

BLUMENTHAL, and so many others, we passed the first major gun safety bill in three decades. While this bill was a long-overdue step in the right direction, we have to do a lot more.

Today, we have an opportunity to come together and pass another life-saving measure.

I yield to the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, the chair of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank Senator SCHUMER for his remarks.

Imagine, if you will a family event that you look forward to each year. That was the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, IL.

Highland Park, a leafy suburb of Chicago, is a wonderful community, truly a community. And every year on the Fourth of July, families ask their sons and daughters to put on that patriotic T-shirt, carry the little flag, stand out and enjoy this commemoration of the birth of the United States of America.

Well, a little over a year ago, that Fourth of July parade became a terrible day for so many families.

Last year, in Highland Park, IL, a shooter on a rooftop, with an assault rifle, was able to fire 83 rounds in 60 seconds—83 rounds in 60 seconds—killing 7 and wounding dozens before law enforcement could even identify where he was. One of those was a little 8-year-old boy, a twin, who will be unfortunately disabled for the rest of his life because of the injuries that he sustained.

This mass shooting in my home State of Illinois was one of hundreds across America last year. Since 2020, the United States has suffered from over 600 mass shootings every year, almost 2 a day.

I ask those who are listening to my remarks to reflect on one fact: There is no other country on Earth not engaged in active war where this type of killing occurs on a daily basis.

In Highland Park and in communities across America, shooters have used military-style assault weapons to cause irreversible harm in just a matter of minutes.

I listened to my friend from Wyoming object to the effort to bring this legislation to the floor and cite the fact that we were being disrespectful to gun owners. He made reference to ranchers and farmers in his State and how it is important for them to have firearms. I don't quarrel with that, but I do have to ask, in all seriousness: 83 rounds in 60 seconds? That is what a farmer needs? That is what a rancher needs? I think not. This is a military weapon designed to kill people. That is it. It is designed to kill massive numbers of people. I don't think that is part of farming or ranching in modern America.

Already this year, there have been 627 mass shootings, including the October 25 attack in Lewiston, ME, where a gunman opened fire and killed 18 people. Literally, the entire State of Maine was on alert, wondering if this shooter would have another victim.

Americans are rightfully afraid when they see their friends and neighbors killed in schools, in places of worship, in bowling alleys, at work, at the mall, at grocery stores. People are asking: What is safe? Mothers and fathers are asking: Is it safe to send our children to school?

Is it safe to send their children to school?

What can we do to stop this madness? It is madness. Firearms are now the leading cause of death of children in the United States. Firearms—the leading cause of death of children in the United States of America.

Mass shootings with assault weapons are a uniquely American phenomenon. Continuing to allow firearms meant for war to be used on the streets is disgraceful.

Last year, Congress took critical steps on gun safety reform with the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, but we must do more. When a shooter is armed with an assault weapon, the number of deaths in a mass shooting is, on average, twice as high. If we can prevent that many deaths when these tragedies strike by passing an assault weapons ban, what are we waiting for?

Finally, I would like to take a moment to talk about my former colleague and true trailblazer, the late Senator Dianne Feinstein, whose voice and leadership in this fight is an inspiration to us all.

Senator Feinstein experienced the devastation of gun violence firsthand the day that George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk were gunned down in the San Francisco City Hall. That was carved into her memory and inspired her response.

In 1994, an assault weapons ban was passed and considered a major step forward. Senator Feinstein's work in the Senate and then Congressman CHUCK SCHUMER's work in the House made it a reality. Congress failed to reauthorize this critical legislation—a big mistake.

Today, we can honor Senator Feinstein's legacy with the lives we will save by bringing forward this bill. After Highland Park, I said that I hope, for our children's sake, we don't run away from the problem. That community and so many others are counting on us to stand up and face this issue head on. I urge my colleagues to unite and do what is right for the safety of the American people. Let's pass the assault weapons ban.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Alabama.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the military's new illegal abortion policy.

Last November, I got word from the Pentagon that it was planning on replacing a 40-year law that was passed in this building, about abortion in our military, that has worked perfectly for 40 years—no complaints. But our Presi-

dent, in his wisdom, decided to change that abortion policy with a memo.

So, because of that, I warned the Pentagon: Don't do this. Send this new policy through the Senate, and let's vote on it. Let's represent our colleagues. Let's represent the people back home who sent us up here. They elect us to do that, to make decisions for them, to represent them.

I said in writing that, if they imposed this new policy, I would put a hold on senior nominations in the military. That is the only power that we have in the minority to get the attention of the majority here in the Senate.

I hated to do it. These people needed promotions, but somebody needs to wake up in the White House and the Pentagon that they cannot dictate policy here in the U.S. Senate.

Send it over. Let's vote on it.

So I put a hold, 11 months ago, on admirals and generals and civil nominees. A few months went by—a few months being 11—and we have had that hold ever since they put this policy in place.

But somebody had to stand up to what was going on. So I did it. I stood up, knowing that I am 100 percent military. My dad was in the military. I was a military brat. I believe in our military. It is the No. 1 institution in this country because, if we don't have peace and security for the American citizens, we are in trouble.

Secretary Austin knew that I would hold these nominations. He knew it, but he decided to go ahead and do it anyway. It was his choice. The current leadership in the Pentagon seems to think that taxpayer-funded abortion is more important than military nominations.

Now, let's get this straight. This was in a policy that we had for 40 years that was about rape, incest, and harm to the mom. It had worked for 40 years, but they decided to change that because they thought they could without the consent of the Senate.

Since then, there has been absolutely no negotiation from my Democratic colleagues or the Biden administration. I have had a brief phone call a couple of times with the Secretary of Defense, but no negotiations at all. You would think, if they were really concerned about our military in a trying time in which we have all of the world which they have created, that they would have called me: Let's talk about this. Let's work it out. We need promotions.

Zero. Zero communications. I have been willing to negotiate the entire time.

So, instead, the Democrats have spent 11 months attacking me for trying to get them to do the right thing and to stand up for our military. No, they didn't want any of that. They wanted it their way or the highway.

Unfortunately, last month, even some of my Republican colleagues attacked me—and attacked me personally—here on this floor. I could see how this thing was going. They call themselves, you know, military—people

that support the military. There is nobody, again, who supports the military any more than me. But they are currently in the military, and they were standing up for their colleagues, which is fine. But I can stand and we all can stand for the life of the unborn and for our military. You can do both.

Unfortunately, the Democrats don't want to do that. They do not like the unborn, and they don't care anything about the military, or they would have done something about this. They were saying these guys and women need promotions. Well, these young unborn will never have a chance for a promotion because they want to kill them before they are born, which is absolutely amazing to me.

I have been asking the Pentagon to support evidence of changing this policy, again, for almost a year. They said it is because of recruiting: We need to be able to recruit more people, more women, because we need a better abortion policy.

Again, there was zero evidence that this was going to help in recruiting. And, folks, recruiting in the military has been an absolute, total disaster—the worst in the history of this country. We don't have anybody—hardly anybody—who wants to join a volunteer military. It has only gotten worse since this policy went into effect, which they started in February.

I have asked the Pentagon how many people have used this policy since it has gone into place. They refused to answer. They have given me no information at all.

I have also explained on this floor many times that this policy is illegal. Now, if it was sent over here and we voted on it and it passed, it is what it is. But that didn't happen. It wasn't going to happen because they didn't have the votes. They didn't have the votes to pass it. So we have an immoral, illegal policy that has no basis in facts.

The world is a much more dangerous place today because of some of the things that have happened, such as this abortion policy being put in by Joe Biden and CHUCK SCHUMER himself. It has become much more dangerous, even since we put this policy in place last year.

Over the last 3 years, we have seen some of the worst humiliations in the history of our military. President Biden waved the white flag of surrender in Afghanistan: We are leaving; we want out. That is without even helping people who are Americans and who have helped Americans for 20 years. We abandoned them.

Just 2 months later, Vladimir Putin began massing forces on his border with Ukraine. I went to Ukraine right before the war started in Ukraine and talked to President Zelenskyy himself, who said: We need help. We need people at the border. If you will send materials, they won't come in.

This administration wouldn't listen. We got out of the way and let them

come in. Since then, by the way, we spent 100 billion of the taxpayer dollars. Now we want to spend \$100 billion more. Joe Biden failed to deter President Putin.

Joe Biden failed to deter Hamas because of his support of Iran—his appeasement of Iran for the last 3 years, giving them money. Iran is flush with cash now. Hamas is one of their proxies. Joe Biden has been softer on Iran than any President in American history. There is no question that America is less safe today than it was before Joe Biden and CHUCK SCHUMER took control of Washington, DC. There is no question. The facts speak for themselves.

We have weakened our military, and Democrats in Congress have been more than happy to go along with all of these policies. There are no complaints from my Democratic colleagues.

I will just mention a few examples.

Joe Biden drove out 8,000—just think about this. We drove out 8,000 people in the military because they would not take a vaccine—8,000 people who love this country. Democrats in the Senate refused to reinstate them and give them backpay when we voted on it about a year ago. Now the Pentagon and my colleagues are begging them to please come back. We can't get anybody to take a job in the military. Please come back. It is no surprise that most of these heroes whom we ran out because of the vaccine will not come back.

Now, I heard that Senator DURBIN now wants illegal immigrants to serve in the military because we can't find enough Americans.

Did I just not hear on the floor that Senator DURBIN and Senator SCHUMER are against assault weapons?

I heard that. Everybody has got their opinion. But they want to turn around and give an assault weapon to a Chinese or a Russian or Iranian who is coming into this country illegally to protect the American citizens in the United States of America. Have we lost our minds? We have absolutely lost it when it comes to protecting the citizens of this country.

Is anybody in the White House asking why we can't recruit anymore? It is absolutely amazing to me.

Here is another example. Our Navy is not building enough ships that are required by law—that we passed. We are not building them. We are worried more about climate change and EV cars.

Folks, we had better start protecting our borders and our country or we are not going to have a country. I have never seen anything like it. The Pentagon has become more distracted from its core mission by things like diversity, equity, and inclusion. Hmm. The Pentagon just asked for \$114 million.

Now, I have been told during these last 11 months when I have been attacked by the Democrats—and I have been attacked every day by the Democrats: Oh, this is not a “woke” mili-

tary. Wait a minute. We are not teaching social justice programs in the military, but we want \$114 million more to give for diversity, equity, and inclusion. We don't even know how much the abortion travel memo has cost.

More and more veterans are telling their kids: Don't join this woke military. I hear it every time I go out on the road and talk to groups of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. I mean, it is not about party. It is about an institution that has been sacred to all of us in this country for 247 years, but now it is under attack. It is under attack by the politicians. This list goes on and on about the problems in the military. It is an absolute disaster.

Then, last week, Senator SCHUMER stooped to a new low. The House and the Senate, every year, pass a budget independently. Then we bring it together, and we vote on the discrepancies to build one bill together with the House—voted on by people on each side. I was involved in that, but it was a sham. The conference is supposed to report it out as a single bill after we put it together, but we had no vote. We had no vote. The conference committee was just brought in for pictures. All of the confirmations were done by the leadership, and Senator SCHUMER got the No. 1 vote. The abortion policy was on the House side. It got kicked out. We were supposed to vote on it. I had the votes to get it done, but he knew that; so now we have an illegal abortion policy. This bill was written in the back rooms, which is like a lot of things that are done here, not by many but by a few.

I came here to represent the people of Alabama. If you are not given a vote, why even send people up here? I didn't come here to outsource my job to the Pentagon or the White House or, frankly, to the leadership of either side—it doesn't make any difference—Democrat or Republican.

This issue of taxpayer-funded abortion could have been resolved through the NDAA, and whatever the outcome, I am fine; but bring it to the floor, and let's vote on it. That is our job. But that doesn't happen. It is not happening because Senator SCHUMER knew that he couldn't get it passed. That is how DC works. Abortion is so important to Senator SCHUMER that he is not letting us vote on this. Therefore, there no longer appears to be any short-term path to ending the Pentagon's illegal abortion policy. Some other policy will take time for me to work through the process, but that doesn't happen overnight.

So, yesterday, I announced that I would change my tactics and let the promotions go through—promotions that they needed, that our military needed. But, again, Senator SCHUMER and his colleagues could care less. They held their feet to the fire—no negotiation. But I am going to continue to hold the four-star generals.

People say: Why would you insist on holding the four stars? We have got 11 of them.

Today, we have 44 four-stars in the military. In World War II, we had 7—44 to 7. We had 12 million with 7 four-stars. Today, we have 44 four-stars with 2 million. It doesn't make sense—too many chiefs. So we are going to hold those four stars. We can bring them up one at a time, but they need to be vetted. We need to know who is running our military. These jobs are too important to rubberstamp.

We need to keep fighting to make our military stronger and stronger. The fight for the integrity of our military leadership will continue as long as I am here. The fight to keep politics out of the most sacred institution will continue. The fight to protect Senate and executive branch overreach will continue. Senator SCHUMER can rig it all he wants, but this fight is not over. We will continue to take it to the American people because elections have consequences; and don't think next year's is not very, very important.

I am not going to stop fighting for these things, and I am not going to stop fighting for the American people. That is the reason we are here. A lot of people forget that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I sit here as I have listened to Senator TUBERVILLE say that the world is a more dangerous place. He has spoken about how we have weakened our military. Senator TUBERVILLE is right on that, and one of the principal reasons is because of Senator TUBERVILLE's own actions. He has held up hundreds of military nominations, hundreds of our military leaders, who have not made it to the posts they were assigned to.

It is clear that it was a grave mistake for one Senator to hold our military promotion system hostage over his personal disagreement with a Department of Defense policy. We need our commanders in the Pacific to deter China and our service vice chiefs to lead the military. I am relieved that he has released most of his holds, but he continues to weaken our military readiness and to undermine both recruiting and retention.

The Senate should not go home for the holidays until we confirm the remaining nominees. This Senator has held up nominations for nearly a year. It undermines our national defense, and it is unfair to our military and to our military families. He insults our military, and then he turns around and tries to blame President Biden for his own actions. The hypocrisy of this Senator is truly breathtaking. We have got to stay, and we have got to get these military leaders confirmed.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

Right now, Mr. President, we are seeing one of the deadliest years of gun violence in recent history. There have been more than 600 mass shootings since the beginning of this year alone. That is nearly two mass shootings a

day. And assault weapons have become the firearm of choice in more and more mass shootings over the decades. Assault weapons kill with deadly efficiency. When an assault weapon is used in a shooting, more than double the number of people on average are shot and more than 50 percent are killed.

Let me be clear: These military-style assault weapons are weapons of war, and they have no place in our communities. Our kids are growing up seeing military rifles in civilian hands on the streets and in their classrooms. Since 2011, the rate of children dying from firearms has skyrocketed by nearly 90 percent.

Enough is enough. It has never been more obvious that Congress needs to ban assault weapons. This isn't some farfetched idea. We have tried it. Senator Dianne Feinstein championed an assault weapons ban, and she got it passed into law. It was in place for a full decade—from 1994 to 2004—and it worked. Researchers from Quinnipiac University, from the NYU School of Medicine, and more have found that, while the ban was in place, there was a meaningful reduction in the number of mass shootings. But the law sunsetted in 2004; and in the following two decades, there have been more and more and more mass shootings.

Today, we must act to reinstate a national ban on assault weapons. It is hard to overstate the urgency of this issue. From Sandy Hook to Parkland and from Orlando to Uvalde, these horrific mass shootings all involved an assault weapon. This fall shooting in Lewiston, ME, also involved a powerful assault rifle and was the deadliest shooting of this year.

After each of these tragedies, Americans ask: What will it take for Congress to act? How many more communities and how many more families will lose loved ones before the laws are changed?

We mourn the individuals lost to gun violence. We mourn the families left behind when a beloved son or daughter or mom or dad is cut down by gun violence, and we mourn the communities torn apart by gun violence. But they don't need our thoughts and prayers nearly as much as they need Congress to do its job and take action.

We have shown we can act in moments of crisis. Last year, after 21 children and teachers were killed in Uvalde, we passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. That was the most sweeping gun violence prevention legislation in nearly 30 years, but it didn't go far enough. This is another moment of crisis. Today, we have another chance, with this vote, to make it easier for Americans to move through their daily lives without fear of being gunned down by weapons of war.

I urge Congress to reinstate the assault weapons ban that Senator Feinstein secured 30 years ago and that would help save lives today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I also am here to talk about gun violence, but before I get to that, I want to address some of the comments we heard from Senator TUBERVILLE.

I think the people of this country and the people who are visiting our Chamber today need to understand that, for 10 months, Senator TUBERVILLE has been playing politics. He has literally held the entire—entire—military chain of command hostage. He was offered a vote on his policy; he turned it down. He was the subject of a rules exception passed through my committee on a 9–7 vote that would have put all of the nominations together. Even then, he kept standing his ground.

Finally, when he realized that a number of his Republican colleagues who came to the floor repeatedly were going to vote for that change, he finally relented. But it was the words of the military families and the veterans' families that made the biggest difference—the spouses who had put their own jobs on hold, who had left their jobs teaching school because they thought they were going to move, and the people who didn't even know where to put their parents in assisted living because they didn't know. These are military families who are serving our country.

And national security? He held up numerous key personnel at a time when there are conflicts all over the world.

Still, it is important to note, which he admitted on the floor today, he is holding up 11 four-star officers, including the head of CYBERCOM, at a time when Vladimir Putin and other tyrants see that cyber as a weapon of war. He is holding up the commander—the commander—of the Pacific Air command. So he continues his hold.

And, yes, we will not go home for Christmas until we finish our work and get through these 11 additional officers being held.

Let me just end this moment by quoting him from the hallways yesterday from a reporter. He was asked about this.

He said:

I have loved to have five downs in football instead of four, but you can't do it. It's got to be fair for everybody.

He was asked if he had regrets.

It was pretty much a draw. I mean, they didn't get what they wanted.

Really? Who is "they"? I guess the "they" are the military members, the servicemembers, who serve our country.

And my last message on this front is that this is not a game, Senator TUBERVILLE. This is not a game. This is not a football game. These are real people's lives and the security of our country, and I am pleased that we have gotten through these 425 nominees, but there are clearly more to go.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 494

Mr. President, on the subject of gun violence, it seems we know as Americans that, every week, there is another