

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. CASSIDY). 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

to fix that process, so we started meeting.

Today, we had our first set of votes on how we are going to significantly reform the budget process. We started meeting at about 10:30 this morning, and after 15 amendments and debate, the hearing was suspended at lunch for a week because a few of the Members wanted to fly home early for Thanksgiving, so now we will have to finish that work next week. It signaled me again that we don't seem to be serious in this body about dealing with debt and deficits, that even the groups selected to reform the process couldn't finish debate without breaking early for Thanksgiving.

So far, the only agreements to do significant reform—remember, that is the mandate; the only agreements that have been set so far have been to do budgets every 2 years rather than every year but still keep reconciliation and appropriations every year, change the membership of the Senate Budget Committee, and then to add a new, optional, bipartisan budget pathway in case some future Congress has lightning strike and they want to be able to try it. Those are the only agreements we have had so far. I don't know if that sounds like significant budget reform to you, but it doesn't to me. That sounds like just shifting things around.

For months we have researched the history of the budget process. We have identified different options that are out there. We have tried to figure out how we have gotten into this unworkable spot of budget deficits that we are in and how to fix it. For months we have worked on this. Then, as we got to this point, suddenly everyone started backing up to the status quo and saying: We will just try harder again.

It will not work just to try harder. The process has to change.

You see, we met with the leadership of the Congressional Budget Office and asked some very blunt questions about our debt and deficit that Americans inherently know the answer to. They can just feel it. We asked for simple, straightforward numbers. The Congressional Budget Office reported back to us that if we want to get back to the historic levels of debt and deficit that we have had for the past 50 years, if we want to get just to that level, we will have to start cutting or taxing \$630 billion every year, starting in 2019, just to get back to the historic levels we have been at. If we want to stay just at this level of debt to GDP, just remain in this position that we are in right now of overwhelming debt, we will have to cut or tax an additional \$400 billion every single year just to tread water. The reason for that is our interest rates are continuing to go up, and on \$21 trillion in total debt right now, as our interest rates tick back up, we will soon be approaching \$1 trillion in interest payments each year. That is more than all of our discretionary spending combined.

People ask the question: Why is the debt increasing suddenly? They look at

things like the tax bill and ask: Is that the tax bill? No, it is not the tax bill from last year. In fact, after the tax bill from last year and the tax changes that were made for this year, there is actually more revenue coming into the Federal Treasury this year, after the tax changes, than there were last year. Let me run that by you again. Everyone seems to want to blame the tax bill for the increasing debt and deficit. There is more revenue coming into the Treasury this year than last year, even after the tax cuts, because the tax cuts spurred economic activity. More people have jobs, more people are paying taxes, more people are making money, so they are paying additional taxes. So even with the cut, more revenue is coming in. It is not about the tax cut; it is about skyrocketing interest on a \$21 trillion debt, and there is nothing we can do about that other than begin to address it seriously.

It has been predictable. CBO has seen it for years, and it is here. The simple mandate of the Budget Reform Committee was to bring out a significant reform in the process so that we can address this together, but so far this has been one of the most frustrating processes that I have had in my short time here in the Senate because most don't want to solve it because the decisions will be hard.

Let me lay out some of the options I think do fix this. What are some of the hard choices? The first thing I have heard over and over again in this budget reform process is that we need to get to a bipartisan process. I agree. Republicans and Democrats alike are going to have to look at the debt and deficit and say: We have to be able to work together. There seem to be all of these different gimmicks for how we are going to try to work together when we are avoiding the one simple way. There is one simple way to make sure we do things in a bipartisan manner; it is called passing the law.

Right now, the budget, as it is done every year, is not law. The Senate writes a budget, the House writes a budget, neither of them are actually passed as law.

The President never signs them. The President creates a budget, the House creates a budget, the Senate creates a budget, and then everyone kind of debates for a year, and then we get to appropriations and fight over appropriations at the end of the year because those are actually law.

Well, here is the simple solution. If you want to avoid government shutdowns, if you want to end all of the end-of-the-year fighting, if you want to make budgeting an actually bipartisan process, there is a simple solution: Make the budget the law. I know that may sound overly simplistic to people who are outside of this Senate body, and many people may think the budget is already a law, but it is not. It is not a law, because without a law, you can create partisan documents and debate it and hash it around for a full year and

then go fight at the very end of the year before the government shutdown happens, when there is lots of pressure.

The simple way to resolve this at the beginning is to make the fight about the budget at the beginning of the year—long before there is a discussion of government shutdowns. Make the budget itself a law. Push the House and the Senate and the White House to sit down early in the year—before May 31—resolve how we are going to spend, what we are going to do, what is the plan, what are we going to save, and then pass it as a law. When that happens, then all of the work can happen after that. Then you do all of the appropriations bills. Then you talk about what you are going to save. Then you fight through all the details of it. But you have established the big deal that takes away the fight at the end and moves the fight to the beginning. But, for some reason, most everyone on this committee is fighting with the one simple, obvious answer: Make the budget a law instead of a partisan political document every year. That has not worked.

Let's fight it out early. We are going to have budget fights. We have disagreements in this body. Fine, let's have our disagreements, but let's have them early rather than holding the entire country hostage at the end of the year right as we approach a government shutdown. Let's lay out in the budget debt-to-GDP targets. Then we look at the gross domestic product—that is GDP. What do we produce in total as a country? What is the total amount of debt we can handle as a country?

Let's create a plan and then, throughout the course of the year, actually execute that plan. That is what every family and what every business does. They look at the revenue that is coming in. If they have debt, such as their mortgage or cars, they plan and allot for that. We don't. The budget is a political document, and then we make up spending as we go through the year without a significant plan. Let's make the budget a law, create our debt-to-GDP targets in it, and then execute those throughout the course of the year.

Most Americans have heard something about appropriations bills. They have heard that on some news report or something. The 1921 Budget and Accounting Act requires that we do a certain number of appropriations bills. Right now, 12 bills are required. It breaks up the major parts of government spending into 12 little spots.

Basically, we have 12 different bills set aside for spending. We never have a single bill set aside for saving. Let me run that past my colleagues again. There is no plan for a bill that is set aside for savings. So one of the things I have recommended, in addition to making the budget a law to force everyone to actually have the fight early rather than late, is to add a 13th bill, to do our 12 appropriations bills, and

the 13th bill will be a bill that is set aside every session of Congress that is focused on what we are going to save, forcing Congress every session to have to stop and have the debate. How are we going to save money? What are we going to do? Each Congress can decide how much they want to save, but every Congress has to work a little bit on this.

Currently, every time we fight debt—it may be once a decade that we have a big meeting on debt. We are never going to get ahold of \$21 trillion trying to fight it once a decade; we are going to have to do it little by little by little and chip it away.

This Congress, just like the last Congress, just like the one before, didn't do significant work on debt reduction because there was no deadline and the work is hard. If I know anything about this Congress from the short time I have been here, it is that it will not do anything until it has to. So if we created in law a requirement that every session of Congress, there has to be this what I call the 13th bill—this bill that is designed to say that Congress has to debate how much they are going to save and where they are going to save—it would at least force that moment where we have to resolve things.

There has been no dialogue so far on how we really reform the debt limit. The debt limit is only an American invention. It was designed to control our spending and control our debt, but I can assure you it has not worked since 78 times we have raised the debt limit. The debt limit has become a debt cliff and a big fight rather than something that actually controls our spending.

If we would put in place something to actually cause Congress to have a vote on debt, I would be glad to deal with the debt limit—it is drama every time—and substitute it for something that is really going to reduce our debt burden. But that is not the discussion. The discussion in the committee is not about trying to actively reduce our debt or to put into a plan a way to reduce our debt; it is just, what can we do to take out the debt ceiling vote entirely because it is tricky. That doesn't help us. That is not significant reform, just removing something because it is tricky. Significant reform on our budget process is when we replace it with something that is effective.

Every year, the President of the United States since 1921 has submitted something called the President's budget. Millions of dollars are spent compiling this big, giant document that no one reads. It becomes a big political document. Every single President has put one out every year since 1921, and not a single one of them has ever passed—not one—but lots of time and attention is spent on the "President's budget".

There is a simpler way to do this. Have the President turn over their priorities, turn over the agency issues that they see on spending. It is perfectly acceptable for the President to

do that. But don't create this big pomp-and-circumstance, expensive process of having this giant President's budget that really means nothing.

How about shifting our budgeting and our whole process to the calendar year rather than the fiscal year? Many Americans don't know that Congress runs from October 1 until September 30. Guess what. It is the middle of November right now. Our appropriations are not done for this year. They are not done for last year. We have carried them over on something called a continuing resolution—what we hear people refer to as a CR—just like was done the year before, just like was done the year before, and just like was done the year before.

Congress actually functions on the calendar year, but we pretend to function on a fiscal year. That just guarantees that every October, November, and December, we have budget chaos as we try to figure out how to run the system. How about this for a simple solution: Why don't we actually run it on a calendar year, because that is how we actually do it, including this year. That would mean we would actually plan and structure for that. That is significant budget reform. But currently the conversation in the budget reform committee is, no, we will try it again next year, and we will see if we can make September 30 work. It won't, by the way, but no one wants to actually make the shift.

There has been a lot of debate about something called reconciliation. Reconciliation is a process that is intensely broken. It was designed by the Budget Act to be something to really focus on debt and deficit, but it has become a fight with our Parliamentarian and with each other about how to stick in something that is not debt and deficit related.

Why don't we simplify the language? Why don't we clean up the reconciliation process? Why don't we make it what it was designed to be and make sure it is clear so that reconciliation is used by every Congress to deal with debt and deficit? It is a doable task. We have laid out multiple different proposals for how to do that. So far, they have all been turned down.

We have to figure out a way to get better numbers. If we can't get better numbers, we are not going to get better results. We have to get real numbers from the Congressional Budget Office and from Joint Tax. We have to allow Joint Tax and other groups to do dynamic scoring so we get a predictive way to look at the spending and the tax and see what happens.

We have to have real consequences if Congress doesn't do a budget. Americans know if Congress doesn't do a budget, they just leave town and say: We didn't get it done this year. How about this for a simple idea that would be effective even today, if we were doing it. There is a set deadline in statute, in law, when the budget has to be completed, when the appropriations

bills have to be completed, and when they have to be signed. If those milestones or deadlines are not hit, Congress cannot adjourn, cannot leave town. I don't care if Thanksgiving is approaching—you set a deadline, and if it is not completed by that deadline, Congress has to be in session every day, including weekends, until it is done. That is a simple solution.

If Congress is in session every single day, at some point, they will say: I want to go home and see my family, so we need to get this resolved. I would agree. There is not a pressure point better than forcing Congress to stay in town and stay in session until the work is done. We will see if that is actually added to the proposal, but so far, that is trending away from just saying to Congress in the future and now, no, we will try to get that done, but I am not sure we really will.

If we want to end government shutdowns, then keep Congress in session. If we want to end long continuing resolutions, keep Congress in session until it is done. It is a pretty straightforward process. It would benefit our economy. It would benefit this Congress.

Even simple things—it is fascinating to me. There is an internal process called vote-arama. It is awful. If you are ever here in the Senate watching it or around it, it is terrible. It is around the budget process, and it is an endless debate/vote, but none of the votes actually count. They are all messaging votes. They don't actually do anything. But anyone can bring up anything at any time, and we go through this endless series of messaging votes, trying to make each other look bad politically. It is a terrible process.

It is fixable. In fact, we brought up an amendment today in the process—one of those 15 amendments that were debated before people left early for Thanksgiving—we brought up an amendment today to fix the vote-arama, and it failed because folks on the other side wanted to have messaging votes just in case it came up.

In the last vote-arama that happened—an all-night, perpetual, meaningless vote series—the last vote in the vote-arama was a messaging vote: Should we end vote-aramas or not? It passed unanimously. Everyone in this Chamber says they hate it, but when there was a real option to get rid of it, they kept it because the status quo is easier than change.

Significant budget reform was the mandate. That has not happened so far—not even small budget reform has happened so far. We will come back after Thanksgiving. We will have another series of amendments. We have an opportunity to get this right and to fix a very broken process. I will pray that over Thanksgiving, Members of this body and of the House determine that \$21 trillion worth of debt needs significant reform, not just tweaks around the edges, and that when we come back after Thanksgiving, people

will actually approach this seriously instead of the flippant way it has been approached so far. We have to get this done. I commend us to get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, a few weeks ago, there was a lot of media attention on the caravan from Central America coming up through Mexico and making its way to the United States intending to declare asylum or to cross the border illegally. This is kind of interesting because people don't realize that we have within our laws that if a person declares asylum, it has to be acted upon as a matter of routine. We have heard all about people declaring asylum. They get a court date, and then they are not showing up for court. We know that happens—it is really a no-brainer—but nonetheless it has been going on and on and on.

In fact, the law prescribes that anyone coming to this country to seek asylum will be coming into the country through other countries, and they must first go to whatever country they go through before coming to the United States. In other words, someone coming from Central America, if they are coming through Mexico, should not go to the United States but to Mexico to seek asylum.

Now, asylum is not very well-defined. Anyone can come in and say: My life is in danger, and therefore I need the opportunity to come across the border into the United States. We all know what happens. Back in my real life, I spent some 20 years on the border. I was a builder-developer, and I know how the border works. I know the border agents. I have spent time down there. They wonder why we don't have a solution.

Anyway, we are told that migrants are escaping violence and persecution, but once they get to this country and someone asks, they say, no, in reality, they are seeking the economic opportunities that we taxpayers are paying for in the United States or they maybe want to reunite with their families. I think anyone within earshot right now would want to do the same thing for their families. So this has been going on for a long time, and while this caravan has rightfully garnered a lot of attention, it is really part of a much larger problem.

In fiscal year 2018 alone, more than 396,000 people were caught illegally crossing our southern border by Customs and Border Protection agents—an average of more than 7,500 a week.

They come because they know our border is porous and, if caught, they can always game our legal system and stay. They have been doing it now for years. While the problems are not new, the caravan brings a renewed spotlight to our vulnerabilities. We have to secure our borders, and we have to tackle the policies that encourage abuse of our immigration system.

After decades of seeing our border breached over and over again, voters responded very actively to President Trump when he was pledging to address our immigration crisis by building a wall. Here is the thing: Walls work. We know they work. We are about the only one who doesn't have walls. We are talking about walls that have been in discussion, proposed by this President and proposed by many of us in this body. DHS estimates a wall will deter 90 percent of illegal crossers. So walls do work. We know they work. Nearly 2,000 miles—the figure they have been using and I believe is pretty accurate—will take an estimated \$25 billion to fully secure our southern border.

I have heard my colleagues describe how we couldn't pay for a wall and, after all, we don't need to grow our deficit or use tax dollars to pay for it. That is why I am introducing the Wall Act of 2018, to build the wall and secure our border. We have talked this over and determined this will work. It is very simple. It provides \$25 billion—actually, more than that—for a wall by eliminating Federal benefits going to illegal immigrants.

We have a lot of liberals in both bodies of Congress who are going to say we can't do that. Liberals are always great about giving things away, and I think of Margaret Thatcher when I think about this: Socialism is a wonderful thing, until we run out of other people's money to give away. That is exactly what is happening right now.

Under current law, noncitizens who are not allowed to work are able to receive the earned-income tax credit—a refundable tax credit. They are eligible because applicants do not need to provide work-authorized Social Security numbers. Very simply, prior to 2003, the Social Security Administration routinely issued Social Security numbers to anyone needing a driver's license or a bank account. We have stopped that now, but those numbers still exist and allow for illegal immigrants to obtain Social Security numbers and receive this refundable tax credit and possibly other Federal benefits.

More significantly, the bill we are introducing would require the tax filers themselves to provide a work-authorized Social Security number to receive the refundable child tax credit. Now, under the law, filers only have to provide a Social Security number for a dependent they are claiming to receive a tax credit and a refundable portion. That is under the current law. An illegal parent with legal dependents at the end of a tax year could get a child tax

credit check for as much as \$1,400 per child, and that check comes from Uncle Sam. By closing these loopholes, we can save billions of dollars a year. We can also save even more taxpayer dollars by ensuring the integrity of other Federal welfare programs like SNAP and TANF. By mandating that all States use the E-Verify system, we can add an additional layer of integrity to ensure the legal work-eligible status of benefit recipients.

These are commonsense reforms. You have to ask the question, Why would we not do this? Only those legally in this country and eligible for work should be receiving Federal benefits that are intended to get people out of poverty and get them back to work. This is something that actually would work, and they are all common sense. It is one of the things that falls into the category of "why don't we do it." We have an opportunity to go ahead and do it now. Only those who are legally in this country and eligible for work should be receiving Federal benefits intended to get people out of poverty and into jobs.

Finally, in this bill is actually an additional amount that is out there that we should be taking advantage of. This bill will increase the minimum penalty for every illegal border crossing. Over the past 5 years, there has been an average of 500,000 illegal border crossings each year. By raising the minimum penalty on illegal border crossings, the Federal Government would raise revenue by as much as \$15 billion over a 10-year period. All of this more than pays for a wall.

Our President rightfully demanded a wall not be paid for with hard-working Americans' tax dollars, and my bill fulfills that commitment by not altering a single earned benefit for any American citizen or lawful immigrant.

I was having a news conference last week on this bill. Someone said: Well, the President has said Mexico should pay for it. In a way, this fulfills that commitment, too, because it is being paid for by benefits that would otherwise go to illegals who would not be getting the benefits. So it is the best of both worlds, and it is a solution to the problem. It is what American families deserve, but even more, it is what the hard-working, lawful men and women who are abiding by our immigration process deserve.

So that is the bill we are going to be introducing and we will be hearing a lot about. One thing people say has not been resolved is, how do you come up with \$25 billion for a wall? It is easy. It can be done. The figures match. It is the right thing to do for our lawful Americans.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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