

who were able to compete and win because of title IX. Additionally, I introduced an amendment to prohibit Federal funding to schools that allow biological males to compete in women's sports.

I have also repeatedly called for the Senate to pass the Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act, legislation I helped introduce that would ensure the definition of "sex" in title IX is based on "solely a person's reproductive biology and genetics at birth" and prohibit Federal funding to institutions that do not uphold that definition.

Just last week, I sent a letter to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Cardona, warning the administration to rethink this rule change. The Biden administration's title IX rule flies in the face of the so-called science that Democrats are quick to pledge their allegiance to by ignoring the scientific differences in biological makeup of male and female athletes. Apparently, science only holds water when it conforms to the Democrats' partisan agenda.

Allowing biological males to compete in women's sports will set women's rights back 50 years to a time before title IX. It will discourage young girls from entering the court, jumping in the pool, walking on the field because they will know they will have to compete with the deck stacked against them; they can only hope to win second place, at best.

So the bottom line is that there is really no pregame speech or halftime talk you can give to a woman or a girl who feels like they aren't competing on a fair playing field, like 50 years ago. With this proposed rule, girls will be playing for second.

The Biden administration should do the right thing and rethink their decision that would destroy female athletics as we know it today.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, like so many people in Texas and across the country, I can't stop thinking about the 19 children and the two teachers who lost their lives in Uvalde, TX. Over the last several days, 21 families have started burying their loved ones. This tight-knit community of 15,000 people 60 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border is grieving the loss of classmates, playmates, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and fellow church members.

As grief turns to anger and anger turns to action, everyone is asking the question—the logical question—how do we stop these sort of things from happening again? Well, I think that is the

right question. That is the question that has been on my mind and dominating conversations with my colleagues the last couple of weeks.

This is a big diverse country. There are a lot of differences regionally, culturally, and the like. Each of us have ideas about what would work best, but that is the genius of our Federal system, one that Louis Brandeis called the "laboratories of democracy" because "one size fits all" is not necessarily always the right solution.

But those of us who work here in the Senate know this is not just about our goals or ideals; it is about what was once called the "art of the possible." Perfect bills exist only in our imagination and we have to be realistic about what can pass both Chambers of Congress and get the President's signature. And we know it is not easy by design. The Founding Fathers had this idea that if they made it hard to pass legislation, if they forced us to build consensus, that we wouldn't pass a lot of laws that would limit individual freedom and liberty; that it would only be where there was a true national consensus that we could get those laws passed.

Over the last week and a half, I have been talking, particularly with Senator MURPHY, Senator TILLIS, Senator SINEMA, but, literally, with everybody I could reach on the phone or get through text message to see if there is some package of mental health and safety legislation that addresses some of the factors that might have prevented the recent shootings in Uvalde and elsewhere.

I want to be clear, though. We are not talking about restricting the rights of current law-abiding gun owners or citizens. This is a constitutional right, as much as that may go against the grain of some of our colleagues who would like to see us do things that would restrict the right of American citizens under the Second Amendment. The right to keep and bear arms is guaranteed by the Constitution itself. And the vast majority of the Republican conference feels, certainly, the same way.

What I am interested in is keeping guns out of the hands of those who, by current law, are not supposed to have them—people with mental health problems, people who have criminal records.

Again, this is about the "art of the possible." In order to deliver results, we have to build consensus, and the best way to do that is through targeted reforms. We have actually had success doing this before. On November 5, 2017, a tight-knit community in Texas called Sutherland Springs was the target of a shooting. A gunman opened fire at a small Baptist church, killing 26 people. We quickly learned that the shooter had a long and disturbing record of violence—school suspensions, comments about wanting to kill his superiors in the military, animal abuse, violence against those closest to him,

felony, domestic violence convictions—he fractured the skull of his stepson in a fit of anger, and he even spent time in military prison. Yet, under the existing National Instant Criminal Background Check System, the Air Force had not uploaded that information.

Under existing Federal law, the shooter was prohibited from ever purchasing or possessing a firearm. So how did he get his hands on a semiautomatic weapon that he used to take 26 innocent lives? Well, it was because of a broken system. He was able to purchase four firearms because the information about his criminal history had never been uploaded into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System known as the NICS system. In that case, it was clear that the answer was, How do we stop this again? It was obvious: Get the background check system improved to record existing disqualifications to purchase or possess firearms.

Senator MURPHY and I introduced the Fix NICS Act to ensure all departments and agencies accurately and correctly uploaded these conviction records on a timely basis. That bill, at the time it became law, had more than 70 bipartisan cosponsors, and it was signed into law in March 2018. And here is what happened next. In the first 3 years since that bill became law, 11½ million additional records have been uploaded into the three national databases—11.5 million additional records. The number of records in one of those databases increased by more than 30 percent.

I believe the reason we were able to succeed with the Fix NICS legislation is because it addressed a glaring problem without jeopardizing the rights of law-abiding citizens under the Second Amendment. I mentioned that the bill had more than 70 cosponsors. I am reminded here that it had 77 bipartisan cosponsors. And that was how we passed the first major reform to the background checks system in 25 years. My hope is we can take the same approach here to build consensus by targeting the problem with a targeted solution.

This one is actually harder because in Uvalde there were so many points of failure—not just one—multiple points of failure. But one obvious glaring issue is the lack of mental health intervention. According to the reports we have seen, the shooter was isolated, he was bullied, he harmed himself, he self-mutilated. He had a history of fighting and threatening students and abusing animals. These are textbook signs, compounded with a profile we have seen too often of someone who could pose, not only as a threat to himself, but to others, as well.

But these signs were ignored, and we saw the tragic consequences. I don't think it is breaking news to say that there is a mental health crisis among America's children, and we can't ignore the devastating impact that the pandemic had on a lot of our young people.

In a recent survey conducted by the New York Times, 94 percent of school counselors said their students were showing more signs of anxiety and depression than before the pandemic. And 88 percent said students were having more trouble regulating their emotions and almost three-quarters said they were having difficulty solving conflicts with their friends. One counselor said: “Kids are more impulsive, [they are] less controlled, and struggle with emotional regulation.”

I believe we need to take this opportunity to support our children who struggle with emotional or mental health problems, and that is something I believe will bring us together and all 100 Senators can agree on.

Another big issue is school safety. This shooter should never have been able to gain access to Robb Elementary School that day. Again, the circumstances of how he gained that access are still under investigation. Initial reports indicated the door had been propped open. Now the police say the door had been closed but did not automatically lock like it was supposed to. If our schools need more resources to harden their infrastructure and evaluate their physical security measures and make necessary improvements, that is something we can agree on and something we need to do. No one should be able to walk through the door of a school and access a classroom so easily. You can't get into an airport very easily. We know how to do this.

Improving school safety also means reviewing current protocol, developing best practices, and adding or maybe expanding the number of school resource officers.

These are commonsense ways to save lives, and we need to provide schools with the resources to protect our students and our teachers.

I am a proud supporter of the Second Amendment, period. We also recognize, though, that there are people who are prohibited by current law from purchasing guns, like the shooter in Sutherland Springs, because of criminal records or mental illness.

We are discussing possible additional reforms to keep guns out of the hands of people who are not legally allowed to purchase or possess them in the first place. If we reach an agreement, law-abiding gun owners will not be impacted at all. Our conversations are ongoing, and, indeed, all 100 Senators will be part of that conversation, but these are the broad parameters of the things that I am interested in addressing. We are not talking about banning a category of weapons across the board, a ban on certain high-capacity magazines, or changing the background check system by adding additional disqualifying items. If we are actually serious about finding common ground and building consensus, those sorts of things will stand no chance of passing the Senate. Instead, we are talking about commonsense, targeted reforms that are responsive to the tragedies in

Uvalde and elsewhere and that will, I believe, help save lives—strengthening mental health, bolstering school security, keeping guns out of the hands of people who are already legally prohibited from having them. I think a lot of our colleagues could get behind those provisions like they did with the Fix NICS bill.

Following Sutherland Springs, we came up with a targeted bill to address specific circumstances. I hope we can do so again. I will not settle on inadequate or downright harmful legislation for the sake of doing something. That is not productive for anyone.

That is one of the things I hear the most. People say “Do something.” Well, we can agree that something needs to be done, but what that something is, is much harder to achieve, and so targeted reforms, I think, are the way to get to where we need to go.

I understand the desire for quick action, but I hope the Democratic leader will allow bipartisan discussions to continue and then conclude before he pulls the plug and schedules show votes on something he knows can't pass. He has threatened to do it, but I don't believe we ought to try to meet artificial deadlines. We know how to do this, and I think giving the Senate adequate time over the next week or so to try to reach that consensus is eminently reasonable.

I don't believe the Senate will be voting this week because good consensus legislation takes time. So I hope Senator SCHUMER will let his Members work. There is no use in rushing a vote on a doomed, partisan bill like the House is expected to vote on this week. My goal is to achieve a result, and the only way we can do that, the only way we can get a bill that will pass both Chambers and earn the President's signature, is by taking the time and reaching that consensus.

Right now, there is not a bill out there that stands a chance of succeeding in the coming days, but my hope is that will change by allowing the Senate to do the work we know how to do and come up with a bipartisan bill that commands the support of 60-plus Members of the Senate and something we can send to the President for his signature.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HEATH ROBINSON ACT

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, it is an honor to be here on the Senate floor tonight to talk about a topic, and it is an honor to have you in the Chair as I do so.

I rise late this afternoon to discuss a piece of legislation that will be before

the Senate perhaps for a good portion of this week and maybe even into the next. It is the most comprehensive toxic exposure package the Senate has ever considered in our Nation's history.

Since September 11, 2001, up to 3.5 million deployed servicemembers have potentially encountered toxic exposures from burn pits. During a deployment to a war zone, military personnel are often exposed to toxic hazards, many of which have been associated with chronic health issues.

Not really as an aside but unrelated to this piece of legislation, a cause I now undertake and have been pursuing since this topic arose is to make sure that in the future, there are no burn pits that our service men and women encounter in their service to our Nation. While we are preparing to take care of those who have experienced burn pits in the past, let there be no more burn pit experiences.

Until almost 2010, the U.S. military kept burn pits on bases for the disposal of chemicals, plastics, medical waste, and other substances that were just burned with jet fuel, creating toxic substances, toxic smoke.

Currently, the VA can provide service-connected disability claims related to burn pit exposures; however, due to lack of evidence, scientific data, and information from the Department of Defense, at least 70 percent of the claims are denied.

Over the past 2 years, nearly every veterans service organization has testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and emphasized the importance of fixing the process the VA uses to provide healthcare and benefits to toxic-exposed veterans. JON TESTER, the Senator from Montana, the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and I have worked in a bipartisan fashion with these veterans organizations, with veterans, with advocates, with the VA, and with our Senate colleagues on and off of the committee to craft a comprehensive bill to deliver all generations of toxic-exposed veterans long-overdue healthcare and benefits.

Three weeks ago, Senator TESTER and I announced the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022. It has many priorities, but among those, this historic legislation will, one, expand VA healthcare eligibility; two, improve the VA's presumption process; three, bolster the VA's toxic exposure training and resources; four, strengthen toxic exposure research; and five, set up VA and veterans for success.

Last week over Memorial Day, our country paused to remember and honor those who served our Nation. My expectation—my guess is that almost every Member of the U.S. Senate in some fashion over the weekend spent time with veterans, paying respect, giving them honor.

One Kansas veteran, when I was in Wichita, told me that he and his dad