

abusers, and the adjudicated mentally ill to buy firearms without a background check.

Some are talking about the so-called red flag, but the red flag doesn't work if there is no background check. Mr. Jones is red-flagged. Then he goes online or goes to a gun show to buy a gun without a background check. The red flag doesn't work unless we tighten the loopholes—close the loopholes—on the background check law.

Later today, Republican leaders will meet with President Trump to talk about the congressional agenda this fall. Gun violence, according to the reports I have read, is expected to be a topic of the conversation. I strongly urge my Republican colleagues to prevail on the President to support universal background checks. Leader McCANNELL has said he will bring a bill to the floor if it has the President's support. That means there is a truly historic opportunity for President Trump to lead his party toward sensible gun safety laws that in the past, Republicans, in obeisance to the NRA, refused to support for decades.

Public support and public pressure is mounting from one end of the country to the other, with 93 percent of Americans supporting background checks. The vast majority of Republicans and gun owners—a vast majority—support it.

The President can provide Republicans important political cover. They shouldn't need it because so many Americans are for this, but they do because of the power sometimes exercised rather ruthlessly by the NRA. The President can do it. This is a moment of truth for the President, for Leader McCANNELL, and for all of my Republican colleagues.

The American people are fed up. Too many people are being killed across the country every day. Just yesterday, I was waiting at the airport, and a man came over to me and grabbed my arm and said to me that his nephew was a victim of gun violence. He pleaded with me for action. It is affecting more and more people, their families, their friends, and their communities. I imagine every one of my colleagues has met someone like this man over the past month.

The Mayor of Dayton, OH, Nan Whaley, joined with Democrats yesterday at a press conference—another incredibly compelling voice pushing for progress on this issue. We invited her to speak at our caucus lunch today. I expect my Republican colleagues have mayors in their States who, just like her, are exhausted by the daily gun violence in their cities. Republicans have a chance today to convince the President to do the right thing and come out in support of a policy that is not a figleaf, that is not milquetoast and will do nothing, but one that will actually save lives.

I strongly urge our Republican colleagues and Leader McCANNELL to use this afternoon's meeting at the White

House to discuss supporting a bipartisan background checks bill.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF DALE CABANISS

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose the nomination of Dale Cabaniss to serve as Director of the Office of Personnel Management.

With roughly 5,500 dedicated employees, OPM is responsible for managing the Federal Government's civilian workforce—overseeing government-wide policies for recruiting, for hiring, and training—and administering the healthcare, life insurance, and retirement benefits that impact millions of Americans every year.

The Director of OPM plays a crucial role in the Federal Government, not only by managing the agency's employees but by serving as a leader and an advocate for more than 2 million hard-working men and women in the Federal workforce. The next Director of OPM must have a proven track record of effective leadership.

While I acknowledge and I admire Ms. Cabaniss's long record of public service, which includes more than 20 years here in the Senate, I do not believe that her experience and qualifications satisfy the requirements of this very important and very challenging position.

Last summer, the Trump administration released its government-wide reorganization proposal, which includes plans to dismantle the Office of Personnel Management as we know it. Since then, Congress has repeatedly attempted to engage in an honest and productive dialogue with the administration about their reorganization proposal. However, they have not been transparent about the repercussions of this plan and what impact those repercussions could have on the Federal workforce. They have not demonstrated how taxpayers will be better served by their proposal, and it remains unclear if they have even studied the full impact of their proposal. In short, they have left too many fundamental questions simply unanswered.

The Office of Personnel Management is charged with safeguarding the non-partisan civil service from the political motives of this or any White House. During such a time of uncertainty and upheaval, OPM needs strong and steady leadership that is focused on good governance and that will not be swayed by political whims of elected officials. This Agency and the millions of Americans it serves each and every day deserve a proven, independent leader.

Simply put, Dale Cabaniss is not that leader. While Ms. Cabaniss has some

experience leading a small agency, I am not confident that her background has prepared her to provide the stability and the autonomy that OPM deserves.

Unfortunately, after a careful review of Ms. Cabaniss's record, I do not believe that she is the right choice to lead OPM at this critical time. I will be voting no, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEBBIE SMITH ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, for nearly 15 years, the Debbie Smith Act has been the driving force behind our progress to eliminate the Nation's rape kit backlog.

Though exact numbers are difficult to estimate, experts believe there are hundreds of thousands of untested rape kits in the United States. Each one of them, of course, represents a different story—the story of a sexual assault victim. Also, as a result of DNA science, it holds the key to apprehending a violent criminal and stopping them from committing further assaults.

Since the Debbie Smith Act was signed into law in 2004, more than \$1 billion has been invested in State and local crime labs for DNA testing. This program also supports training for law enforcement, correctional personnel, forensic nurses, and other professionals who work with victims of sexual assault. Though the primary goal of the program is to reduce the rape kit backlog and identify attackers, processing this DNA evidence can assist investigations into other nonviolent crimes as well.

Once evidence is tested, it is uploaded into the FBI's DNA database, called CODIS. This is similar to the criminal fingerprint database but provides DNA evidence that can help identify and convict people who commit other crimes. So if it is collected as a result of a sexual assault, you may, in fact, be able to get a hit that will help you identify someone who has committed a burglary, a murder, a robbery, or some other crime. This is particularly true when somebody commits a crime in one State and moves to another State—to be able to connect the identity of the person based on their DNA, not based on where the offense was committed. According to the National Institute of Justice, 42 percent of hits in the FBI's DNA database system are the direct result of Debbie Smith Act funding—42 percent.

In addition to helping us get more criminals off the streets, this information could also be the key to exonerating individuals who were wrongly

accused and preventing innocent people from being put behind bars for a crime they didn't commit. DNA evidence is very, very powerful.

States have seen the positive results of this program at the national level and have been following suit. Texas has led the Nation in passing mandatory rape kit testing laws, conducting audits of the backlog, and using Debbie Smith funds to analyze untested sexual assault evidence.

Since 2011, the Debbie Smith Act has helped Texas reduce its backlog of previously unsubmitted rape kits by approximately 90 percent—from over 20,000 kits to now around 2,000. This program has allowed us to provide victims of sexual assault with the resources they need and the answers they deserve while more effectively identifying criminals across the board.

The benefits of this law simply cannot be overstated, and that is why the Debbie Smith Act was readily reauthorized in 2008 and 2014. Now it is time to once again reauthorize this important legislation.

Earlier this year, Senator FEINSTEIN, the senior Senator from California, and I introduced the Debbie Smith Act of 2019, which will extend this program through 2024. As you might expect, with this kind of nonpartisan legislation, it sailed through the Senate earlier this year. In fact, it passed the Senate in May with not one person voting against it. But here we are, nearly 4 months later, and the House of Representatives has not scheduled a vote. If they don't take action before September 30, the law will expire—something I hope we all can agree would be unconscionable and certainly completely unnecessary.

The benefits of this program transcend politics or party, and allowing it to expire would be a disservice to the victims and advocates who have championed this bill for the last 15 years, particularly Debbie Smith herself.

It is time for the House to vote to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Act so that we can get it to the President's desk without further delay.

One of the strongest advocates for the reauthorization of the Debbie Smith Act is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, also known as RAINN. It is the Nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, and in its 25-year history, it has helped 3 million survivors and their loved ones.

Last week, RAINN held a press conference announcing the delivery of more than 32,000 signatures urging the immediate passage of this legislation by the House of Representatives. Debbie Smith also spoke at the press conference.

Just to remind colleagues, Debbie is, of course, a remarkable woman whose advocacy was born from a terrible personal experience. We have had the benefit of hearing from Debbie over the years many times in the Judiciary Committee.

I believe there is no one—no one—who has done more to support victims

of sexual assault than Debbie, and I am continually grateful to her for her courage and her candor as she travels around the country advocating for survivors. It can't be easy to talk about your own personal sexual assault and how you tried to grapple with the fact that your rape kit has not been tested and, thus, you don't even know who your attacker was and whether he may show up at some future date and try to repeat his crime.

During the press conference, Debbie spoke about the years of fear she dealt with while waiting for her attacker to be identified. She said: “The years I spent waiting for justice can never be returned to me.”

That is a heartbreak reality for survivors of sexual violence and a reminder of why it is so critical to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Act without further delay.

While we can't turn back the hands of time and somehow change history, we can act now to provide victims with the support, the answers, and the closure they need.

I urge Speaker PELOSI to bring the Debbie Smith Act of 2019 to the floor for a vote immediately in the House to demonstrate Congress's ongoing commitment to support victims of sexual violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Mr. KAINES. Mr. President, I rise to object in the strongest possible terms to President Trump's continued raid on the budget of the U.S. military. As a candidate, the President promised the American public that he would build a border wall with Mexico and that Mexico would pay for any wall that he would build. The President has broken his promise. It shocks me that, as Commander in Chief, he now insists that it has to be our troops, our military families, and our Nation's security that has to be sacrificed for his foolishness. Frankly, it shocks me even more that Republican colleagues in this body seem perfectly willing to let him do that.

If you will not stand up for the men and women in our military, whom will you stand up for? If you will not stand up for important projects in your own State, whom will you stand up for? If you will not stand up to protect your Defense authorization bill or your Defense appropriations bill when they are being cannibalized, when will you stand up?

We will have a vote soon to block the President's destructive efforts to weaken our military and to trample on the power of Congress to set the Nation's budget and appropriations levels. I am hoping that my colleagues, Democratic and Republican, will stand up.

Let me first address the need for a secure border. I have called the President's insistence on using military monies to build the wall foolishness. What do I mean by this?

I don't challenge the need for border security. I strongly supported a comprehensive immigration reform package in 2013 that included vast amounts for border security, much more than the President has asked for. The bill had strong bipartisan support in the Senate, but the Republican-majority House refused to even take the bill up in committee, much less on the floor of the House. Had we passed that bill in 2013, it would have been a powerful step forward for immigrants, Dreamers, employers, TPS recipients, the American economy, and the security of America's borders.

In February of 2018, I worked with a bipartisan group of 16 Senators—8 Democrats and 8 Republicans. We put a proposal on the table, a permanent fix for Dreamers and a major investment in border security. In fact, we put an investment in border security into that bipartisan bill that had every penny that the President asked for for the next 10 years, \$25 billion, but President Trump attacked that bill and killed the bill, even though he had earlier indicated that he would sign it. There was \$25 billion for border security over 10 years, with basic guidelines to ensure that the monies were spent wisely and not foolishly.

I learned something from that experience. What I learned is that I don't believe the President cares about solving the border security issue. The substance of it means nothing to him, or he would have embraced a deal that gave him every penny he asked for in February of 2018.

He could have had a deal a long time ago if this mattered to him. What the President cares about is big campaign rallies with people chanting “build a wall” so he can continue to stoke his political machine. That is what I call foolishness.

It gets worse. A foolish insistence on political sloganizing over problem-solving is one thing, but taking money out of the military budget—from key priorities affecting our troops and the lives and safety of our troops and their families—is something much worse. It is disrespectful, and it is dangerous.

The President proposes to raid the military construction budget to the tune of \$3.6 billion to build 173 miles of border fencing. That is an average cost of \$4,000 per linear foot of fence. For reference, a standard 6-foot fence costs \$25 a foot, and a standard 6-foot brick wall costs \$90 a foot. The proposal is to spend \$4,000 a foot on fencing.

Let me give you examples of projects in Virginia and elsewhere that are being slashed to build this \$4,000-a-foot fence.

In Virginia, we will lose \$77 million in MILCON projects that the Department of Defense has told the Senate they need. There is \$26 million being taken away from improvements to a Navy ship maintenance facility in Portsmouth. Here is what the DOD said about the importance of that work on the ship maintenance facility: