

We had “Remain in Mexico.” We ended catch-and-release. We had title 42. And we were doing what the Border Patrol has said for three decades they need: a physical barrier.

People commonly called it “Build the wall.” And wherever a wall could be built, there was a plan to build it, and they were working on it. And having people working on that border made certain that you didn’t have those border crossings.

Border Patrol has also said that they need better surveillance because, right now, the cartels have better technology than our Border Patrol. Think about this. With the cartels—multinational, big business—you don’t cross the border any way, shape, or form—sex trafficking, human trafficking, gangs, drug trafficking. Nobody and nothing comes across that border without the cartel getting their cut.

That is what is happening, and our Border Patrol is saying: Here is what we need. There is a way to fix this. We can fix this issue.

The Border Patrol says: Look, let us enforce the laws that are on the books. We have immigration laws. Let’s enforce them.

So you see why it is frustrating to them when you have a President and a Department of Homeland Security, and the President is signing 94 Executive actions that make it harder for them to do their job. It defies common sense.

Eliminate the monetary incentives that are out there. The cartel feels like they have a great business model. They get people to the border. People raise their hands, claim asylum. Then the U.S. taxpayer picks up the tab, buys them a plane ticket, a bus ticket, and gets them wherever they are wanting to go in the country.

When was the last time the Federal Government did something like that for you? Wherever you want to go, we will give you a ticket. We will get you there. We will provide you food, housing, shelter.

Look at those economic incentives and remove those.

As I said, “Remain in Mexico,” building the wall, those are things that the Border Patrol—those are the things that people who live on the border—tell us need to be done.

I was down here earlier this week talking about this trip and talked about a visit I had at a ranch. It was out in Uvalde. I met with people from Kinney County, TX, and from Uvalde, and some ranchers, some farmers, some business owners. Right now, with this border policy, it is making it very difficult for them to ranch. Some of them have cattle on their ranches. The migrants come in. They cut fences. So they are bearing that cost of fences.

Some are farmers with watermelons, lettuce, and cabbage, and their fields are getting torn up. Pecan orchards are being run through. And they are saying: Help us.

One rancher looked at me, and he said: Marsha, how long can we continue

this, and what is the endgame? Because he has people who die and they end up on his ranch, he finds it hard to do their cattle business.

We need to think carefully about this. The Border Patrol has said these are steps that would stop the chaos. This would bring some law and order back to the southern border, but the Biden administration is going to have to say: We got this policy wrong. We need to take these steps. We need to honor the service of the Border Patrol. We need to respect the people who live and work on this border. We need to make certain that we build that wall, that we secure this area.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this is becoming a regular appearance on the Senate floor to talk about Social Security. It is something that most Americans think that Congress supports almost unanimously.

It is a program that has been with us. President Roosevelt, on August 14, 1935, signed the Social Security Act. Out of that came Medicare, when a Democratic Congress in 1965, with President Johnson’s signature, signed it.

We know what Medicare means. We know what Social Security means for people who live longer, healthier lives. No matter your income, no matter if you have been a Senator for 20 years, no matter if you are a CEO, no matter if you are a UAW member and at a Ford plant in Avon, no matter if you are a low-income worker at the Hilton Hotel on West Market in Akron, no matter your work, you are eligible, at a certain age, for Social Security and Medicare.

So what is the debate about? Well, the debate is philosophical, and I am not even sure what. It is partly my conservative colleagues who generally want to privatize Medicare and Social Security. For them, it seems to be something philosophic or ideological or sometimes it is just people wanting to support the insurance industry because if you privatize Medicare and Social Security, yes, it will help the insurance companies; yes, it will help the banks. If you privatize the VA, like many want to do—the Veterans’ Administration—undermining what veterans have earned by serving their country, it may help some private sector corporations. It will help pad their bottom line. It will help many CEOs make even more money, but it is wrong. When work has dignity, people have a secure retirement, veterans have benefits, and pen-

sions are protected, Americans can count on Medicare and count on Social Security.

A secure retirement shouldn’t be a partisan issue. It wasn’t a partisan issue, particularly in the 1930s. It is not a partisan issue to the American people. I don’t think you can tell a Republican from a Democrat who is 70 years old or 80 years old drawing Social Security and Medicare. They know they have earned it. They have paid into it for decades. As I have said, they have earned it.

It is one of the most unifying institutions in the country. Americans want to protect Social Security and Medicare. They want to make those programs stronger, Americans do. But elected officials—far too many people on this side of the aisle, as the Senator from Connecticut knows—far too many people from this side of the aisle think that we should privatize those programs; that they will be more efficient or some such philosophical jargon that they throw forward. But we know what will happen: insurance companies will make more money, banks will make more money, and people who have worked in this country and played by the rules all their lives get squeezed.

Today, down the hall—especially straight down the hall in the House of Representatives down there—the Republicans are threatening, in order to raise the debt limit—the debt limit is simply, we should pay our bills. The Trump administration and all administrations have run this deficit up. We should pay the bills. That is what it is about. They are refusing to pay the bills our Nation owes, and they are saying that if we don’t do what they want to do, then they are going to stop Social Security checks from going out. They are going to try to privatize Social Security.

They want to take this country and the American economy to the brink of default. They want to leverage their fiscal lunacy. It really is leveraging their fiscal lunacy, frankly, to cut your Social Security. It is that simple.

Then, as I said, there is privatizing Social Security. The details differ. The terms may change, but the goal is the same.

I have been in the Senate now, this is the beginning—it is my 17th year. Every couple of years, a few of the “wunderkinds” on that side of the aisle want to try to find a way to privatize Social Security, privatize Medicare, and privatize the Veterans’ Administration. It is nothing less than an attempt to go back on a bedrock promise.

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

The Senator from Nevada understands that people pay into Social Security every paycheck. They tend to pay into Medicare every—well, that is not actually true. If you are really, really, really rich, you only pay into Social Security for the first part of the year because you have already paid enough for the year, and it is some philosophy that I don’t really understand.

But it is a bedrock promise to all of us. You pay in; you get those benefits.

Last year, I introduced a resolution—the Senator from Nevada cosponsored it—affirming the Senate's commitment to protecting and expanding Social Security. It was pretty simple. It simply said we affirm, we pledge we will protect Social Security and Medicare from any kinds of cuts from the far right that doesn't believe in the program. Almost every Democrat signed on. Not one Republican signed on. Not one Republican committed to our promise, re-committed to our promise to the American people, that if you work hard all your life, Social Security will be there for you.

So Americans shouldn't have to worry that politicians, secure with their government pensions, are going to try to take away their retirement. I urge my colleagues to do what the American people want us to do overwhelmingly. They want us to protect and expand Social Security and Medicare.

As I said, just look down the hall in the House of Representatives. There is a new majority there—a new majority controlled by the far right—of what used to be a pretty centrist Republican Party, from the far right, that—when ever they try to privatize Social Security and Medicare, they get all kinds of contributions from the rightwing and from Wall Street and from some big healthcare companies and some big energy companies and all that, and it is wrong. We know it is wrong. Whether it is Nevada, whether it is Las Vegas or Cleveland, whether it is Reno or Columbus, whether it is Carson City or Dayton, we know that overwhelmingly people in this country want a strong Social Security that will always be there for our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids. They want a Medicare that will provide healthcare to people regardless of your wealth, regardless of your income, regardless of your station in life.

That is my pledge. I know the Senators on the floor from Connecticut and Nevada also support that commitment and pledge. It is where we are as a country. It is not, unfortunately, where some of my colleagues sit.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### MASS SHOOTINGS

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, this week, the country has been riveted again by scenes of mass shootings, this time in California. I spoke on the phone to my seatmate Senator PADILLA just a few days ago, and it is a conversation that I have had with the Presiding Officer. It is a conversation I have had with Senators from Colorado and Virginia. We all now increasingly come from States where we have seen dozens of people murdered at one time in these horrific, horrific mass shootings.

I am proud that in the wake of the Uvalde massacre and the shooting in Buffalo, last summer this Congress came together and finally passed, after 30 years of inaction, legislation that begins to make our communities safer, but what we saw in Monterey and Half Moon Bay is just confirmation—reaffirmation—that we have enormous work to do.

Let me first tell you the good news, and that is this: The legislation we passed last summer, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, is saving lives as we speak. If you recall, that legislation set up a new background check process for younger buyers of weapons in this country. It eliminated the boyfriend loophole so that no domestic abusers in this country can get their hands on weapons. It gave funding to States to set up red flag laws. It strengthened our background check system. It is a set of really important changes.

A bipartisan group of us went out to West Virginia just a few weeks ago—Senator CORNYN, Senator TILLIS, Senator CAPITO—three Republicans—and myself and Senator MANCHIN—to see the background check system at work. We went out and sat right next to the background checks operators in their cubicles, and we watched them process these new background checks that are required because of the law we passed.

We got briefings from the FBI in which they laid out for us the details of incredibly dangerous individuals, individuals who were in crisis, many of them under 21, who would have gotten a weapon in their moment of crisis had it not been for the legislation we passed.

I also saw how diligent these background checks operators were, how serious they were about their job, how proud they were of their job, because they knew that in their hands they held the safety of the American public; that every time they click that button, there was an individual walking out of the store with a gun, and they wanted to make sure of two things: First, they were protecting the American public—make sure that only those who were qualified under the law, who weren't deemed to be too dangerous, were getting those weapons. The second thing they were concerned about—and every single one of them told us this—they were there to uphold the Second Amendment as well. They were there to make sure—to make sure—of the guarantee that if you are a law-abiding citizen, you can get a legal weapon.

I think all of us who visited were really impressed by the work that our background checks operators do and were confident that the bill we passed last summer is saving lives as we speak. But everybody in this country knows it is not enough. Everybody in this country knows it was just a start. I hope this year we will be able to build on the progress we made last year to find additional common ground because what you are seeing in California

and what you have seen all across the country are individuals—largely men, mostly younger men—whose brains are breaking, and in that moment of crisis, they are reaching for a weapon, they are seeing their path to exorcise those demons as running through an episode of mass slaughter.

But it is important to note that this is not the only country in the world where brains break. This is not the only country in the world where people have paranoid ideas. This is not the only country in the world with severe mental illness. So the story of American mass murder is not a story of mental illness; it is not a story of paranoia; it is not a story of grudge or grievance because every other country has that. But only in the United States does that grudge, grievance, paranoia, and mental illness lead to mass assassination. That is because in this country we are flooded with weapons—and not just any weapons but weapons of mass destruction.

These killers, they use the same set of weapons, semiautomatic weapons with attachable clips that can fire 300 bullets out of 1 cartridge. They all use the same set of weapons because they are trying to kill as many people as quickly as possible. Only in this country can those individuals, who have decided to take out their anger, their grudge, and their grievance through mass murder, get their hands on a weapon that will allow them to do that. Other countries don't allow that to happen.

I have told this story many times before, but on the same day that Sandy Hook occurred, there was an equal number of students attacked in a school in Henan Province, China. Every kid who was shot in Sandy Hook died. Why? I won't describe it for you on the floor today, but the damage that a bullet fired from an AR-15 does to the body of a little child is irrevocable. It literally tears you apart, the bullet is going so fast through your body. So none of those kids survived. But in Henan Province, China, every child who was attacked survived. Why? Because in Henan Province, the attacker, who was just as unhinged, likely, as the attacker in Sandy Hook, had a knife and not a gun. Knives can do damage, too, but not as much damage as an AR-15.

So States that are more serious about keeping assault weapons off the streets and guns away from dangerous people have a lot less gun crime—a lot less. Countries that are more serious about making sure that people who have these grudges, grievances, and paranoid ideas don't get their hands on dangerous weapons—they have almost rock-bottom levels of gun violence.

I think we are at a moment in time where Americans know this. Americans are sick and tired of the status quo. That is why we were able to pass this law last summer. It was a start—a really important start—but it was not a result of any of the advocates in the Senate perfecting their argument; it was a