

Altogether, this framework is a good and necessary first step towards changing the reality of gun violence in America. It will lay the foundation for future action. Most importantly, this legislation will go a long way toward saving lives.

I want to thank Senators MURPHY, SINEMA, CORNYN, and TILLIS for working assiduously on this framework.

Senator MURPHY asked me for space to let the negotiators do their work, and I was glad to give it to them because we knew that any chance of getting something real done on gun safety was worth the effort.

I also want to thank my colleagues who were part of the bipartisan guns working group, including Senators BLUMENTHAL, MANCHIN, COONS, HEINRICH, and others.

I want to thank all the advocates, families, and volunteers who lost loved ones, who shared their stories, who marched to make a change. Without the advocates, the families, and the volunteers who lost loved ones, this bill wouldn't have happened because year after year after shooting after shooting, they didn't give up. They persisted, and it helped bring us to this important moment.

For decades, families across the country have seen the same dismal pattern play out whenever a mass shooting strikes the Nation—tragedy followed by inaction. From Columbine to Virginia Tech, to Sandy Hook, to Las Vegas, to Parkland, to Buffalo, to Uvalde, and to so many others, gridlock has prevented Congress from bringing solace to families in grief.

But no matter how many shootings have traumatized this Nation, these families have never given up in their hope of making change happen. Rather than curse the darkness, these families have responded to tragedy by lighting candles. They have shared their stories, they have marched for change, and they have done everything in their power to make sure no other parent, spouse, or sibling has to suffer the pain they have felt and live with every day.

The same is true for all the advocates, and there are so many groups who have worked on gun safety. Many members of these groups are survivors of gun violence. I have a person on my staff who is a survivor of Aurora. They all worked tirelessly for years to enact commonsense gun safety laws.

Despite decades of frustrating gridlock, I hope that yesterday's announcement brings some sense of accomplishment to these grieving families and to all of those who have marched and protested and written letters and tweeted because it is thanks to them we are at the threshold of progress.

Nearly 30 years ago, I was the author of the Brady background checks bill, and that was the last time Congress took meaningful action to address gun violence. It was a different era back then, but the lesson of that experience remains relevant today: The right law can decrease gun deaths. I believe that

there are tens of thousands of people alive today because the Brady law was passed in 1994. They don't know who they are, we don't know who they are, but it is virtually certain that that law saved thousands and thousands of lives.

I urge my colleagues to think of all the lives we can now save by turning this framework into law. Americans have waited long enough for us to take action. Too many lives—too many—have been already lost. Too many families—too many—have been left grieving.

While we can't undo the tragedies of the past, we can act now to make them less likely in the future. If this framework is enacted into law, it will do precisely that, and I urge all of us to continue working to pass gun safety legislation soon.

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Madam President, now on the PACT Act, as negotiations continue off the floor on gun safety reform, today, the Senate will move forward with the most significant expansion of veteran healthcare benefits in decades—in decades. In a few hours, the Senate will vote on cloture on the substitute amendment for the PACT Act, which Chairman TESTER and Ranking Member MORAN have been working on for months. It is my hope that we can finally pass this legislation in the next few days, well before the week is out.

The changes outlined by the PACT Act are long overdue. It would make sure any veteran suffering from toxic exposure in the line of duty could get the VA benefits they deserve. It would end the indignity that too many veterans face right now of carrying the burden of toxic exposure on their own and being forced to jump through hoop after hoop after hoop by the VA before they can get any benefits, and many of them never get them. As many as 3½ million veterans could benefit from the reforms brought about by this bill.

I urge my colleagues to keep working so we can push this bill over the finish line A-S-A-P because both sides want it, our veterans deserve it, and the veterans service organizations—the VSOs—have been telling Congress for years that change is needed at the VA. So before the week is out, the Senate should do its job and pass this bill.

SHIPPING REFORM

Madam President, now on the shipping bill, a few months ago, the Senate unanimously passed legislation to fight inflation by fixing unfair shipping practices that are clogging our ports and straining our supply chains. Tonight, the House will finally act on that bill and send it to the President's desk.

Inflation is the greatest frustration America has right now, and backlogs at our ports are one of the biggest drivers of price hikes that we will address through this bill.

By now, we have all seen pictures of scores of ships lining up in ports from Las Vegas to Savannah, to Seattle, to New York and New Jersey. These back-

logs have not only caused great harm for American exporters trying to send their products out into the world, they have also skyrocketed the price of goods coming into this country. The backlogs create a brutal double whammy that ultimately leaves American families paying the price.

I applaud Speaker PELOSI and all of my House colleagues for taking action on this shipping reform bill, and I want to thank my colleagues here in the Senate—Senators KLOBUCHAR and THUNE, the authors of the legislation; Chairwoman CANTWELL, who shepherded it through; and others for their leadership when this bill was before the Senate.

By reforming unfair shipping practices, Congress is taking a much needed step to lowering costs, clearing our ports, and relieving supply chains. I thank all of my colleagues for a job well done.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 969.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ana Isabel de Alba, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 969, Ana Isabel de Alba, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Richard Blumenthal, Alex Padilla, Christopher A. Coons, Gary C. Peters, Elizabeth Warren, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Baldwin, Tina Smith, Mark R. Warner, Edward J. Markey, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Jeanne Shaheen, Sherrod Brown, Margaret Wood Hassan.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 919.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary T. Boyle, of Maryland, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2018.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 919, Mary T. Boyle, of Maryland, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2018.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Richard J. Durbin, Jeanne Shaheen, Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Jack Reed, Jacky Rosen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Amy Klobuchar, Ron Wyden, Debbie Stabenow, Jeff Merkley, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher Murphy, Edward J. Markey.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, June 13, be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, 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 minority leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, runaway inflation has pushed workers and families to the breaking point. According to one recent poll, nearly 60 percent of Americans are making an ef-

fort to drive less and cut back on electricity use. Three in four are pinching their budgets for food and entertainment outside the home, and two-thirds are bracing for prices to climb even higher in the coming year.

Six months ago, in December, President Biden told the American people we had reached the "peak"—the peak—"of the crisis" with inflation. He said that prices would start falling "over the next couple months." But like so many of Democrats' other confident predictions about our economy, the President's statement has proven completely false.

Friday morning's inflation report provided more official confirmation of what American consumers know painfully well: The Democrats' out-of-control inflation is not letting up. In fact, it is actually getting worse.

This year to May, consumer prices rose 8.6 percent, blowing away expectations, jumping a full percentage point over the previous month and setting—you guessed it—a new 40-year high. The data underneath tell a brutal story for working families and American businesses. The categories driving inflation last month were the ones they can't do without.

Overall energy prices clocked a year-on-year increase of nearly 35 percent. Drivers are paying 48.7 percent more at the pump. And fuel oil consumers have seen prices more than double.

Food costs continue to climb at over 10 percent. Grocery prices, in particular, hit nearly 12 percent inflation, the worst year since 1979. And full service restaurant prices saw their largest increase on record.

Of course, that is not to mention the 31-year high for inflation in the services sector, the 35-year high for rent inflation, or the 42-year high for rising airfare.

Day by day, all of these painful milestones add up to one simple reality: Americans' hard-earned dollars aren't going nearly as far as they once did. Runaway inflation has swallowed up any shot of rising pay bringing more prosperity. In fact, the average worker has seen a 3.9-percent pay cut in the last year.

One mother of two in Indiana recently reported that she is earning more than she ever has in her career but "says she still feels like she is financially losing ground." This is what she had to say:

I should be able to live on my own. I'm getting ready to pay rent and it's going to take every single dime I've made.

As one of my constituents in Barbourville put it recently, "We're cutting back on everything—and I mean everything. Gas, meat, bread, it's all expensive as hell. One moment you think you can afford to buy something, then you go to the store and it's like, 'Nope, can't get that anymore either.'"

And here is a real kicker. One young couple in Utah has taken to asking themselves weekly, "What did we spend money on that we could not have spent money on?"

Imagine if Washington Democrats were willing to engage in that sort of self-reflection. Remember, it was their policy choices that made this painful situation possible. It was the Democrats' choice to insist on flooding—flooding—the economy with trillions of dollars in liberal spending last spring. And it was Democrats' choice to spend months last summer and fall working on ways to pour even more gasoline on the fire, even though working families were already feeling the pinch of inflation.

The Democratic leader himself said last spring:

I do not think the dangers of inflation, at least in the near term, are very real.

None other than some of his own party's top economists warned the exact opposite. But Washington Democrats were not to be deterred. Working families' budgets took a backseat to the far-left's wish list, and now Democrats' decision is literally driving them off a cliff.

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Madam President, on another matter, the Senate is in the middle of proposing major legislation to expand healthcare access for veterans exposed to toxic substances in the line of duty. Doing right by our vets is a bipartisan priority. An 86-vote majority of us voted to begin processing this bill a few days back, myself included.

This legislation is not a minor fix; it is a series of major—major—changes to help more veterans. So the precise language of the final bill will have major consequences for veterans, for policy, and for government spending.

Republicans have pushed to get votes on a few commonsense amendments that would make this bipartisan bill even stronger for our veterans. For example, one of these amendments would make sure the veterans who are already in line—those who are waiting now, already in line—waiting for treatment under the current rules are not disserved or treated unfairly as an unintended consequence of the new expansion. Surely that should be completely without controversy.

Another amendment would clarify how the government accounts for the new funding to make sure the new legislation does not impose major unintended consequences on the appropriations process.

Another amendment would make it clear that new medical presumptions must rest on sound science, so Congress does not substitute our judgment for the experts'.

These are not controversial amendments. They are directly related to the substance of this bill. And given the magnitude of the changes under consideration, the Senators sponsoring these amendments have every right to expect votes on the floor. There is no reason why this important bipartisan bill should be denied a bipartisan floor process.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.