

So rather than just sitting by and watching this happen, they actually made it worse. They fomented this crisis with open border policies they started implementing on day one.

And after that, they didn't want to acknowledge the existence of a crisis, let alone work with this side of the aisle to try to craft solutions to address it. But because of their malfeasance, the border crisis has grown and grown and grown. And it continues to put the American people at risk.

I believe that a terrorist attack on American soil again is not a matter of "if" but a matter of "when" as a result of the fact that terrorist organizations have facilitated the entry of their allies and supporters across the border into the United States.

President Biden's policies are responsible for these terrorists crossing the border and slipping into our communities. They are responsible for the fentanyl that has taken the lives of 74,000 Americans last year alone, the leading cause of death of young people between the ages of 18 and 45. And they are responsible for the humanitarian crisis that is burdening communities thousands of miles from the southern border.

Thanks to President Biden and his policies, every community is now a border community. But the threats that come across the border don't just stay at the border or even border States, like mine. They fan out across the country.

Regardless of how many executive actions that the President takes today or how forceful his rhetoric is when he talks about the border, the American people see this 11th-hour conversion for what it is: an election year stunt.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President and colleagues, this is a speech I have been thinking about giving for a long time. I think it is a speech somebody needs to give, but it is hard. There is some really awful stuff I am going to talk about, things that cut deep when we think about who we are, when we think about how we handle crises and emergencies, about the things we need to do as a human race to feel safe.

I want to talk to you today about what happened on May 24, 2022—almost 2 years ago—at an elementary school in Uvalde, TX. After 2 years of review, investigation, hand-wringing, grief, and anger, we now have as full a picture of what happened that day as we ever will, and we need to talk about it because it is important.

Here is what we know: 1 hour and 17 minutes after a gunman entered Robb Elementary School and opened fire on two classrooms full of children, 54 minutes after a school police officer got a call from his wife, who said that she had been shot in her classroom, 38 minutes after a 9-1-1 dispatcher told police there were confirmed victims in the classrooms, only then did a team of officers finally enter room 111 at Robb Elementary School and kill the gunman—1 hour and 17 excruciating minutes. The kids inside those classrooms—9, 10, 11 years old—and their teachers waited to be saved by the people whose job it was to keep them safe.

The students in rooms 111 and 112 had prepared for this moment. They had practiced what they should do if something like this were to happen: Drop to the floor. Sit along the walls farthest from the door and the windows. Crouch under desks, countertops—anywhere you could be safe.

They stayed silent—so silent that the officers on the other side of the door thought that there couldn't possibly be children inside. Surely, they would be crying out. But they were doing, in fact, exactly what they were told to do. They were doing their part.

As the minutes went on, outside the classroom stood not 10 armed officers, not 50, not even 100. Outside the classroom and surrounding the school, 376 armed officers were present—outside the classroom.

Inside the classroom, 10-year-old Ailyn Ramos hugged her friend Leann Garcia to stop her from screaming out in pain.

Inside the classroom, Elsa Avila, a teacher in room 109, tried to stay conscious after a bullet ripped through her stomach. Her students whispered to her:

Miss, we love you. You're going to be OK.

They told each other:

Don't let her go to sleep.

Inside the classroom, 10-year-old Khloie Torres and Miah Cerrillo called 9-1-1, begging for help.

Inside the classroom, Khloie and Miah's classmate Kendall Olivarez sobbed in pain as she lay stuck under their teacher, who had already been killed.

As 33 students and 3 of their teachers spent an hour and 17 minutes trapped in a room with an active shooter, there were hundreds of armed adults who stood outside. Doing what? Well, they were doing the things that would naturally occur to you if you heard that a man with military weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition is just around the corner from you on a killing spree. They were scared. They were disorganized. They were panicked. They were frozen. There were good people amongst those 376, but they were all providing natural reactions given the circumstances. But that does not excuse their inaction. Of course it doesn't.

The adults—the adults—in Uvalde had bought into this idea that more se-

curity, more men with guns in schools would keep those kids safe. In fact, the Uvalde School District placed so much faith in the ability of armed security to keep schools safe that it had its own school police department. But all of those men with guns didn't protect those kids. The opposite happened.

How on Earth could this happen? How could there be 300 armed law enforcement officers doing nothing for so long as children called 9-1-1, as parents ran to the school and begged to be allowed in? How could those officers wait 1 hour and 17 minutes when the entire point of having a school police department full of men with guns is to stop something like this from happening?

Earlier this year, the Justice Department released a report to try to answer some of those questions. They spent 20 months reviewing hours of body cam footage, audio recordings, training logs. They interviewed 260 people who were there that day. The final report paints a damning and infuriating picture of what went wrong, and I think it is important to talk about it because it shows how flawed this promise is—this promise that good guys with guns is all that is necessary to stop bad guys with guns.

At 11:35, Sergeant Daniel Coronado heard gunfire and ran inside the school. Another round of shots grazed two officers who had been approaching the classrooms with him. One of those officers kept moving toward the classroom, but he turned back when realized that none of his colleagues had followed him.

Again, this reaction from those initial police officers is understandable. There was a madman inside that classroom. Instinct tells you to run away, not to run toward danger.

Then confusion set in—the second predictable element of an active shooter crisis. Sergeant Coronado relayed an unconfirmed report that the gunman was contained and had barricaded himself inside a classroom, leading officers to believe that they were dealing with a barricaded subject, not an active shooter. Active shooter training says rush into the classroom, but they didn't think it was an active shooter, so they didn't act with urgency.

Eventually, they just couldn't continue to rationalize standing idle because it was a barricaded suspect. They continued to hear gunfire. They learned that one of the officers' wives was shot inside the classroom. They heard over their radios that there were victims. Common sense would have told them that there were kids inside these classrooms. Forty minutes into this massacre, there should have been no doubt what they were dealing with. This was an active shooter. This was the time to enter the classroom, but instead they continued to wait.

Now, part of the confusion was that there was no clear command structure; there was no one to give orders. There were probably lots of men with guns who wanted to go in but were told that

they couldn't. But there really was no excuse. At one point, the officers claimed that they needed keys, but they admitted not a single officer even walked up to the door to check if it was unlocked. Why? Because they all knew that inside that classroom was a young man equipped with military-style weaponry that could kill them—that would kill them the instant they opened that door.

Finally, at 12:50 p.m., 77 minutes after the shooter entered the school, a team of officers breached the room and killed the gunman. Two children still had a pulse when they were rescued. Eva Mireles, the teacher whose husband was on the scene, died in an ambulance that never even left the school.

One gunman, 376 armed officers—1 hour and 17 minutes of avoidable, indescribable horror; 19 children and 2 teachers dead—a colossal failure.

So what does this tell us? What can we learn from this? Because we are commanded to learn something from these tragedies.

I know human instinct. I know we have a biological inclination to want to fight fire with fire. So our first reaction, when we see the threat of a deranged young man with a gun, is to mirror that threat with our defensive reaction. If a gunman steps into a building where our kids are, we want them to be met with equal force: Confront a bad guy with a gun with a good guy with a gun.

At some level, in here, I get that that makes sense. I understand this reaction, because I have felt it. I have had kids in these post-Sandy Hook public schools for the last 12 years. And when we wrote the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the most comprehensive gun legislation in 30 years, it made important changes to our gun laws and invested in mental health, but it also provided \$300 million for school hardening. So I am on the record supporting putting more security in our schools.

But in the wake of Uvalde and in the wake of all of this reporting, it is increasingly impossible to square this gut reaction so many of us understandably have with reality. It is time for me to admit that to myself. It is time for all of us to admit this publicly.

In 1970, police officers were stationed in just 1 percent of America's public schools. By 1997, 22 percent had an officer onsite, and 43 percent in 2016. By 2019, the majority of schools had a police officer onsite. You can match almost every uptick with a high-profile school shooting.

But despite this exponential increase in armed officers at schools, the shootings have not abated. They have increased in frequency. More guns and more police and more armed security in schools has done nothing to stop this trajectory.

We should have seen this with our own eyes well before Uvalde. When the gunshots started at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL,

the armed police at the school that day ran away and then argued in court that they had no legal obligation to protect those kids, only an obligation to protect themselves.

But it is not just anecdotal evidence. A study of 179 school shootings between 1999 and 2019 found that there was no association between the presence of a police officer in a school and any reduction in the severity of violent shootings in those schools.

When you really stop to think about this, it does make sense. A shooter with an AR-15 needs a minute or two to get off enough rounds to kill dozens. Even if the armed security officer does the right thing and runs to the gunfire—instead of the natural thing, running away from it—time is on the shooter's side. So it is not surprising that there is no evidence that more guns in our schools keep our kids safe.

What tends to happen, frankly, when police officers populate our schools, is that ordinary school misbehaviors get criminalized, and kids, especially Black boys and disabled students, get arrested for things that used to be dealt with in the principal's office. The police in these schools don't end up stopping mass shootings. They just end up arresting a bunch of kids and ruining their lives.

We can zoom out even further to consider this argument of whether more guns—or more good guys with guns—make our communities safer or less safe. If good guys with guns protected us from gun violence, you would expect States or communities with high rates of legal gun ownership to be safer, but they aren't.

You can probably guess by now that the opposite is actually true. In places with high rates of legal gun ownership, there are more gun deaths than in places with low rates of gun ownership.

There is a difference between what makes us feel safe and what actually makes us safer. The reality is this: More people with guns and more guns do not make our kids safer. That is an uncomfortable truth—I get it—because we want to believe that we can meet force with potential force, and everything will be okay.

But there were 376 armed police officers and security outside that classroom in Uvalde. There were plenty of good guys with guns outside that classroom, some of them steps away from a shooting that was ongoing for an hour, and it did nothing for those kids. Frankly, it made the massacre harder to live with for so many of those parents because it exposed this fraud that told us that we can protect ourselves with more guns.

This is a hard lesson to learn. After Uvalde and Parkland, Texas and Florida just doubled down on a failed strategy. They required more guns in our schools, despite no evidence that it works. In Tennessee, after the terrible Covenant School shooting, the State legislature went even further, arming teachers with guns.

In the movies, a heroic lone good guy with a gun kills dozens of armed evildoers, but that is in the movies. That is fiction. That is not reality. A teacher with a gun isn't going to save our kids. Remember, the evidence tells us, over and over again, that in places with more guns, there are more gun deaths, not less.

But amidst all of this bad news, amidst the failure to learn the lessons of Uvalde and Parkland, there is good news. There are policies that work. In States with gun safety laws—like universal background checks, safe storage, and red flag laws—fewer people die by guns.

In the wake of the passage—the bipartisan passage—of the 2022 gun bill, gun crime is down. Urban gun murders have dropped by 12 percent from 2022 to 2023—the biggest 1-year drop in the history of the country. And 2024 is on pace for another record-setting drop in urban gun crime.

And, this year, the pace of mass shootings is way down as well. Between January and May of this year, there were 29 percent fewer mass shootings compared to the same period of time in 2023.

It is proof that when the primary focus of your efforts is to pass laws that keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, instead of loading our communities up with guns, and putting money into communities to help get at the root causes of violence, you can save lives.

What happened that day at Robb Elementary School is a disgrace. We will never understand—I will never understand—the grief and the pain of those parents who lost kids that day, who watched 376 armed officers wait an hour and 17 minutes to confront that gunman.

What we can do—what we can do—is make a decision to not simply avert our eyes from what happened that day because it is what is easier, but instead study and learn from this tragedy.

Flooding our schools and our communities with more guns won't solve the problem. It won't stop the next Uvalde. What will keep our kids safe is keeping guns—especially the most dangerous guns—out of the hands of dangerous people.

Congress has the power right now to do something about it. We could start, for instance, by responding to last week's Supreme Court decision and passing legislation to ban the conversion of semiautomatic weapons into machine guns. Our kids would be safer, undoubtedly, if it was harder for a deranged psychopath to get their hands on a banned automatic weapon.

The majority of Americans are on our side. They want Congress to act, to pass things like universal background checks, to ban bump stocks. They are sick of us learning the wrong lesson every time tragedy strikes. It is never too late for this time to be different.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The majority leader.

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. 597.

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Nancy L. Maldonado, of Illinois, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

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 senior assistant 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. 597, Nancy L. Maldonado, of Illinois, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Amy Klobuchar, Jack Reed, Tina Smith, Tammy Duckworth, Richard Blumenthal, Robert P. Casey, Jr. Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch, Sheldon Whitehouse, Raphael G. Warnock, Laphonza R. Butler, Brian Schatz, Benjamin L. Cardin.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today, June 17, be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

DISASTER RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, the United States had 75 major disaster declarations since July of 2023. Just last week, a flood tore through southern Florida, and it is only a matter of time before another State is hit.

This “natural disaster” caucus is growing, and it is growing quickly. It is a caucus none of us want to join nor do we ask to join, but instead are forced into it with a single mission: to help our constituents—our communities that have been through unimaginable suffering and pain—to get the resources that they need.

Vermonters know all too well the immense toll a natural disaster takes. It

takes it on our communities and our economy.

Nearly 1 year ago, Vermont experienced nonstop rain over a period of several days. It led to flash flooding, washouts, and mudslides all across our State. It was brutal. Homes and businesses and farms and public infrastructure were damaged, and many were destroyed. It was an all-hands-on-deck moment, and neighbors helped neighbors dig out. From the municipal level to the Federal Government, we tried to help people get back on their feet. And we did get back on our feet, but the damage—if it was your home, if it was your business, if it was your farm—is still lasting.

I have come to the Senate many times since the floodwaters receded to share stories of Vermonters. Their stories are of resiliency through hardship. Vermonters have stories of community and grit and determination. And I am proud, of course, of Vermonters, but I believe that this is the case in communities throughout our Nation.

But our recovery, despite that, is far from complete. Madam President, I will say it loud, clear, and directly: Vermont needs more recovery money. What happened to these families and to these businesses was an act of nature—no fault of their own—but they deserve a shot to get back on their feet.

And as I revisit communities that were hit hard by flooding—places like Barre, Johnson, Hardwick, Montpelier, Ludlow, and Londonderry—it is clear that work to recover from this flood will last for years. There are home and business buyouts that are stalled, farmers who need help, and resiliency projects that need to get done before the next flood comes—and it will be coming.

We need supplemental disaster funding, and we really do need it now. The funds need to be flexible so that our communities in Vermont, in Hawaii, in Texas, in Florida, in California, and in other States can use the funds as needed for their recovery to their unique needs.

A flood and a fire require different recovery strategies, and that should be reflected in the funding. That is why the community development block grants for disaster recovery are so critical. They are flexible. They are localized. These funds give the communities the flexibility needed to rebuild and recover, allowing them to prepare for future disasters and safeguard their communities. Senator SCHATZ has been a fantastic partner in this, and I am thankful for his leadership as subcommittee chair on the Appropriations Committee.

Last week, the Joint Economic Committee's Democratic majority released a new report on the economic cost of flooding. The findings are really stunning: Flooding will cost \$180 to \$496 billion each year. These costs are probably an undercount. They are only a fraction of what our communities truly endure as we recover from a flood. I en-

courage my colleagues and everyone listening to read this report. See for yourself how climate change is ravaging our economy.

There are obvious ways that flooding costs our economy: structural damages to our homes, farms, businesses, schools, transit systems, and more; infrastructure upgrades needed to protect against future flooding; and the direct and indirect commercial impacts from flooding. But then there are the costs that you might not consider: costs associated with flood-related deaths; decreased tax revenues; increases in insurance premiums; and crop loss, among the many other costs.

This should be an alarm bell. It should give pause to every one of my colleagues in the Senate and in the House because every State could be the next victim of the severe weather that is all about us as a result of the change in our climate. Vermonters know it all too well.

But there is good news. We can do something to mitigate these costs. Another recent analysis found that every \$1—\$1—spent on flood resiliency efforts saves up to \$318 in flood-related damages. It is a pretty good return on investment.

And if you want to talk about cost-saving measures, resiliency funding should absolutely be paired with recovery funding for natural disasters. We need to build back in a more resilient way after natural disasters hit, not build back in the same way for it to be done all over again.

I was just in Brattleboro on Friday, where I saw a new FEMA-funded floodplain restoration project. It is terrific. A similar project helped downtown Brattleboro avoid damage during the July floods and will hopefully help the community avoid flooding in the future when the rains come again.

We cannot rebuild in the same way and in the same place and hope for the best. The reality is that climate change is here, and it is unpredictable. We need to do more to make our homes, farms, and communities more resilient.

Gone are the days, by the way, of so-called climate havens. In 2020, ProPublica and the New York Times Magazine published a report that found that in Vermont, Lamoille County, Orange County, Franklin County, and Essex County were the top four counties in the United States to live in to avoid climate change-related crises.

I can tell you—as a Vermonter—no longer. Climate change has come to all of Vermont.

I am going to keep working with my friends and colleagues, the senior Senator from Vermont Senator SANDERS and Representative BALINT in the House, to get Vermont the flood recovery funding we need, but I want to do that in partnership with every other Senator and Representative whose districts need flood recovery funding.

Congress, in both Chambers and both parties, need to come together to help