

oversight hearings on social media, including bringing in top executives to testify and to answer tough questions.

I am deeply concerned, however, that the legislation that we are discussing today could have serious unintended consequences, including undermining our national security. This bill could damage our national intelligence and law enforcement operations by requiring Agencies to disclose every interaction with a social media platform about the activity of a terrorist or a criminal on their platform. This can involve sensitive ongoing investigations and enforcement action, including the terrorist use of social media to recruit Americans to carry out attacks against our homeland.

The bill could also chill effects by executive and legislative branch employees who are working to address online threats and hate speech directed at Americans and communities all across our Nation. In addition to creating new redtape for staff trying to address these very difficult issues, it threatens them with a year in jail for not meeting paperwork deadlines.

Certainly, we must all protect our Nation's First Amendment and the right to speak freely. However, this bill will not accomplish that goal, while potentially undermining our national security.

Mr. President, therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Mr. President, I appreciate the sentiments my Democratic colleague expressed, and I very much appreciate his work and his concerns with respect to Big Tech. I share those concerns.

And I share some optimism today that we will find common ground to work together. The legislation I have put forward simply allows Americans to see when the government is trying to censor them. My colleague suggests that this is because of concern over protections for law enforcement and national security work.

I would like to say this. My legislation contains appropriate exceptions to protect legitimate law enforcement or national security activity and preserve the confidentiality of those communications. But in assuming that the details of those protections are my colleague's only concern, I am happy to work with my colleague to address those concerns and ensure that the core of this legislation, which requires disclosure of government censorship efforts, is quickly enacted.

I hope that Senator PETERS and I can work together and do this because it is too significant to ignore. Our government, at the end of the day, works for the American people, and to ensure that this continues, the First Amendment prohibits the government from controlling what Americans can say or read. But now government is using Big Tech to accomplish such censorship, and without disclosure of such commu-

nications, Americans' free speech rights become a dead letter because there is no way to address improper government efforts to ban speech.

My legislation would preserve these rights by allowing Americans to see when government is trying to silence them. It is a basic element of self-government. I look forward to working with Senator PETERS and his committee to try to make this something that can be acceptable to all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as our Nation celebrated on July 4th, our birthday, with festive block parties, in one example in Baltimore, it turned into tragic gun violence in our own backyards and across the country.

It has been a deadly summer so far, and we have only made it to the middle of July. In my home State of Maryland, in Salisbury, 14-year-old Xavier Cordei Maddox was killed and six others injured during an overnight July 4th block party.

It came just after a horrific mass shooting on July 1st at an annual block party in the South Baltimore Brooklyn neighborhood, which claimed the lives of a young man and a young woman, while injuring 28 others, many of whom are teenagers. Twenty-year-old Kyliis Fagbemi died at an area hospital, and 18-year-old Aaliyah Gonzalez was pronounced dead at the scene.

Just weeks before the shooting, Gonzalez graduated from Glen Burnie High School in Anne Arundel County. Gonzalez had recently decided to enroll at Anne Arundel Community College to stay closer to her family, according to news reports. Now she is dead.

I joined Governor Wes Moore and Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott in a visit to the Brooklyn neighborhood on Independence Day. As I said at that time, this is a dark moment for our community and our country. People who shouldn't have guns have guns, and they are causing irreversible harm.

Public safety always must be our top priority. Sympathy and words are not enough. A comprehensive approach to reducing violence includes cracking down on illegal guns, many of which flow from other States into Maryland. We must also enact stricter regulations on legal gun purchases.

Mayor Scott of Baltimore summarized the need for action:

You're talking about a country where it's easier for a 14-year-old kid to order pieces to put a gun together and go out and use it and commit a crime than it is for me to get Claritin D from CVS. That's what we should be talking about every day in this country.

Maryland has been working on this. The general assembly, with Governor Moore's signature, recently enacted legislation in Annapolis to strengthen gun safety rules regarding carrying concealed weapons, restrict the carrying of firearms in sensitive locations such as schools and healthcare facilities, strengthen safe storage require-

ments for firearms, and raise the age from 18 to 21 to qualify for a handgun permit.

Following the Brooklyn shooting, Mayor Scott stood up a coordinated neighborhood stabilization response within the community under the auspices of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement. This response focused on addressing trauma and stabilizing the neighborhood, in partnership with community-based organizations and city agencies.

Our Federal partners also have been working to make Baltimore safer, with a focus on reducing violent crime and the homicide rate, particularly gun crime. U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Erek Barron recently noted that overall homicides and nonfatal shootings in Baltimore are continuing to trend down significantly. While this is little consolation to the victims of the recent shootings and their families, as of the half-year mark in 2023, homicides were down over 22 percent and nonfatal shootings were down over 12 percent.

In Congress, our Maryland delegation has worked to increase resources and investments to improve public safety in Baltimore and throughout our State. This has included direct resources to local governments, community organizations, colleges, universities, and others.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation to end cyclical violence and protect crime victims and have sponsored legislation that boosts Federal assistance for State and local witness protection programs. I continue to urge the U.S. Justice Department to provide additional resources to combat violent crime in Baltimore and throughout the State of Maryland.

It is important to understand that the horrific and seemingly endless instances of gun violence are not limited to our State. Sadly, over the July 4th holiday, there were at least 538 shootings, in which 199 people were shot and killed, and 520 were shot and wounded, across a total of 43 States and the District of Columbia. This is a national problem that must be addressed at the Federal level in conjunction with State and local measures.

President Biden is correct that we have the power to make a change and end the cycle of violence caused by guns in our society. He recently stated that "as we have seen over the last few days, much more must be done . . . across America to address the epidemic of gun violence that is tearing our communities apart."

When I heard that half the victims in the Brooklyn shooting were under 18 years old, it bought back memories of last summer when a masked shooter in Uvalde, TX, killed 19 children and 2 teachers.

Following that tragedy, Congress formed a bipartisan working group and within a month of the shooting passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. President Biden signed this legislation

into law, which finally broke the decades-long gridlock on gun safety legislation. It is already making a difference with increased funding for community violence intervention and prevention initiatives, including some underway in Baltimore.

The new law strengthens protections for victims of domestic violence by adding convicted domestic violence abusers to background checks. It creates a new source of funding for States to implement “red flag” laws, which help to keep weapons out of the hands of dangerous individuals who should not have access to a firearm. It cracks down on criminals who try to evade licensing requirements and makes clear which gun sellers need to register, conduct background checks, and keep appropriate records. It also strengthens the background check process for those under 21 years of age seeking to buy firearms by ensuring that officials have access to juvenile and mental health records.

Importantly, in July 2022, shortly after the passing of this historic gun safety legislation, the Senate—I will acknowledge that unfortunately it was on a party-line vote—finally confirmed Steven Dettelbach to be the Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF. The ATF had not had a permanent Senate-confirmed Director since 2015, due in part to lobbying by the National Rifle Association to keep this position vacant. The ATF now has a permanent leader in place who can carry out its critical mission to stem the illegal use and trafficking of firearms among other important priorities.

There is no single solution to this deadly problem. We have to attack this from all directions until our children and our neighbors stop being shot. In addition to battling the scourge of illegal weapons and changing the mindset at the community level, there has to be—we have to end the knee-jerk reaction of every disagreement trying to be settled by the use of handguns.

It is time—way past time—for Congress to pass commonsense additional legislation, such as renewing the assault weapons ban; requiring background checks for all gun sales, including unlicensed sellers; eliminating the Charleston loophole that allows for a sale to go forward if a check is not completed in 3 days; banning the importation, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition; raising the minimum age for assault weapon purchases from 18 to 21; requiring the safe storage of guns; and ending gun manufacturers’ immunity from liability.

These are just a few additional examples we could do right here in the U.S. Congress and make a difference. As a community and as a Nation, we are not powerless to act. In fact, we have a responsibility to do something meaningful to save lives.

Most Americans support commonsense gun safety action. Saving lives is

the right thing to do, and it should never be partisan. Gun violence affects both urban and rural communities, and daily gun violence affects both large and small communities, even when it doesn’t make the headlines.

I urge my colleagues to take action now—not wait for another mass shooting—to break this ongoing cycle of violence in so many of our neighborhoods and communities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations: All nominations placed on the Secretary’s desk in the Coast Guard; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s actions.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY’S DESK

IN THE COAST GUARD

*PN667 COAST GUARD nominations (4) beginning STEVEN BLUM, and ending JASON VEARA, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 15, 2023.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

(At the request of Mr. THUNE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, had I been there for the recorded vote, I would have voted no on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 114, Kalpana Kotagal, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2027; the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 141, David M. Uhlmann, of Michigan, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 21, Rachel Bloomekatz, of Ohio, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.●

ISRAEL

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, on behalf of the Senate and House Abraham Accords Caucus co-chairs, it is with tremendous pride that I have the opportunity to welcome and honor my friend His Excellency Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel, ahead of his address to a Joint Meeting of Congress.

Nearly 3 years ago, we witnessed the historic signing of the Abraham Accords, and in that time, the Accords have transformed the Middle East, enhanced Israel’s security, created economic opportunities for our partners and allies in the region, and advanced vital American security interests. On the 75th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, we recognize the profound possibilities the Accords offer to Israel and its Arab neighbors alike.

In 2022, Senators JAMES LANKFORD, CORY BOOKER, JONI ERNST, and I launched the bipartisan Senate Abraham Accords Caucus, alongside the House Abraham Accords Caucus, founded by Representatives CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS, BRAD SCHNEIDER, ANN WAGNER, and DAVID TRONE. Together, we are working to build on the success of these historic agreements, help encourage and deepen partnerships among Israel and our Arab partners, and widen the circle of peace to new countries. We have advanced bipartisan legislation to deepen security cooperation between the United States, Israel, and our Arab partners and are developing initiatives to further cooperative and sustainable development partnerships in the areas of energy security, water infrastructure, trade, cybersecurity, and emerging technologies.

In January, seven members of the Senate Abraham Accords Caucus traveled to Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Israel, the first-ever congressional delegation to visit these four nations since the signing of the Accords, where we saw firsthand how normalization is transforming the region. President Herzog believes in this vision, declaring: “The Abraham Accords proved above all else how the courage of leaders and nations can open a window to a world that had previously seemed unattainable, and how much space there is for momentum and growth when we choose to change paradigms and learn about each other.” As we celebrate 75 years of the enduring friendship between the people of the United States and Israel, we are also committed to advancing Israel’s integration into the Middle East in pursuit of a more peaceful region.

President Herzog, we welcome you on this historic occasion and reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our two nations.

TRIBUTE TO MITCH AND LILLY ZIMMERMAN

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today in celebration of Mitch and Lilly Zimmerman, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Wyoming’s 2023 honorees.