

This is unnecessary. This is petty. We are better than this. We need to pass this bill. I will be back. I am not going to quit until this thing is passed, because the fact is, all 100 Senators agree that this is good legislation, including the objecting absent party.

We should never get to the point where egos get in the way. And egos, alone, prevent us from passing legislation that all 100 Senators agree would make things better. I can tell you, there is no one who would be happier about this than Big Tech. So if the objecting Senator, who is absent today, wishes to make sure that Big Tech is held accountable, then she should allow this to pass forthwith without her objection. If, on the other hand, she wants to make it easier for Big Tech, then this objection would be the way to go.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. As cosponsor of both pieces of legislation that are being debated here, I would say to the Senator from Utah: Keep the faith. The day will come. This legislation will see the light of day, and I believe should become law along with Senator KLOBUCHAR's bill. I believe both are good pieces of legislation.

This is not the appropriate moment, but that moment will come.

ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

Madam President, I cannot imagine what it was like last night in Texas in the homes of the 19 or 20 children who lost their lives in that Robb Elementary School gun massacre. Those are the longest, loneliest nights of your life as a parent when you have lost a child. And for each of them, it came as a stunning shock: a child sent off to school, nearing the end of the school year, probably happily anticipating summer camp, a visit with relatives, a family vacation, whose life was taken away in an instant.

The freedom and joy of youth was ripped from every single one of those 19 children, and 2 of the heroic teachers who sought to protect them when they were murdered in cold blood by this gunman.

Today, instead of thinking about vacation and summer, the parents are sadly making funeral arrangements for their babies. Others are sitting down with their children and trying to explain why their playmates are not at school.

It is not even June, and this year alone there have been more than 200 mass shootings in the United States. My colleague CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut said last night there had been more mass shootings than days in this last year.

Now families across America are stepping forward to offer their condolences, to donate to the families who lost these precious, precious children, and to demand that this Senate act to prevent something—do something to prevent the appalling acts of mass murder that we see way too often.

The Members of the Senate have to make a choice: Will we listen to the American people in their overwhelming numbers calling on us to set politics aside and stop the killing of children and other innocent Americans or will we cower in front of the gun industry?

The lives of countless children, and I might add, grandchildren, depend on our answer to that question.

It was 21 years ago—hard to imagine—but 21 years ago this September when we lived through 9/11.

That morning, I was in this building, down the hall at a meeting at 9 in the morning called by Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. We had just heard that a plane had crashed into a skyscraper in New York, and we didn't know much more. We quickly turned on the television to see another plane crash into an adjoining building. It was obvious that something horrible had happened. And it wasn't long after that that we looked out the window and looked west down the Mall to see black smoke billowing in. We learned it came from the Pentagon, where another plane had crashed into that building.

That was a day none of us will ever forget, nor should we. It was a day when America changed in so many ways. That was the beginning of TSA security checks at airports. Things that have become commonplace in our life were initiated because of 9/11.

And did we ever mount an effort to stop international terrorism against the United States. We were serious. It was a deadly serious issue, 3,000 innocent people losing their lives on 9/11. We were bound and determined—so determined that this Senate declared war on al-Qaida and called for the invasion of Afghanistan.

I voted for that because I felt then and feel now, no one should attack the United States with impunity. There is a price to pay. And so we made a decision which for 20 years guided our foreign policy in Afghanistan and other decisions by the scores around the world that really fought international terrorism.

We learned something recently. Last year, we had the Director of the FBI come before us, and I asked him about domestic terrorism. What about the terrorists in America itself who are killing innocent people? His report to us was sobering. He said it is a real threat, and it is a threat that is metastasizing. We know that horrible word from the disease of cancer. It means that the cancer itself is advancing in a deadly way. That is the way the FBI Director described domestic terrorism.

As we mourn yesterday's mass shooting in Uvalde, TX, we have a bill coming before the Senate tomorrow that responds to the mass shooting that took place in Buffalo just 11 days ago, in which a gunman killed 10 Black Americans in a racist act of violence.

Tomorrow, we will vote on my bill, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act. I first introduced it in the year 2017, and that passed the House on a bipartisan basis last week.

This legislation will help law enforcement combat the serious and lethal threat of domestic terrorism. It will authorize offices within the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security that are squarely focused on this threat.

And these offices will be required to regularly assess domestic terrorism risk and provide training and resources to State, local, and Tribal law enforcement.

The bill will also establish an interagency task force to combat White supremacists' infiltration of the uniformed services and Federal law enforcement.

Like gun safety reform, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act is long overdue. I first held a hearing on domestic terrorism 10 years ago after a White supremacist marched into a Sikh gurdwara in Oak Creek, WI, opening fire and killing seven people.

In the 10 years since, violent White supremacists have massacred Americans with their sickening attacks. In 2015, a White supremacist shot and killed nine Black worshippers at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC.

At the time, it was the deadliest attack in a place of worship in recent American history, a horrifying record that sadly was surpassed just a few years later.

In 2018, an anti-Semitic terrorist killed 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Think about this for a moment. There are members of that synagogue who actually survived the Holocaust in World War II, only to be targeted by the same hate nearly 80 years later in America.

A year after that, a far-right extremist killed 23 people at the Walmart in El Paso, TX, targeting immigrants and members of the Hispanic community. Some of these gunmen subscribe to the same racist conspiracy theory as the shooter in Buffalo a few days ago, the so-called "great replacement theory."

It has become the great rallying cry for White supremacists. Each of these acts of hate-fueled mass murder has torn apart a community, traumatized the Nation, and left unimaginable grief and pain in its wake.

And so it was over a year ago that FBI Director Christopher Wray testified to domestic terrorism metastasizing and growing in the United States.

Well, I think it is time that we take action to stop this threat. Time and again, the Senate has failed to take any meaningful steps to prevent violent extremism. When exactly did stopping mass murder become a partisan issue? It wasn't like this after 9/11.

Twenty years ago, Republicans and Democrats joined in common cause to confronting international terrorism threatening America.

After that horrific act of mass murder on 9/11, we worked together on a bipartisan basis to reconfigure our entire national security apparatus. We created a new Agency, the Department of

Homeland Security, designed to prevent the next 9/11.

To be sure, there were moments when we went off in the wrong direction. Over the years, we worked to rein in legislation like the PATRIOT Act and protect civil liberties of the American people.

As lawmakers, our responsibility is to enact sensible solutions and save lives while also protecting our Constitution. That is exactly what the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act is all about. It will improve data collection on incidents of domestic terrorism and strengthen Federal coordination to combat it.

That is why it makes no sense to me that there are Republicans who oppose it. The same Republicans who once took bold steps to prevent terrorism on an international basis now won't even allow us to debate a bill to prevent terrorism at home.

There are actually Republican Members of the House who are cosponsors of my bill, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, who just last week voted against it, cosponsors. What exactly is the reason for this Republican opposition?

Well, one Senate Republican claimed that the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would be “the PATRIOT Act for American citizens.” That is phony and wrong.

First of all, as I just mentioned, the PATRIOT Act was flawed. It was an excessive policy response to a nation in panic. I should know because I voted for it and then led the effort to change it. Here is why the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act is different.

Unlike the PATRIOT Act, it will not provide any new law enforcement or surveilling power to the government. It also does not establish a single new criminal offense. Let me repeat this. The bill that comes before us on domestic terrorism does not create any new Federal crime, period. This is a modest bill with a simple goal: ensure that the Federal Government devotes existing resources and authorities to what has been identified by the FBI as the most significant domestic terrorism threats.

Who supports this bill? The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the Arab-American Institute, the NAACP. All of them and more support the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act.

I hope our Republican colleagues will join us in a bipartisan effort to keep America safe. Last week, I spoke to the courage and sacrifice of Aaron Salter, a retired police officer who was working as a security guard in that Buffalo grocery store at the time of the attack.

When the shooter entered the store, Officer Salter jumped into action. He fired multiple shots at the attacker, but his skill and courage were not enough. He was outgunned. He had a pistol. The shooter had an assault rifle and a tactical vest. It is a scenario

that, sadly, is becoming too common. We saw it yesterday in Texas.

The attacker in yesterday's school shooting in Uvalde was also carrying an assault rifle and wearing a tactical vest. He reportedly shot two officers before entering the school and wounding a Federal law enforcement official.

Can the Members of this Senate say in good conscience that we have done enough to protect the lives of police officers and the children in communities like Uvalde? Of course not. They were killed by people who never should have had a gun in the first place.

With the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, this Senate can take the first step of many steps needed to save lives and reject hate. The next step is finally closing the loophole that allows guns to fall into the wrong hands. Ten years ago, after 26 little children, God bless them, were murdered by a disturbed gunman in Sandy Hook Elementary School, we voted to close gaps in the gun background check system, and we fell short.

Will we finally close those gaps now after another school filled with little babies and children was targeted in a mass shooting? The CDC reported last week that for the first time in more than 60 years, car accidents are no longer the leading cause of death for kids and teens. As of 2020, the leading cause of death of children and adolescents in America is guns—guns. Guns are the No. 1 threat to our children.

When will we finally find the courage and the spine to pass commonsense changes to our gun laws that the vast majority of Americans support?

Well, this Friday, the National Rifle Association is holding its annual meeting in, of all places, Texas. A few of the politicians who are scheduled to speak at that gathering were among the first to send their thoughts and prayers to Uvalde. Well, I hope and pray they will find the courage to stop cowering before the gun lobby and take action to save our children's lives.

Let me address one last misconception about this bill. A number of my colleagues have said: Well, why did you have to use the words “White supremacists” or “neo-Nazis” in the bill? Why did you want to focus on that?

Let me make it clear that we are focusing on domestic terrorism, and that is why we mention White supremacism. The bill requires reports to Congress on all domestic terrorism activity, with a breakdown by specific category.

The bill requires that White supremacist terrorism be one of those specific categories. We include this requirement because during the Trump Presidential administration, the FBI was ordered to stop tracking White supremacist attacks as a separate category of domestic terrorism.

Remarkably, the FBI stopped tracking White supremacist attacks in the middle of the spate of White supremacist violence, including the lethal attack at the 2017 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally and the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting.

This decision also came after an unclassified May 2017 joint intelligence bulletin from the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security that found “white supremacist extremism poses [a] persistent threat of lethal”—lethal—“violence,” and that White supremacists “were responsible for 49 homicides and 26 attacks from 2016 . . . more than any other domestic extremist movement.”

I am not making this up. People are dying because of these extremists. We are asking the FBI and other Agencies to identify the incidents of violence so that we can track them, find if they are growing or receding; train local law enforcement to recognize it.

This bill does not require collecting of data on First Amendment-protected speech at all, no matter how vile that speech may be. It only requires the FBI to provide a report to Congress on violent domestic terrorist activity that the FBI is already investigating.

In fact, this bill does not provide any new law enforcement or surveillance powers to the government. It does not establish any new criminal offenses.

This morning there is an outrage over the violence that took place in Texas. The question is, Can we channel this outrage into an active, productive effort to pass legislation to make America safer?

We know what the problem is. We know what the challenge is with domestic terrorism. The question is, Can we gather the information to put an end to it? Isn't that our responsibility, what comes to our responsibility as Senators and as citizens in this country?

In the U.S. Senate, let's start with this bill. Domestic terrorism is for real. We saw a form of it in Buffalo, NY, and we are going to see it again, I am afraid, unless we take it very seriously.

Fighting terrorism used to be a bipartisan effort, and I hope it will once again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each prior to the scheduled votes: MURRAY, WYDEN, and BROWN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF LISA M. GOMEZ

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor today to support the nomination of Lisa Gomez as the Assistant Secretary for the Department