

I have always related to that idea of the American founding on a personal level. I grew up among farmers and tradesmen and factory workers. My dad was a union factory worker, and my mom was a nursing home cook. I came from a working-class family and grew up in a working-class town—a small town—in Northeast Indiana called Columbia City. It was a town that had about 5,000 people when I was born. It is around 10,000 people today. I am still proud to live in Columbia City and to call it my home—this small town, my home today. Even though Columbia City is a humble town, I love it intensely. I have so many great memories from my childhood in Columbia City, and I feel great pride in my hometown, but Columbia City's humble nature didn't stop people from doing great things.

Columbia City shaped Thomas Riley Marshall, who became the Vice President of the United States of America in 1913. It shaped me, too, into who I am today—in my serving here, with the Presiding Officer, as a U.S. Senator. That is the beauty of smalltown America. Small towns like my hometown are where the American dream is realized, and it was in the Thirteen Colonies 250 years ago that the dream of America came to life.

That is why, on this July 4, I will be celebrating Independence Day back in my hometown with my family. Growing up, I remember spending every Fourth of July in Columbia City, watching the community's celebration and the fireworks in the evening. That is exactly what I will be doing with my kids and my parents and my family this year as well.

I know that there will be a lot of incredible festivities happening right here in Washington, DC, and I am all for that. President Trump says it is going to be the biggest and best fireworks display in American history. I have no doubt that he is right about that, but I think it is also important for people to spend time celebrating with the local communities that shaped them. I encourage everyone here and those listening today, if you can, the America 250 celebrations happening in your hometowns are going to be great, and I hope you will be a part of them.

My upbringing instilled within me a profound love for this country. Sadly, not enough people share that same love today. Three years ago, the Wall Street Journal had a poll that showed that only 38 percent of Americans believed that patriotism was important to them, and that was down from 70 percent in 1998. For the last 3 years, I have wondered about and wanted an update on that poll—what does that look like today?—because it has really bothered me ever since I read that story in the Wall Street Journal a few years ago.

Last year, Gallup released new data about American pride and patriotism. Unfortunately, the numbers have hardly changed. Only about 41 percent of

American adults said they were extremely proud to be American. Among America's young people, that picture was particularly damning. Only 41 percent of Gen Z said that they were extremely or very proud to be an American. These are record low numbers, but this is what happens when too many people, especially young people, feel detached from our Nation's story.

But here is the thing: As we celebrate America on this historic and monumental occasion, this decline is not irreversible. We can absolutely fix this trend. One way that we can fix this trend is to make our Nation beautiful again and do everything we can to make our Nation beautiful.

A few months ago, I came to the Senate floor to talk about one of my bills that is very important to me, the Beautifying Federal Civic Architecture Act. I spoke about how important it is to have and build beautiful buildings that reflect the beauty of this great country. We owe it to ourselves and to our children to build beautiful buildings that reflect who we really are as a nation.

And that is why I fully support and applaud President Trump and his efforts to make the Federal buildings and communities all across America even more beautiful than what they were before. When a nation sees beautiful and great buildings, it sees beauty and greatness in the nation.

And there is another way that we can reverse the downward trend of American patriotism as well, and that is by returning to our roots in our small communities. Our small communities are what made this country great and are what continue to make America great.

The original Thirteen Colonies succeeded in founding the Nation because ordinary people in ordinary places believed in something that was much bigger than themselves.

We can make America beautiful again, inside and out, by rediscovering the power of those small places and the ordinary Americans who call them home.

When we strengthen our communities, teach our full and honest history with pride, and recommit to the founding principles that turned 13 fragile Colonies into a global beacon of liberty and freedom, we will see national pride rise once again.

Let me end by saying this: Mighty empires that once ruled the world have vanished to the dustbin of history, but America, this great country, still stands, and she stands taller and mightier than the rest.

So as we gear up for the 250th birthday of this great country, let us recommit ourselves to the incredible American story that is still unfolding right before our eyes. And let us never forget that, from small and humble beginnings, rose the greatest country on Earth, the United States of America.

Happy America 250.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The Senator from Texas.

DOBBS V. JACKSON WOMEN'S HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to address one of the most consequential decisions the Supreme Court of the United States has ever made.

Four years ago, on this day, our country waited with bated breath—from the streets of Washington, DC, to homes all across America—waiting to hear news from the Supreme Court on a case that sought to determine the value of human life.

At approximately 10:10 that morning, on June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court announced that, for the first time since 1973, abortion was no longer mandated by Federal law across the Nation.

Overturing *Roe v. Wade* was an incredible milestone. It reversed precedent set by judges whose interpretations were rooted in judicial activism.

And in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, the Court made clear that the issue of abortion—an issue on which people of good faith can disagree—would be returned to the people and their elected representatives.

While today and every day we celebrate this milestone, it is important to remember that the fight for life did not end 4 years ago. It continues today and will continue to be a fight for many years to come.

Abortion remains legal in many States across the country, and, as a result, thousands upon thousands of unborn children are lost to abortion every year. Unfortunately, in some areas, the numbers are rising.

There are serious challenges we face in this fight. The expansion of mail-order abortion pills, individuals traveling across State lines for abortions, and significant funding—taxpayer funding—for organizations like Planned Parenthood are among the most significant issues. It is evident that this battle is far from over.

While we should celebrate the victories that we have achieved, we must also continue to seek new avenues and new opportunities to ensure that every life is protected. One of the most important ways we can do this is by reaffirming the inherent value of life.

Life is not an accident or a coincidence. It is a gift from God and a blessing, and it is the very greatest gift we can share. Life is the foundation of every other right we hold dear. Without life, there can be no liberty, no prosperity, no pursuit of happiness.

Protecting life means more than just defending the unborn. It also means supporting mothers. It means uplifting pregnancy resource centers and ensuring that when mothers welcome children into the world, they have the support that they need.

I am reminded of how important this fight is every January, when thousands gather in Washington, DC, for the March for Life. People from all across the Nation come together and walk miles and miles, marching for the unborn and the protection of human life.

They remind us that this is a moment and a movement of conviction, of compassion, and of courage.

The decision 4 years ago today was the result of millions of Americans working, standing, speaking, marching, organizing, and praying. That is why, a year ago, I introduced a resolution to designate June as “Life Month,” so that each year we can recommit to celebrating and defending the preciousness of life.

Today, I call upon my colleagues in the Senate to help pass this resolution so that we can be reminded every June of the importance of the fight for life, that we can recommit to the American ideal that every single life has dignity, and that we can stand together as a nation that chooses life.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENTIAL OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

BIPARTISAN SAFER COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor with good news. It is really important news, but it is news that not a lot of people in this country know about. We are experiencing, over the last 3 years, a dramatic decline in the number of people who are killed by guns. Gun violence rates in this country are plummeting, and they have been plummeting since 2002.

Let me just give you a couple of numbers. From 2023 to 2024—the last year that we have full numbers for—we saw urban gun homicides drop by 16.7 percent. That is extraordinary. And, in general, urban homicides have been dropping by double-digit percentages over the last 3 years.

Mass shootings are way down. That might actually make sense to you because, while we still hear about these awful mass shootings on the news, we have a sense that they are not appearing on our television screens with the rapidity and frequency they were a few years ago.

Now, in 2025, there were 400 mass shootings in America. That is unacceptable. There are still more mass shootings than days in the year, but that is a 41-percent decline from 2021.

Similarly, school shootings have declined over the last 2 years.

This is all good news. There are more people alive today because something is changing in America. And while it is still unacceptable that we are averaging a mass shooting every day in this country, the numbers are unquestionably heading in the right direction.

Now, there are a set of complicated factors to explain why that is happening, but it is not coincidental to the passage in 2022 of the most significant piece of anti-gun violence legislation in 30 years. And that is why I am on the floor today, because tomorrow will mark 4 years since this Senate passed and got signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation that strengthened the gun laws of this country while respecting the constitutional right of law-abiding citizens to be able to purchase and own weapons.

Let me just remind you of what that bill did, because it is important to remember that we can come together.

There were, I think, 15 Republican Senators that supported this legislation. It received Republican votes in the House of Representatives as well.

This legislation said: Listen, we have got to be a little bit more careful before we sell an assault weapon to a 19-year-old or a 20-year-old—because we had seen, over and over again, that it tended to be, unfortunately, young men under the age of 21 who were carrying out these mass murders.

And so while legislation didn't take away the ability of someone under 21 to buy a weapon—because this is what we needed in order to get bipartisan consensus—we did put enhanced background checks for those individuals—just an extra check, most significantly, with the local police department to see if this was somebody that the police knew as being troubled. Well, since passage of the bill, 800 firearms purchases have been prevented solely because of these enhanced checks.

These were mainly purchasers that were prohibited from buying a weapon, but until you called the local police department, you didn't find out that they were actually prohibited. But sometimes it was that this was an individual that was in crisis. The local police department knew it, and the enhanced check caught them.

The second thing the bill did was just make firearms trafficking a Federal crime. It was crazy that it hadn't been. It made trafficking and straw purchasing a Federal crime. And since that bill went into effect, there have been 280 cases with 525 defendants who have been brought under Federal charges for gun trafficking. That is a big part of why there is so much urban gun homicide—because there is a pipeline of illegal guns that goes into places like Hartford, CT; New Haven, CT; or Chicago, IL. Now we have interrupted that pipeline of illegal guns.

What is something else that that bill did? It said that if you have a history of domestic violence, you can't buy a weapon, regardless of whether that violence is against your wife or your girlfriend. There used to be something called the boyfriend loophole. If you had committed domestic violence against your girlfriend, you could still purchase and have weapons. Well, we closed that loophole on a bipartisan basis. And since that law passed, there have been 10,000 firearms purchases that have been denied because the individual had a history of domestic violence.

Now, the way that we got that bill passed, with Republican votes, was to give the ability of that individual to reapply for the ability to buy firearms. We didn't take that right away permanently. Some of us might have wanted that prohibition to be permanent after you have a domestic violence conviction on your record, but that is how we got the bill passed—an example of how we can find common ground.

And then the last thing I want to mention is that the bill put about \$1.4 billion into funding existing and new community anti-gun violence measures—and this is maybe the secret sauce. This is maybe the biggest explanation as to why numbers are going down.

What we find in community after community that is plagued with high rates of gun violence is that it is normally a very small group of people—again, largely young men—that are committing these acts of violence and that if you engage in targeted interventions aimed at these small groups of young men, you can very quickly get gun violence rates down, and it doesn't cost hundreds of millions of dollars, especially in a small community like Hartford.

Hartford has a number of really impactful but small organizations that do this community anti-gun violence work. We gave them a small amount of money from this legislation, and they have made a big, big difference in Hartford. These are groups like Hartford Communities That Care, Compass.

Hartford had 37 murders in 2022, the year that we passed this bill. In 2025, Hartford had 10 murders. That is an extraordinary decline, 37 to 10.

In 2020, there were 223 shootings, a reminder most people don't die in shootings. They get badly wounded. Their lives are altered by the shooting even though they don't die.

Mr. President, 223 shootings in Hartford in 2020—89 last year. That is a 25-year low. And all the laws we passed made a difference in Connecticut, but Connecticut already had pretty strict gun laws so a lot of the stuff we passed didn't have a big impact on Connecticut, but the community anti-gun violence money did because those groups are now well-funded.

Again, these aren't groups with \$10 million-a-year budgets. These are often very small organizations that have four or five people on staff. For instance, one of the things that these groups often do is when there is a shooting, they rush to the emergency room because there are often cycles of retributive violence that play out: Somebody gets shot. Their group of friends congregate at the emergency room. They make a plan to engage in retributive violence. Well, these community workers can often get to the emergency room and interrupt that cycle of violence, and they have been enormously successful.

Now, there are threats to the progress we have made. I don't want to make this a speech about President Trump, but it is just true that he has stopped funding the programs that support community anti-gun violence initiatives.

There are also billions of dollars in that bill that we passed for school-based mental health, and he has also suspended many of those accounts. That is bad news.

He has also issued new regulations that undermine other parts of the bill,