who ministered to those who were wounded and tried their best to minister to those who were dying.

All of these individuals—and it is impossible to name all of them whether they are in law enforcement or are medical professionals or are emergency personnel—were, at that moment, as they always are, servants in the most profound meaning of the word. These were servants who came forward to help in that darkness. They came forward to save and to comfort. As the great hymn “The Servant Song” tells us, these were servants who were holding the light for these individuals in the nighttime of their fear. That is what that song, “The Servant Song,” reminds us of.

So, when a gunman with very powerful weapons was shooting directly at individuals—targeting them—in a house of worship, where there was no protection at all for those who were victims and for those who were targets but who survived and had to wait what must have seemed like an eternity for

help because the gunman was in control of that scene for a period of time, they were in that nighttime of their fear. Those servants came forward to bring some light to that darkness, to bring light to that nighttime of their fear.

People all over the world have marveled at the strength, the resolve, and the love of the people of Pittsburgh—a community, as they have said so many times since, that is stronger than hate and, I would argue, that is stronger than ever.

We are thinking about those families. We are thinking about those who gave so much in that hour of tragedy and horror and death and darkness. We also have to do more than that. Commendation and sympathy and condolences and solidarity and being determined to try to prevent this from ever happening again is all important, but we have to do more. We have to also act—maybe it is better to say “take action”—to enact commonsense policies, laws, and other policies that will at least reduce the likelihood that these acts of violence will, in fact, continue to occur.

This problem of mass shootings is a uniquely American problem that has to be solved by the American people, of course, through their elected representatives at every level of government but, maybe most especially, by those who are here in the U.S. Senate and in the other body, the House of Representatives, in working with the executive branch. I believe we have to take action. No single law and no series of measures, even if they were to be enacted into law, will remove the possibility that these mass shootings and other examples of horrific gun violence will suddenly vanish from the Earth and never happen again. Yet there are steps we can take that will, for sure, reduce the likelihood.

The point I have made all along is that we have to take enough action, even a series of actions, that might prevent one fewer of these incidents in which kids are killed in school, as we saw 6 years ago in Newtown, CT, at Sandy Hook Elementary School, or one less example of people being gunned down in a nightclub or in another school in Florida or now in a synagogue in Pittsburgh.

What do we need to do?

We could start with measures that have broad-based support. Some of them are supported by 80 to 90 percent of the American people. We could require universal background checks. I think that that is about a 90-to-10 issue, maybe. We could ban military-style assault weapons. There are millions of them on our streets already. There are weapons of war on our streets and in our communities. We could also limit high-capacity magazines that allow hundreds of rounds to be fired in just a matter of seconds or minutes. We must keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people—suspected terrorists and individuals convicted of

hate crimes, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence.

These policies can't prevent every act of violence or replace what has been lost at the Tree of Life Synagogue or in communities across the Nation, the most recent, of course, being in California, but we can take action. I don't think it is in the best interest of the American people to surrender to this problem, to surrender to this uniquely American problem, and just throw up our hands and say that there is nothing we can do, as some might say, about mass shootings or that there is nothing we can do, some might argue, to prevent losing over 30,000 lives a year to gun violence. I think we can take action. I think we can do more. At a minimum, we have to try. All of the measures I have mentioned—you could add more, like plugging the loophole which says that if you are too dangerous to get on an airplane because you happen to be a terrorist or we have a reasonable suspicion, a well-grounded suspicion, that you are a terrorist and you can't get on an airplane, why would that same individual be allowed to have a weapon? It doesn't make a lot of sense. We have some work to do, as legislators and as Americans, to try to reduce the likelihood that these attacks will continue.

None of the measures that I have outlined here today—and we could add more to the list—are in any way inconsistent with the Second Amendment or in any way would undermine the right of a law-abiding American to purchase a firearm and to use a firearm for self-protection or for hunting or whatever else.

We have to take action at long last. It has been too long. There have been too many tragedies, too many lives lost, and the response by Congress for years now—you could even say for even decades—has been to throw up their hands and say: There is nothing we can do. I don't believe that about America—that the most powerful Nation in the world can do nothing on this issue. We need to do more.

We need to debate it on this floor again, but do something we haven't done in a substantial way in at least 6 years, and that is to have votes on this floor that deal with this issue.

We have to solve a lot of problems in the weeks that remain in this Congress and in the new Congress, but one of them is this: to begin to solve this problem from which only America has suffered. It is difficult, it is contentious, and it is certainly not a problem that has an easy solution, but to do nothing, which is basically what Congress has done for far too long, is not in the best interest of the American people. I would argue it is inconsistent with our values, and it is inconsistent with who we are.

As we express condolences for those who have loved and lost—those families who have suffered either the loss of a loved one or are still suffering because a loved one is injured, the law

enforcement who were injured in this incident—and as we commend and salute the good work of law enforcement, the good work of medical service professionals—those professionals who are on our streets every day, saving people—as we do all of that and offer those words of sympathy and condolences and commendation, let us also be determined as a people to begin to reduce the likelihood that we are going to be the only country in the world that continually suffers and endures mass shooting after mass shooting, losing lives all throughout these many years and just in the last couple of months.

I think that is a challenge, but, also, solving that problem is a mission worthy of a great country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BUDGET REFORM

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, earlier this year, Congress created a bipartisan committee—eight Republicans, eight Democrats, half from the House, half from the Senate. Their mission was to reform the budget process. It was an acknowledgement that our debt is climbing, and there is no structure in place to even address that debt, and any time our debt is addressed, it seems to be somewhat haphazard or accidental or some ad hoc committee is formed to go after debt every 10 years or so. This is spiraling, and we need to have something done, and it needs to be built into the structure.

Starting in April, these 16 Members of Congress started to meet, with these instructions: “to significantly reform the budget and appropriations process”—significantly reform the process. The idea was simple. We are getting a bad budget product; we probably need to look at the budget process and be able to find out what is happening with the process.

You see, this process that we have was started in 1974. Right after Watergate, Congress created this new process with a budget, with a President's budget, with authorizing bills, with appropriating bills, and they would all work together for great transparency. It was a great plan on paper, but since 1974, it has worked only four times—four times.

Year after year, Americans keep saying the same thing: Why isn't the budget working again? Why is everything climbing? And every year, Congress says the same thing: We will fix it next year, next year, next year, next year. At some point, we have to admit it is a bad process, and we are not going to get a better product out of it. We have