

did this have to happen and never let it happen again.

As I said, I will speak further on this. I know in my State of Vermont, we do have a very large percentage of gun owners. Most of them tell me, "Do something."

As I said, of course, pray for the children. Pray that the Congress does the right thing with real—with real—gun control.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Last week, we paused to honor the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation and in defense of our freedoms.

For families all across America, the long holiday weekend also kicked off the excitement of summer traditions, but, unfortunately, a year-and-a-half into the failed policies of this all-Democratic government, even modest family celebrations came with pricetags that were literally sky high.

Today, the average price of gas in America reached a new record high. There is now just one State in our whole country where average prices haven't passed \$4.30. From trips across town to visits with relatives, driving is becoming an even more painful proposition for working families.

In Boyd County, one Kentuckian said it now cost him about \$73 to fill up the tank.

I just hope those prices will go down.

Another in Lexington said:

I'm traveling up north to take care of my mother up in Michigan. It's a long haul, and yeah, it's hard when it is this expensive.

And sky-high fuel prices aren't just hurting drivers. April saw the biggest 1-month spike in airfare on record with tickets up nearly 20 percent. The cost of backyard cookouts and all other home-cooked meals are continuing to rise. Prices on everything from ground beef to eggs have clocked the fastest annual increase since 1979.

What about big household purchases? Many families wait for Memorial Day weekend sales to fill a need around the house. Well, tools and hardware are 11 percent more expensive than they were a year ago. Major appliances cost 12 percent more. And furniture is up almost 15 percent.

These record-setting prices have got working families literally surrounded, and the American people know exactly where these hardships are coming from. They know this pain is a direct—a direct—result of the failed policies

that Washington Democrats pursued even as everybody warned that their reckless spending would cause inflation.

A little more than a year ago, Democrats dumped \$2 trillion of liberal waste onto our economy. Their own experts—their own experts—told them not to do it. President Obama's top economist warned then it was "definitely too big for the moment."

President Clinton's Treasury Secretary said it could "set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation." And both of them said it at the time.

It was reported a few days ago that even Secretary Yellen, the President's own Treasury Secretary, knew the spending spree was reckless and wished it were smaller.

But our colleague, the Democratic leader, brushed aside expert concerns, saying that "I do not think inflationary dangers, at least in the near term, are very real."

Well, now his party is presiding over out-of-control inflation, the worst in four decades, a year-on-year inflation rate of—listen to this—8.3 percent. And even that terrible number may be an understatement.

In the early 1980s, right after the last bout of inflation this bad, the Bureau of Labor Statistics changed how they measure inflation. Larry Summers has coauthored a new research paper that tries to create an apples-to-apples comparison between the inflation figures today versus 40 years ago.

So here is what they found:

The current inflation regime is closer to that of the late 1970s than it may at first appear.

In other words, Democrats have brought inflation much closer to the bad old days of the late seventies than the official numbers even make it look.

Of course, no matter which way economists measure it, the American people know historic inflation when they feel it. It is impossible to ignore, from the gas pump to the supermarket, to the big-box store.

On Democrats' watch, working families' hard-earned dollars are buying them less and less.

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

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

#### REMEMBERING JOHN EDWARD PORTER

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the name "John Edward Porter" may not be well known to many people now, but there was a time when he had a special impact on America.

I was proud to call him a colleague and my friend. John Porter was a Congressman from Illinois who served at the same time I was a Member of the House. He did some remarkable things

in his life. In the famous 10th District, he was a real leader on many issues. He represented that district in Chicago's northern suburbs from 1980 until the year 2001 and for most of the time we served together in the House. I admired him. We always had a good, positive working relationship although we were of different political faiths. He was a leader and a voice for principled, bipartisan cooperation within our Illinois congressional delegation.

John Porter passed away last Friday. He was raised in a family where public service was a way of life. He took it to heart. He served in the U.S. Army Reserve from 1958 to 1964 and as an attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice during the Kennedy administration.

He was elected to the House in 1980 when his predecessor, Abner Mikva, resigned to become a Federal judge. The two men were different in political faith, but in many regards, they were the same. Ab Mikva, you see, was a legendary liberal Democrat, the son of Jewish immigrants from Ukraine who relied on welfare to survive the Great Depression. John Porter was a fiscally conservative Republican whose father was a judge. But they shared many values. They believed that public service was a noble profession and that government could make life better and that America must remain a beacon of hope for the world.

John Porter supported efforts to protect the environment in the earliest days. He championed human rights efforts across the globe and efforts to protect the environment at home. He was the founder of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. He was a key supporter of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

John Porter was an independent thinker who defied the National Rifle Association to support a national ban on assault weapons in 1994. It took guts. John Porter did the right thing.

His greatest and most visionary contribution to America was in the field of biomedical research. He was chair of the powerful House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. He was a driving force in the House behind the successful effort to double the funding for the National Institutes of Health.

For those who may not know, the National Institutes of Health in Washington, DC, is the leading medical research agency in the world—in the world—and John Porter, this Congressman from Illinois, teamed up with two Senators to take on what seemed like an impossible assignment. He joined with Tom Harkin, a Senator from Iowa, a Democrat, and Arlen Specter, a Senator from Pennsylvania, a Republican. They set out to do the politically impossible—to double the budget for the National Institutes of Health.

The new funding came at a critical moment in history. It made possible discoveries that literally changed the

world, including the famous Human Genome Project, which Dr. Francis Collins headed up at that time. It was one of the greatest scientific breakthroughs of the 20th century, and it happened because John Porter and the Senators I mentioned decided to make certain that the NIH had the resources when they needed it.

The mapping of the human genome continues to transform medicine on a daily basis and has provided lifesaving cures all around the world. It is the leadership of NIH Director Dr. Collins and the inspiring example of John Porter that convinced me to try to team up with Senators on the other side of the aisle and do the same in my time in the Senate. I admired John's success so much that I decided to try to make it my own. So I teamed up with ROY BLUNT, a Republican from Missouri, and also, of course, with PATTY MURRAY, a Democrat from the State of Washington, and we started our effort to see if we could increase dramatically the National Institutes of Health's budget. We did. We increased it by over 40 percent in the period of time that we have taken on this assignment and more to follow.

The NIH recognized Congressman John Porter's invaluable contributions in 2014 by naming its new Neuroscience Research Center in his honor.

Loretta and I send our condolences to his wife Amy, their children, stepchildren, and grandchildren, to John's friends and colleagues, and to all who were inspired by his example to make our world and our Nation a better, healthier, safer place.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Madam President, 23 years ago, after the massacre at Columbine High School left 12 students and a teacher dead, the gun lobby and its allies insisted that "Now is not the time" to talk about gun laws. In shooting after shooting since, as America has been stunned and grieving and burying its children, the gun lobby has demanded that we not "politicize" the issue of gun violence. They say we should wait until passions have cooled before taking any action to reduce gun violence in America.

Well, the grim reality is this: It is no longer possible to wait months or weeks or even days after a mass shooting for passions to cool. The shootings just keep happening. So far this year, we have seen 246 mass shootings in 157 days—more than 1 mass shooting every day. Just this past weekend, a string of 11 mass shootings left at least 15 people dead and more than 60 others wounded in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Arizona, Texas, Georgia, New York, and Michigan. No other developed nation on Earth has even a fraction of the mass shootings we have in the United States.

President Lincoln once said famously that "we cannot escape history." This Senate cannot escape its responsibility to do something. We cannot allow ourselves to grow numb and resigned to this mass murder.

Negotiations are underway on a bipartisan basis to help reduce gun violence in America. I want to thank Senators CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut, JOHN CORNYN of Texas, and the other Democrats and Republicans who are trying to find a way to reduce gun violence. But it takes 60 Senators for that to happen. I hope in good faith we can at least take a step forward from this awful situation.

The House of Representatives already acted last year to close gaps in the gun background check system. This week, the House will vote on bills to support extreme-risk protection orders, or "red flag" laws, and other important measures.

Tomorrow, the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, will hold a hearing on the mass shooting that took place in Buffalo on May 14, just a few weeks ago, and the domestic terrorism threat it exposes. One of our witnesses is Garnell Whitfield, Jr., whose mother Ruth was murdered at Tops grocery store in Buffalo.

Gun violence is now the leading cause of death among America's children and teenagers. It replaced automobile accidents.

Next week, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing to hear from experts about the lasting trauma that gun violence leaves on children.

Next month, the Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on the growing danger of gun violence to police, who increasingly find themselves outgunned on the streets.

There was a retired police officer in that grocery store in Buffalo. His name is Aaron Salter. He served the community and the police force, and he was there to bring security to that grocery store. When the shooter came in with his military style weapon, this policeman did his duty. He pulled his handgun. He was outgunned by this killer and lost his life.

Let's consider a few basic truths.

No. 1, this crisis is not simply about school safety. It wouldn't be solved by turning every school into an armed fortress. It is much bigger than schools alone.

Last Friday, I went to a grade school in Chicago. I won't name the name, but I have a granddaughter who is in the fourth grade there. There are 100 kids in the fourth grade in this school, and they all came to the assembly hall, where I gave them a little talk and answered their questions. I couldn't help but think as I stood there talking about my job and what is the hardest part and what is the best part. And I looked at those wonderful kids and I thought to myself, they are exactly the same age as the kids who died in Uvalde, TX. I couldn't imagine for a second the horror that the families must have felt when they heard the news that there was a shooter on the premises in their school. I can't imagine that this Nation is so cold and callous that it would ignore the reality of human suffering—not just the deaths

of those children and the teachers but what it meant to those families and still means to them to this day.

But it isn't just schools. Some people say: Well, if we just make a fortress out of the school, we will only have one door, and we will have metal detectors. And if the custodians and cafeteria workers and all the teachers and principals are all carrying guns, then we can keep our kids safe.

Think about that for a moment. Is that the answer in the United States of America to gun violence, that we are going to outgun any madman who comes on the premises carrying an assault-type weapon? Is that as good as it gets in the United States of America? I think we can do better.

Let's not kid ourselves. As heart-breaking as it is to hear of any violence in a school, schools are not the only places where this happens—grocery stores, Walmarts, Waffle Houses, bars and night clubs, hospitals, doctors' offices, churches, synagogues, Sikh gurdwaras, movie theaters, subways, street corners, baby showers, graduation parties, weddings, funerals, big cities and small towns, north, east, south, and west. Gun violence can be found in every corner of America. It can happen anywhere to anyone at any time.

Point No. 2: As horrific as they are, mass shootings are only a small part of America's gun violence crisis. In 2020, the most recent year for which the CDC has statistics, 45,222 Americans died by gun violence in 2020—45,222.

That total number of gun deaths was 14 percent higher than the year before, 25 percent higher than 5 years before, and 43 percent higher than 10 years. Counting only homicides, the 2020 deaths were 34 percent greater than just 1 year earlier, 49 percent over 5 years earlier, and 75 percent greater than a decade earlier. How can we look at those numbers and do nothing?

In 2020, 79 percent of murders in the United States were carried out with guns—79 percent. How about Canada? What percentage of their murders in 2020 were the result of guns? Thirty-seven percent. In the United States, 79 percent; Canada, 37 percent; Australia, 13 percent; United Kingdom, 4 percent. But it is 79 percent in the United States of America. It is horrible, and it is getting worse.

Point No. 3: The changes the Senate is likely to consider pose no threat to the lifestyle of any law-abiding gun owner. Our goal is to save lives through responsible gun ownership.

There is a website, and I am not going to mention its name, but it is sometimes viewed as the most prolific place to buy a gun on the internet. If you buy a gun on that site from a licensed firearms dealer, you have to pass a background check. But there are also what they call private sales on this site, one person selling to another person. Private gun sales on this website and at gun shows and other places require no background check.