

we keep those words sacred so that the NATO alliance is an alliance that can be counted on by all of the members.

I am heartened by the fact that Finland and Sweden are joining in this effort now, want to be part of the future of NATO. Extending that NATO border with Russia 600 to 800 miles is an affirmation of the foolishness of Putin. He actually thought, at the end of the day, by invading Ukraine, NATO would be weaker. Now it will be stronger than ever and, frankly, right up against his own country and the Finnish borders if they are allowed to join us in the NATO alliance, which I dearly hope for.

In the meantime, to my friends and all of the folks I have worked with in Lithuania, we are so proud of your continued determination to stand up for what is right. Continue doing that. That is the spirit of the Baltics, it is the spirit of Lithuania, and it is the spirit of the NATO alliance.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here today to visit with my colleagues about a group that we refer to as pharmacy benefit managers, but around Washington, the shorthand for that term is PBMs.

Many Americans may not know about PBMs. They are very obscure in the whole pharmaceutical business. Yet the PBM market is nearly \$500 billion, and they are powerful in our pharmaceutical drug supply chain.

It is our duty in Congress to understand, first, how PBMs operate; second, hold them accountable; and, third, work to lower prescription drug costs for the taxpayers and for the consumers.

In 2018, I pressed the Federal Trade Commission to investigate PBMs. I saw the ongoing consolidation in the pharmaceutical supply chain and its impact on drug prices, driving those prices up. But I didn't wait for the FTC to act.

I have pursued, one, bipartisan legislation; two, held hearings; and, three, conducted oversight. Most recently, Senator CANTWELL and I have introduced the PBM Transparency Act. This bill prohibits PBMs from engaging in spread pricing. This is a situation where PBMs charge an insurer more than they charge the pharmacy and then they pocket the difference. Iowans call that gaming the system.

Another practice we prohibit in our bill: clawbacks. In Medicare Part D, these are sometimes called retroactive direct and indirect remuneration fees—or DIR, for short.

Iowa pharmacists have told me clawbacks are costing patients more in higher copays and also costing the local pharmacy. This practice is putting rural and independent pharmacists out of business. In addition, our bill will incentivize fair and transparent PBM practices, benefiting consumers and taxpayers.

The bill has the support of community pharmacists, manufacturers, and patient advocacy organizations. Not surprisingly, this industry we call PBMs oppose the Cantwell-Grassley bill. They say my bill is “anti-competitive” and, in their words, an “expansion of power at the FTC.” They also claim that their industry is already well-regulated. Nothing could be further from the truth.

My bill establishes transparency and accountability. So good news: Tomorrow, the Commerce Committee will mark up the PBM Transparency Act. I don't happen to sit on this very important Commerce Committee, but I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Finally, I have never given up on passing the bipartisan Wyden-Grassley bill, known as the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act. Despite the Democrats having the majority for 18 months, we have not passed a prescription drug bill. So we still have high prescription drug prices.

By now, I would assume they would be interested in advancing a bipartisan prescription drug bill. They can get 60-plus votes, save the taxpayers \$95 billion and seniors, who are consumers, \$72 billion—rather than a partisan effort that doesn't have 60 votes here in the U.S. Senate.

I want my colleagues to know I will work with anyone who wants to pass the bipartisan Wyden-Grassley bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 28 days ago, an 18-year-old young man opened fire on students at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX. He murdered 21 people—19 children and 2 teachers. In the process, he effectively committed suicide as well.

This was an attack that was so cruel, so brutal, and inhumane that it has brought much of our Nation to its knees in mourning. Since the shooting, my office has received—as I am sure many other Members of Congress have—I have received tens of thousands of calls and letters and emails with a singular message: Do something.

Do something. Not do nothing, but do something. Texans are disgusted and outraged by what happened at Robb Elementary, and they want Congress to take appropriate action to prevent the loss of more innocent lives.

I don't want us to pass a bill for the purpose of checking a box. I want to make sure we actually do something useful, something that is capable of becoming a law, something that will have the potential to save lives.

I am happy to report as a result of the hard work of a number of Senators in this Chamber that we have made some serious progress. In particular, over the last few weeks, Mr. MURPHY, the Senator from Connecticut; Ms. SINEMA, the Senator from Arizona; Mr. TILLIS, the Senator from North Carolina; and I have searched high and low for common ground.

Now, there are some people who would say, What is the use? Why try? We know this is an issue that divides much of the country, depending on where you live, and maybe even divides people living in the same household. But I think we have found some areas where there is space for compromise. And we have also found that there are some redlines and no middle ground. We have talked; we have debated; we have disagreed; and, finally, we have reached an agreement among the four of us. But, obviously, this is not something that will become law or fail to become law because of a small group of Senators.

The truth is we had a larger group of 20 Senators—10 Republicans and 10 Democrats—come forward and sign on to an agreed set of principles, and I believe as Senators see the text that supports those principles, they will see we have tried our best to be true as to what we said those agreed principles should be.

So soon, very soon—not soon enough for me—but very soon, we will see the text of bipartisan legislation that will help keep our children and our communities safer.

We know there is no such thing as a perfect piece of legislation. We are imperfect human beings. But we have to try, and I believe this bill is a step in the right direction.

One of the pillars of this legislation is support for community-based mental health care. Following the violent attacks, we have all heard about missed signs, and the fact is the New York Times recently profiled the type of young man: typically alienated, isolated, not receiving any sort of support or medical or psychiatric care, certainly not complying with their doctors' orders when it comes to taking their medication that allows them to manage their mental illness challenges.

We know that this profile is one that Salvador Ramos fit, the shooter in Uvalde. He was a deeply troubled young man. He was isolated. He was bullied in school. He cut himself because he said he liked the way it made him look. It made him look tough. He had a history of fighting, of assaulting fellow students, of threatening sexual assault of young women, and torturing and killing animals. It is a familiar profile.

This man, this young man, I think was crying out for help. But he got no help, notwithstanding the best efforts of people around him. He shot his own grandmother before he went to Robb Elementary School because she wanted

him to go back to the classroom after being out of the classroom for 2 years because of COVID mitigation practices.

So our goal with this legislation is to try to help people in crisis get treatment before they reach a point like Salvador Ramos.

Now, I want to be clear: Not everybody who is suffering a mental health crisis is a threat to themselves and others. Matter of fact, the opposite is true. Many people suffer in silence with their parents, their families, their siblings, trying to help them to no avail. But there is a small subset of people like Salvador Ramos who are a danger to themselves and others if they don't get the kind of help they need.

So the provision of the bill which represents the single largest investment in community-based mental health treatment in American history is drawn from bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator STABENOW and Senator BLUNT. I think there are eight demonstration projects around the country. We want to make this kind of access to community-based mental health care available all across the country, and our bill will help to do that.

It expands high-quality mental health and addiction services nationwide through the expansion of certified community behavioral health clinics.

Many of these providers already operate in communities across the country, but our legislation expands the networks of clinics to deliver even stronger and more fulsome support to our communities.

We also include provisions to expand support of care in our schools because it is at school that many of our young people will be identified as needing support.

Teachers actually spend more time than parents, typically, with our school-aged children; and the supported services that will be part of this bill will help identify students that need that help so that intervention can come as early as possible.

As the Presiding Officer probably knows, 60 percent of gun deaths in America are suicides—suicides. We not only want to try our best to do things that will hopefully stop the Salvador Ramoses in the future from hurting other people, we want to try to help them and keep them from hurting themselves as well.

So I believe this huge investment in America's mental health delivery system is an investment in safer and healthier communities.

Another pillar of the legislation is school safety. The Uvalde shooter was able to enter Robb Elementary School through a door that was not locked when it should have been. That is an obvious vulnerability. Schools need to be prepared for the worst-case scenario, which means evaluating physical security measures, reviewing current protocol, adopting best practices, which are broadly available through publications and studies by the Secret Service

and other law enforcement agencies. And they also need to be able to add or expand the number of school resource officers as appropriate.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: No parent should have to send their child to school fearful for their child's safety, and no child should have to go to school and be afraid for their safety.

All of our students and teachers and the administrators and others in our schools deserve to feel safe, and parents deserve peace of mind, and that is what I hope these additional resources will provide.

Now, the final range portion of this bill beyond mental health and school safety involves a range of provisions to prevent these sort of violent attacks from occurring in the future.

Again, I believe that law-abiding citizens are not the problem. I don't believe law-abiding citizens are a threat to public health, and this bill honors that commitment.

So unless a person is convicted of a crime or is adjudicated mentally ill, their ability to purchase a firearm will not be impacted by this legislation.

Now, some have suggested provisions that I believe would infringe on Second Amendment rights and really not get to the root of the problem.

For example, there is no particular ban on a type of gun or no mandatory waiting periods, no background checks of intrafamily or friend-to-friend transfer, none of these are included in the legislation. And some of our colleagues clearly would like to see that. But, again, that is because law-abiding gun owners are not the problem.

What we are trying to do is prevent dangerous individuals from unleashing violence on their communities. And one way of achieving that goal is through more robust crisis intervention programs.

Now, that is a broad term that describes a range of initiatives that aim to reduce violence, protect the public, and connect individuals in crisis with the help they need.

It could include something called assisted outpatient treatment, which allows courts to order people with mental health challenges to receive outpatient treatment to ensure they receive the care they needed, and the court will hold them accountable to make sure they make the doctors' appointments and take the medications they need in order to remain productive.

But beyond AOTs—or assisted outpatient treatment—there are very effective regimes like mental health courts, like I saw in Dallas, TX, not that long ago.

Now, one of the things that encourages compliance is the fact that you have a judge, somebody wearing a black robe, saying: You will do this. And if that is what it takes, that is fine with me. But there are also drug courts, veterans' courts, and the like which aim to treat the root cause, not

the symptom. And across the country, there are hundreds of mental health and veterans' treatment courts and thousands of drug court programs that have delivered incredible results.

I have been clear at the outset that I am interested in providing law enforcement-related grants to all 50 States to put forward a range of crisis intervention programs that the State deems best to help reduce suicide and violence.

Now, some of our colleagues wanted to focus this money solely on the 19 States that have passed some form of red flag law, and, frankly, that is a choice that is up to the State. But we are not introducing a national red flag law, but we are providing the availability of law enforcement-related grants to crisis intervention programs, whether you adopted a red flag program or not. Perhaps you have chosen something different. Well, this grant program will get every State funding that implements programs that they themselves have adopted to stop individuals in crisis from reaching the point of violence or self-harm.

If any State wants to pass a law, obviously, under our Constitution, they have plenary authority to pass whatever crisis intervention laws they choose to do so. But one of the things that we have agreed upon is they have to have robust due process protections because we are talking about a constitutional right.

So if the new law does not include due process protections, it will not be eligible for these grants, no matter what form that crisis intervention program takes.

Our bill also provides increased protection for domestic violence victims. It shouldn't matter whether a person is married to their abuser, if the abuser is convicted of domestic violence, and many people have what I would call nontraditional relationships, whether they are living together, they have a child together, or whether they just have a long-term romantic or intimate relationship. Eighty-six percent of gun-owning households support that sort of protection for domestic violence victims, where, too often, a gun is involved.

Again, this doesn't limit law-abiding gun owners' rights unless somebody is convicted of domestic abuse under their State laws. Their gun rights will not be impacted.

Again, this portion of the bill includes critical due process protections which, as we all know, is part of our Constitution. You shall not be deprived of your rights without due process of law.

One new feature that we proposed is that those who are convicted of non-spousal misdemeanor domestic abuse—not felony but misdemeanor domestic violence—will have an opportunity after 5 years to have their Second Amendment rights restored, but they have to have a clean record. And this is an incentive, in fact, I think, for people

who have made a mistake and have committed domestic violence and received a misdemeanor conviction to straighten up their act and to not repeat it.

Our bill also strengthens the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, known as NICS, to ensure it is more fulsome and accurate.

In Uvalde, this young man, Salvador Ramos, turned 18. He went in and passed a background check. It is like he was born yesterday because there was no way for the National Instant Criminal Background checks system to look back on any mental health adjudications or criminal convictions, which would have barred him from purchasing a firearm had it occurred as an adult.

If a 17-year-old is convicted of a violent crime or adjudicated as mentally incompetent, that information should show up in the background check system if he tries to purchase a firearm when he turns 18.

Eighty-seven percent of gun-owning households in America support making juvenile records available in the background check system, and this legislation will make that possible.

Now, the States will control what information they are willing to share, but our legislation provides an incentive for States to upload the records that reflect on the suitability of an individual to purchase a firearm, allow them to upload juvenile records into the National Instant Criminal Background System to ensure that firearms are not falling into the hands of those under 21 who would be prohibited from purchasing that gun if they were an adult when it happened.

So I know this bill is not going to please everyone. Some think it goes too far; others think it doesn't go far enough, and I get it. But the nature of compromise and the nature of actually wanting to get a result requires that everybody try to find common ground where we can, and that is particularly hard in a 50-50 U.S. Senate.

But I believe the same people who are telling us to do something are sending us a clear message to do what we can to keep our children and communities safe. I am confident this legislation moves us in a positive direction.

I want to thank all of our colleagues who have worked so hard in this process that has gotten us this far. My understanding is that the text will be released essentially at any moment, although the principles upon which that text is written have been public for quite a while now.

This legislation is the product of good-faith, bipartisan negotiations. It includes bills and ideas offered by colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and it makes changes that are supported by vast majorities of Americans. And I think, most importantly, it has the real potential to become a law and to create real changes in communities across this country—safer, healthier communities; stronger, more secure

schools; saving lives. That is what we are all about.

So I am eager to discuss more details with our colleagues as they review the text in the coming days, and I hope we can continue to show the same sort of good faith and the openness to other ideas that have brought us to this point as we debate and we vote on this bipartisan legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF ANA ISABEL de ALBA

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, today, I am proud to celebrate two district judges joining the Federal bench for the State of California.

We are scheduled to vote shortly on the confirmation of Judge Ana de Alba, who is nominated to become a judge for the Eastern District of California.

Judge de Alba brings a lifelong commitment to advancing justice in California's Central Valley. The daughter of immigrants from Mexico, she was born in Merced, CA, and grew up in a family of farmworkers.

Judge de Alba watched her mother and her grandmother struggle with unfair treatment, as they worked together in some of the hardest jobs in the world.

She decided at a young age that one day—one day—she would become a lawyer to help families like her own.

Judge de Alba is a first-generation high school graduate. She went on to earn her bachelor's degree and her J.D. from UC Berkeley. And after graduating, she built a successful career in private practice in the Central Valley, and she realized her childhood dream of service by establishing a Workers' Rights Clinic for low-wage workers to learn their rights and to seek legal advice.

In 2018, based on her extensive legal experience and proven commitment to the public good, Judge de Alba was appointed by then-Governor Brown to serve as a superior court judge for Fresno County.

Judge de Alba is a dedicated, fair, and universally respected public servant, respected by her colleagues.

I also want to note that if confirmed, Judge de Alba will be the first Latina to sit on the Eastern District bench. She will bring a deep knowledge of the Central Valley and a passion for equal justice, informed and inspired by her own family's story.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Judge de Alba's confirmation today.

CONFIRMATION OF ROBERT STEVEN HUIE

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I would also like to take this moment to celebrate the confirmation last month of Judge Robert Huie, now serving in the Southern District of California.

Judge Huie is a resident of San Diego, where he has lived and worked for nearly 20 years, but his roots in California, in fact, began generations ago. His grandfather immigrated to San Francisco from China in the 1930s, making his home there until joining the U.S. Army.

Judge Huie is a talented lawyer who has continually sought out opportunities to promote justice.

He earned his undergraduate degree from Calvin College and his J.D. from Yale Law School. His career includes 12 years of service as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California.

During that time, he investigated and prosecuted more than 600 district court cases and two dozen appeals on matters ranging from public corruption to securities fraud, to bank robberies.

And at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Judge Huie took the initiative to create a districtwide working group that combated pandemic-related fraud.

Judge Huie's commitment to service, his strong work ethic, and his insightful legal thinking will benefit the community of the Southern District.

Mr. President, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am proud of the work that we continue to do to confirm outstanding, effective, and diverse judges across the Federal court system. That is especially important in places like the Southern District and Eastern District of California—two of the busiest Federal judicial districts in the entire country. As we confirm more nominees like Judge de Alba and Judge Huie, we are building a Federal court system that can better deliver on the promise of equal justice for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. PADILLA. I ask unanimous consent that the order with respect to Judge de Alba's nomination be executed at 5:30 p.m. today; further, that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, when I returned to Connecticut after the shootings in Uvalde and Buffalo, I saw