

returned today from Illinois. For the first time since January 6, the fence that was erected to hold back the insurrectionist mob was removed. We hope that we are prepared now to protect this Capitol and can get back to business as usual, but we have to recruit additional Capitol Hill Police to be prepared, we have to work with the National Guard units to be prepared, and we have to realize the obvious. There was a decision made on the floor of the U.S. Senate by the Republican Senate leader just a few weeks ago to stop any bipartisan effort to establish a Commission to ask what happened on January 6 and how it can be avoided in the future. Senator MCCONNELL objected to a bipartisan, evenly-split Commission to investigate that terrible day. The GOP Senate leader killed that idea several weeks ago.

I want to commend Speaker PELOSI, who is trying her best through a special committee in the House of Representatives to have a bipartisan investigation. It should have been done through this Commission. Senator MCCONNELL stopped it.

There is one other element I would like to raise when it comes to free speech in the time of pandemic. What caught my eye in this morning's paper, as I mentioned earlier, was this article about FOX Primetime. They recounted the fact that over the last several months, FOX had been losing ground to CNN, and questioning the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines became a split decision at the FOX network.

Some of the leaders at FOX obviously believe strongly in the vaccine, and I commend them. I do too. Rupert Murdoch was vaccinated in December.

When a list of those who supported the effort to encourage the use of vaccines across America was taken at FOX, they put together a 30-second spot featuring host and anchor Steve Doocy, Harris Faulkner, Dana Perino, and John Roberts. Ms. Faulkner said in that ad by FOX: "If you can, get the vaccine." Bret Baier, chief political anchor at FOX News, said in an Instagram post that he was grateful for the shot of vaccine. The hosts of "FOX & Friends" spoke of the relief they felt in becoming vaccinated. Sean Hannity himself said:

I do believe in science, and I believe in vaccinations. Talk to your doctor. You don't need to talk to people on TV and radio that aren't doctors.

Which goes to the point of this message. There are two hosts of programs on FOX Primetime who can only be characterized as anti-vax quacks. I am referring, of course, to Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham. They have been spreading what I consider to be irresponsible information about vaccines across America and about the effort of this Nation to deal with them.

Here is the reality. We have millions who have died across the world from this virus. We may never have an accurate count. We have hundreds of thousands who have died in the United

States. Now it is said repeatedly that those who are headed to the hospital with the most serious strains of COVID-19—99.5 percent of them were not vaccinated. So the facts are obvious here.

I know it is an individual decision on whether to be vaccinated, and I am sure there may be some Senators who have decided not to do it, but I was happy to do it as soon as I could. I think the vaccines are protecting me and my wife and my family. But in the meantime, to have these hosts of TV shows at FOX, in prime time, peddling this nonsense about vaccines being unnecessary and COVID-19 being no threat can only be summarized in a statement which concluded this article:

In a recent opinion essay for The Daily Beast by Preston Padden, a former high-level executive at Fox Broadcasting wrote that Fox News had "contributed substantially and directly" to "the unnecessary deaths of many Americans by fueling hesitation and doubt about the efficacy and safety of life-saving Covid-19 vaccines." He singled out the channel's prime-time opinion programs for blame.

I want to commend those at FOX who have stood up and said the right thing about these vaccines, but I also want to take issue with those who are using this vaccine, for whatever purpose, to mislead and confuse American people about its necessity, its effectiveness, and its safety. They are not doing America any favors, and I hope that FOX will come to its senses.

If there are things that can remove you from the air for being said on a program, I certainly hope that the management of the station will caution Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham for the statements they have made in opposition to vaccines.

GUN VIOLENCE

Madam President, the Fourth of July, of course, is a night when you may not be able to get to bed early, with a lot of fireworks in celebration of our Nation's birthday, and it is celebrated from one corner of America to the next. But sadly, in many places on this Fourth of July, the noise you were hearing was not fireworks; it was gunfire.

One hundred and four people were shot in Chicago. One hundred and four people were shot in Chicago on the Fourth of July weekend. Nineteen died. Among the wounded were 13 children and 2 Chicago police supervisors. The dead included, in Chicago, a National Guard member who was aspiring to join the Chicago Police Department.

The week before the holiday, a 1-month-old baby girl was shot in the head during a mass shooting. A 20-year-old University of Chicago student, just riding on the L train, coming home from an internship at an investment firm in The Loop, was hit by a stray bullet. He, too, died.

Two days after the Fourth of July weekend, two ATF agents and a Chicago police officer on an undercover

operation were shot and wounded. It was the 36th Chicago police officer shot this year.

This is madness. Chicago is not alone with this gun violence experience. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are just cruel taunts if anyone can be cut down anywhere in this great country by gunfire.

Gun violence is a national crisis. At least 233 people were killed, and 618 people were injured by gunfire in the United States over the Fourth of July weekend, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Shootings are up this year in big cities but also in suburbs and rural areas. Don't believe it is only blue cities. It is blue cities and red cities and purple cities and small towns.

Already this year, there have been nearly 23,000 gun violence deaths in America. Did you hear that? This year, 23,000 gun violence deaths in America—that includes more than 12,000 by suicide and fatalities from more than 340 mass shootings. Sadly, virtually every weekend there is a mass shooting in the city of Chicago, which I represent—340 mass shootings, nearly 2 a day.

No other nation on Earth experiences this massive civilian slaughter. Neither should we. We must do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and others who are prohibited from having them.

I met with the mayor of Chicago to talk about the Fourth of July weekend. We both agreed that more has to be done, and we are determined to work with President Biden, who is committed to this issue as well. But we also believe that we need to enforce the laws that are on the books. Specifically, we need to make sure that guns are not being sold to people without a background check.

Convicted felons have no business buying a gun, nor do people who are mentally unstable. But, unfortunately, they can. There are many loopholes in the law. There are ways to sell these guns at a gun show, without a background check, or over the internet or ghost guns, which have no, basically, identifying serial number.

We have to do more to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and we can if we will just stand up—both parties stand up—and say: Enough. This is ridiculous, it is cruel, and it is heart-breaking.

I have spoken with the mayor about the crisis in Chicago, and President Biden did the same when he came to Illinois last week. Today, the President is meeting at the White House with law enforcement, local elected officials, and others to discuss his administration's efforts to reduce gun crimes.

The American Rescue Plan, which passed the U.S. Senate without a single Republican vote in support, included funding that communities can use for youth unemployment programs, mental health services, and other strategies to break the cycle of violence. The COVID rescue plan also included funding for local law enforcement to improve community policing practices.

The Republicans like to make a big thing about the statements from some people about defunding the police. I never supported that, and most of the people I know had nothing to do with it. But here they are defunding the police themselves and voting against the American Rescue Plan.

That plan is going to provide law enforcement more resources. We want that money to be spent properly, and we certainly want law enforcement to discharge their duties in a professional way. But additional resources can be and will be used effectively. I am sorry that not one single Republican Senator voted for that plan. I think it is not defunding the police; it is defending the police with the American Rescue Plan provisions.

President Biden's American Jobs Plan, which we are now going to consider soon, is an opportunity for us to consider \$5 billion to fund community violence prevention programs. I have introduced my bill, the RISE from Trauma Act, which would implement the proposal by funding trusted members of the community to tackle trauma and the pain that is at the root of violence.

Last month, the President announced the creation of a new strike force, to be headed by the Justice Department, that will crack down on illegal drug trafficking in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay area, and Washington, DC. I support this step.

NOMINATION OF DAVID H. CHIPMAN

Madam President, we have before us a nomination. I am not sure when it will be called, but it was a product of our Judiciary Committee. David Chipman was nominated by President Biden, to serve as the next Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Madam President, you know the answer to this question but most don't: When was the last time that Agency had a Director chosen by Congress through the orderly process? Well, it was about 6 years ago. That was the last time. It turned out to be the only time in the history of the Agency.

But why would an Agency of the government go on for years without a duly selected Director? Well, it was an intentional strategy by those gun groups to make sure that this Agency, as important as it is, didn't have a leader, and as a consequence was not as effective as it should be.

David Chipman was born in New Hampshire and has a B.S. from American University and an M.S. from Johns Hopkins. In our committee, we recognized the fact that he had 25 years of law enforcement experience. He is a responsible gun owner himself, and he has advocated for commonsense gun safety measures.

I think he is well qualified to serve as the head of the ATF. He spent decades working in that Agency, including serving as a special agent in Virginia, Texas, and Michigan. He would be the

first former ATF agent to head the Bureau, and this experience has equipped him with the skills he needs.

Chipman would only be the second confirmed Director in the Agency's history, as I mentioned. A lifelong gun owner, he knows firsthand the responsibility of gun ownership and the commonsense safety measures that go hand in hand with it.

He is uniquely positioned to counter a false narrative, pushed by the gun lobby, that he has a radical or somehow contrary to the Second Amendment view.

Chipman's knowledge of firearms and gun policy is unparalleled. He gained his insight not only working in law enforcement but also as an adviser to one of the Nation's top violence prevention organizations.

Congress and the Biden administration must take action to address gun violence in the city of Chicago, in the city of Springfield, IL, and all across this Nation. It is an urgent issue for all of us. That is why we should pick, as quickly as we can, a leader like David Chipman to lead the ATF Agency.

CLIMATE

Madam President, I will conclude by saying that this has been an unusual weather time in our country. We have seen things happening that are unparalleled in history—extreme weather in the Chicago area, tornadoes, to the baking 120-degree heat of the Northwest, to even a warning of a tornado here in Washington, DC. Strange things are occurring.

When you hear about these wildfires in California and Oregon, there is a natural inclination, if you don't live in that area, to dismiss them, to say: That didn't happen in my backyard—not in my backyard. Well, I have to say, we ought to wake up to the reality. Extreme weather and the results of global warming are coming to everyone's backyard. We have to come to the realization that it is time for us to prepare this Nation to turn back the impacts of climate change and global warming. Those fires are burning in California and Oregon, but they reflect the situation which is dangerous for all of us.

We are waiting to investigate and bring in engineering groups with the Surfside, FL, building collapse, that terrible tragedy which claimed, I am sure, I am sad to say, over 100 lives. We think climate change may have had something to do with that. The rising water table and the infiltration of saltwater from the oceans may have caused the decline in the stability of the foundation of that building. We will only know after the engineers can look at it more closely.

In the area of the Great Lakes—we love our Great Lakes—Lake Michigan is one of the most beloved aspects of our State and in the city of Chicago, but 2 or 3 days ago, in the New York Times, there was a front-page story about what is happening with the Great Lakes and the instability of that

region. We are taking it seriously. I am glad to say that President Biden has joined in restoring the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which President Obama began.

The Great Lakes are a great asset, but they are also a great reminder that we all face climate change in our own home areas.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JEN EASTERLY

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I rise in support of Jen Easterly's nomination to serve as Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, commonly referred to as CISA.

Before the Senate adjourned for the July 4 holiday, I stood right here and urged my colleagues to confirm her for this vital position. I was disappointed that a Republican colleague blocked Ms. Easterly's swift confirmation at that time, but I appreciate that he has now resolved his concerns and that we can move forward today.

I warned that, without confirming Ms. Easterly, we risked leaving ourselves vulnerable to cyber attacks, and in the 2 weeks since I last called on my colleagues to approve this critical nomination, nation-state actors and criminal organizations have continued their relentless targeting of the United States.

Over the July 4 weekend, we learned that U.S. software company Kaseya was the target of a major ransomware attack that has impacted hundreds and possibly thousands of businesses and organizations worldwide. Days later, we saw reports that a Republican National Committee contractor had been attacked in an attempt to target the RNC.

Unfortunately, these are only the latest of several recent cyber attacks that threaten our government, critical infrastructure, and key industries. These attackers will stop at nothing to infiltrate our networks, and we urgently need qualified, Senate-confirmed cyber security leaders in place to fight back.

With more than three decades of cyber security expertise and service in the public and private sectors, Ms. Easterly is more than qualified to lead CISA. We need her in place immediately so she can get to work with agencies, businesses, and others to recover from recent cyber attacks and to strengthen cyber security defenses before the next attack.

I appreciate that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have withdrawn their objections and that the