

that can actually do something to help prevent gun violence—does nothing. Gun violence kills 100 people in our country every day—every day. That is 3,000 people a month and 36,000 people a year.

This is a crisis, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are not treating it like one. Perhaps looking at the numbers—100 people dying every day—is just way too abstract.

How would the majority leader react if the entire population of Sparta, KY—all 231 residents—disappeared in less than 3 days?

How would the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee react if all 128 residents of Livingston, SC, disappeared in a little over a day?

How would my colleagues from Texas react if Bartlett's 2,600 residents were killed in just under a month?

This is the scale of what is happening in our country every single day, week, and year. This is a crisis, and it is past time Senate Republicans start treating it like one.

Here is what we can do right now. We can join the House in passing H.R. 8, a bill that would close loopholes in the background check system. More than 90 percent of the American public supports this bill. Although it passed the House 266 days ago—almost a year ago—the majority leader refuses to even bring the bill to the Senate floor for a vote.

We can also pass S. 66, which would reinstitute the Federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004. I have joined Senator FEINSTEIN and 34 of my colleagues in cosponsoring this commonsense measure, but the Republican majority refuses to hold a hearing or otherwise consider it.

We can finally pass an extreme risk protection order bill that would allow police or family members to petition a court to remove firearms from people who may be a danger to themselves or to others, and despite repeated promises after each mass shooting that we will get a vote, the vote never comes.

We all know none of these bills alone will end gun violence in our country, but they will help keep guns out of the hands of those who are a danger to themselves and others. They will make those guns that remain available for sale far less lethal. In other words, the bills will make us safer.

Republicans refuse to take any of these commonsense steps. Instead, they cower before the NRA, an organization that curries favor with gun manufacturers and gun rights extremists by opposing seemingly every piece of gun safety legislation that is introduced; this, in spite of the fact that a strong majority of the NRA's claimed 5 million members actually support stronger gun safety protections.

We all remember the aftermath of the Sandy Hook massacre, where it seemed for a brief moment Congress might pass a gun safety bill for the first time in a generation. Senators MANCHIN and TOOMEY introduced a

modest background check proposal that actually came to the Senate floor for a vote, but what happened? The NRA came out against the bill, and nearly every Republican Member of the Senate fell in line to defeat it.

The vote came in the aftermath of a shooting that took the lives of 20 innocent elementary school children, and my Republican colleagues chose to side with the NRA and its \$50-plus million in campaign donations.

Today those first graders who were killed would be in the eighth grade, and yet we still haven't passed a background check law. We have seen the NRA block commonsense gun safety bills time and again. Most recently, President Trump voiced support for strengthening background checks in the wake of mass shootings in El Paso, Dayton, and Gilroy. He tweeted that "Republicans and Democrats must come together and get strong background checks."

Days later, he spoke on the phone with the NRA executive vice president and CEO Wayne LaPierre and quickly changed his tune. Suddenly, our loophole-ridden background system became "very, very strong," to quote the President. He no longer saw a need for additional legislation.

The President of the United States is often called the most powerful man in the world. Yet, in the face of opposition from the NRA, Donald Trump proved himself anything but.

Like so many people across the country, I am angry and frustrated that Republicans in Congress seem to care more about satisfying the NRA than taking commonsense steps to keep our communities safe.

Every day that Republicans in Congress refuse to act costs lives. In the 6 days following the November 14 shooting in which two people were killed and three others wounded at Saugus High School, there have been at least four more mass shootings.

On November 16, five were killed and one wounded in a murder-suicide in Paradise Hills, CA. On November 17, four were killed and an additional six were wounded when gunmen opened fire at a backyard party at Fresno, CA. That same day, four were injured when a gunman fired shots into a home outside Cleveland, OH. On November 18, one was killed and four injured in a shooting in Newark, NJ.

These shootings happen quickly—16 seconds in the case of the Saugus High School shooting in Santa Clarita. This is hardly enough time to expect the proverbial "good guy with a gun" to protect innocent men, women, and children caught in the line of fire.

Failing to take decisive action to confront the crisis of gun violence in our country makes the Senate complicit in its continuation. Instead of making more excuses for the Senate's inaction, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle should stop hiding behind the NRA and join us in passing commonsense gun safety legislation that will save lives.

As our country endures mass shooting after mass shooting, I have to ask, at what point do we say, "Enough"? When will my Republican colleagues turn their backs on the NRA's leadership, listen to the 90 percent of the American people and the rank-and-file NRA members who join them, and pass gun safety laws? The cost of continued inaction is far too high.

I say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Wake up. What is it going to take? What is it going to take?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as the 2020 Democratic Presidential candidates prepare to debate this evening. We are sure to hear once again about their proposals for massive taxing and spending. At the top of the list is their \$34 trillion Medicare for All, which is really a one-size-fits-all healthcare scheme for the people of our country. Here is the key point. Democrats will dramatically raise taxes on all Americans. One candidate plans to increase taxes on working families by \$26 trillion over the next year—that is new taxes—new taxes—of \$26 trillion. This candidate also proposes an additional \$2 trillion on top of the \$26 trillion by hiring an army of IRS agents to crack down on hard-working Americans who this one candidate, as a Member of this body, says can actually pay more and are not paying their full share. So Americans will pay \$28 trillion more in taxes over a decade. Do not be deceived. These taxes will hit all Americans.

Democrats know they can't win this election on policy. Specifically, they are dangerous Democratic socialist policies that they are going to be promoting in the debate tonight. So what are they doing? Well, they are counting on their totally partisan impeachment process. We have been hearing all about it now for months—actually, for years.

Democrats have been obsessed with impeaching—impeaching—President Trump since day one, the day he was elected. Then fast forward to his inauguration in 2017. The campaign to impeach President Trump, starting from the day he was elected, really took force the day he was sworn into office.

Democrats want to overturn the last election, and they want to interfere with the upcoming election. Election day 2020 is now less than a year away. Still, Democrats' impeachment obsession continues to burn on.

This is an unfair, bitterly partisan process. I will tell you, the Americans I talk to at home in Wyoming see right through it. When I talk to my colleagues around the country, their constituents at home see right through it as well.

Recent polling shows that the public wants the voters—not House Democrats and not Speaker PELOSI—to make

their own call on election day. The Democrats, meanwhile, seem to prefer impeachment to doing the work of the American people—the work all of us were elected to do.

Republicans prefer to work on the issues we were elected to address: jobs, the economy, and our Nation's security. We are going to continue to work for the people who elected us.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, on another matter, I come to the floor as we approach another government funding deadline. The fact is, it is already past time to fund the government, especially our military.

Republicans have worked all year to complete the annual appropriations process and to get it done on time. Here is the problem: Republicans can't pass the annual funding bills alone. We need cooperation from the Democrats. We need the House Democrats' cooperation, and here in the Senate, we need to clear the 60-vote hurdle. So we need Senate Democrats to be involved in the process as well. But Democrats prefer impeachment grandstanding rather than governing. That is what we are facing here today.

We are nearly 2 months into fiscal year 2020, and we have yet to pass any of the 2020 funding bills. The government has been running under what is called a short-term continuing resolution. This current continuing resolution is set to expire Thursday—tomorrow. We will, undoubtedly, pass another stopgap continuing resolution this week, but these are only a temporary fix. They are needed to keep the government's lights on but at last year's funding levels. Meanwhile, there is no end in sight to Democrats' 3-year-long impeachment obsession. Their impeachment fever rages on.

They are so consumed by this bitterly partisan process that they cannot focus on the priorities of the American people. They are too consumed to fix our aging roads and bridges, too obsessed to pass "America First" trade deals, and too fixated to fund the government on time. Above all, people expect us to fully fund defense—the defense of our Nation. Yet the Democrats continue to stonewall.

Republicans are fighting to fully fund the military; Democrats are waging war on the Commander in Chief. Remember, both parties came to the table and completed a bipartisan budget deal this past summer. The deal meant that we could fund the government on time. The deal supported critical defense funding to keep our Nation safe, and it included a major pay raise for our troops.

So what happened? It is pretty clear. The Democrats went back on their word. And in so doing, they broke faith with the American people and broke faith with our troops—those in harm's way today.

Back at home in Wyoming, a deal is a deal. Your word means something. A handshake means something. You

never go back on your word, certainly not when you make promises to our men and women in uniform. Nevertheless, the Democrats have since poisoned the well with unreasonable partisan demands. They are tying our Americans' hands, repeatedly blocking key defense votes. Democrats filibuster and Democrats impeach while neglecting the troops.

U.S. forces, meanwhile, are facing heightened threats with last year's funding levels. The fact is, while necessary, these continuing resolutions take a real toll on our military. The current CR means a \$22 billion cut from this summer's bipartisan budget deal when it comes to our troops. It is harming military readiness and harming military training.

The CR has also delayed new weapons programs, and it has suspended existing weapons programs. These include hypersonic strike weapons, missile defense systems, and new fighters and ships.

Our adversaries—most notably Iran, China, and Russia—pose a grave, growing threat to our Nation. That hasn't stopped House and Senate Democrats from blocking both the Defense authorization and funding bills. Right now they are blocking both.

The National Defense Authorization Act, which is the authorizing bill, has passed and been signed every year since 1961. That is when John Kennedy was President of the United States—1961.

The NDAA has a long history of strong bipartisan support. Yet, right now, House Democrats are delaying final passage of our National Defense Authorization Act. Again, they are blocking the House's spending bill for our military, even though it gives our troops a well-earned pay raise.

Like the Presiding Officer, I frequently visit our troops overseas. I did so last month. We have a number of Wyoming National Guard members deployed around the world, and it is always an honor to spend time with them.

Most recently, I visited Wyoming troops deployed in the Middle East and in Kosovo. The Wyoming guard is about 400 members overseas. It is our State's largest deployment in a decade. As I noted at this year's American Legion Post 6 Veterans Day celebration in Cheyenne, WY, these troops will be away from home for Thanksgiving; they will be away from home for Christmas; and they will be away from home for New Year's as well.

Both my dad and my father-in-law served overseas. My dad fought in Europe in World War II in the pivotal Battle of the Bulge, the 75th anniversary of which is coming up next month. My father-in-law fought in both theaters during World War II and also served in the Korean war.

The U.S. Armed Forces are on the frontlines. They are defending our freedoms, and they are doing it every single day. They make this sacrifice 365 days a year, and they do it to protect

us, to protect our freedom, and to protect our Nation. U.S. servicemembers never quit. They don't complain, and we don't quit on them when they need us the most.

Our troops deserve our full support right now, and, clearly, that support must be bipartisan. Yet Democrats remain too obsessed to do the work of the Nation. People elected them to do a job, and those people are nowhere to be found.

Think about it. Democrats are fast-tracking impeachment and filibustering the defense funding bill. How can they do that in good conscience? Instead of funding certainty, we have an impeachment circus.

Republicans are committed to work on policy priorities for the people who elected us. It is time for Democrats to stop the stonewalling. Let's give our troops the state-of-the-art tools they need and the raise they deserve and have earned.

Democrats need to get their priorities in order. Defense should be top of the list. It is past time to keep our promises to the military. It is past time to give the troops a well-earned and well-deserved pay raise, and it is past time to fund the defense of our Nation and to fund our government.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

PENSIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the financial crisis facing the private sector multiemployer pension system calls for comprehensive reform and getting it done soon.

The crisis is severe and growing worse every day. Would you believe about 125 multiemployer plans are in so-called critical and declining financial status? These plans report that they will become insolvent over the next two decades. There will be a lot of people without a retirement plan if we don't act.

Several large plans, including the United Mine Workers Pension Fund and the large Central States Pension Fund, predict these plans will become insolvent in the next few years. That is not a very comfortable environment for those retirees.

This will leave more than 1.3 million participants without the pension benefits they have been promised and, of course, worked for probably throughout their whole lives.

In just my State of Iowa, the benefits of close to 10,000 participants of multiemployer plans are at risk if the system fails. Ten thousand Iowans being affected by what we do or don't do, obviously, gets my attention. That figure of 10,000 will represent over \$70 million in benefits paid out annually that these individuals rely on in retirement.

More broadly, another large group of multiemployer plans are in critical status. They report that no realistic combination of contribution increases or allowable benefit reductions—options available under the current law