

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 PRESIDING 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,

but there is nothing President Trump can do to stop the enhanced background checks or the ability of prosecutors to go after gun traffickers or the denial of weapons purchases to individuals convicted of domestic violence.

And so I don't want you to hear me say that the President is unwinding all of our progress. He is unwinding some of our progress—our bipartisan progress—but much of the statute can't be unwound.

And so I just want to give us a little pat on the back because 4 years ago, after the awful shooting in Uvalde, four Senators got together—supported by another bigger ring of bipartisan Senators—and we were able to come up with a bill that was not perfect, was not everything that I wanted or that many other Democratic Senators wanted, but it was progress.

And we have seen the impact of that bill: literally extraordinary declines in mass shootings and homicides, all happening, not coincidentally, as soon as we passed that bill.

The gun lobby has a habit of arguing that the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. The gun lobby says the answer to gun violence is more guns. Well, we proved that if you pass legislation that just makes it a little bit harder for the wrong people to get their hands on weapons—people who have serious criminal convictions, people who are mentally ill—you make it a little bit easier for prosecutors to go after the gun traffickers, you give a little bit more resources to the people who do anti-gun violence work in our communities, that you can make a big difference.

I live in one of these traditionally high-gun-violence-rate neighborhoods. I live just south of downtown in Hartford, and my home is on the route to the primary critical care hospital in the south end of Hartford—Hartford Hospital. And I will just say: There are far fewer ambulances passing my house with victims of gunshot wounds. In fact, it is an extraordinary reduction.

In 2020, I think the year that I bought that house, there were 223 shootings—223 gun violence victims being rushed to Hartford Hospital or Saint Francis Hospital. In 2025, there were 89. So I know we are often consumed with the bad news here, but that is really good news. That is really good news. And it is evidence of the fact that this place is not fundamentally broken. There are these moments when Republicans and Democrats can come together and pass laws that save lives—4 years since the passage and signature of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, something that this Senate should be proud of.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

IRAN

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, Donald Trump's Operation Epic Fury has become "Operation Epic Failure." He

started a war of choice. It turned out, Iran had a lot more leverage than he ever anticipated.

The President thought that superior weapons, a huge number of bombs would give, well, the opportunity for America to conduct a war in which Iran would unconditionally surrender. The President expected that in short order.

But not all unfolds accordingly because Iran had an ace up its sleeve: It had the ability to stop traffic on the Strait of Hormuz. And if the President had listened to any expert, they would have said: You are totally underestimating the leverage and power Iran has over the world economy.

But he didn't listen. So like a dog that got skunked, he has slunk away humiliated—"Operation Trump Humiliation"—and the American people and the world are paying the price.

I am relieved that the bombs have stopped falling, but Trump's disastrous deal has left everyone so much worse off.

The American military: a huge number of munitions expended, 13 service-members killed, hundreds wounded.

The U.S. Treasury: depleted by some \$50 billion to \$80 billion.

American families are paying a much higher price for gas and now facing year-over-year inflation of 4.2 percent because of Trump's war.

American farmers are paying so much more for fertilizer, paying so much more for diesel; bad for the farmers for sure, but that is going to mean higher grocery costs for the American family.

And in international affairs, Russia has been enriched, the Iranian hard-liners have been strengthened; the reformers in Iran have been undermined; our alliances have been deeply, carelessly damaged. Now, of course, Iranian civilians have paid the price with thousands dead and far more injured.

And Iran's highly enriched uranium? Still in exactly the same place it was before his war started.

Now, Trump has signed a 14-point framework, and it has some troubling elements. Donald Trump calls himself "Deal-maker-in-Chief," so let's look at the deal that he has struck.

What does Iran get? Access to \$24 billion in unfrozen funds, waivers that allow Iran to sell its oil at the world price, a commitment by the United States to organize a \$300 billion plan like a Marshall Plan to rebuild Iran, and a stipulation that after 60 days, Iran can work with Oman and work out fees for vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz.

Let's compare that to the JCPOA that President Obama negotiated. And for more than a decade, I have listened to colleagues across the aisle say President Obama did a side deal that returned \$500 million to Iran in frozen funds and interest on that \$500 million; that we had had it so long, it had stacked up to \$700 million.

All right. We are talking about less than \$2 billion. Here is Trump: \$24 bil-

lion in unfrozen funds, \$300 billion in redevelopment, waivers for your oil, and the ability to charge fees in the Strait of Hormuz—not even vaguely comparable.

And those elements, those are not an exchange for a final nuclear deal. They are an advance of one, undermining America's leverage to get a nuclear deal done. And Trump calls himself a dealmaker, giving away all the leverage up front.

And what else does Iran get? No restrictions on cruise missiles or drones; no restrictions on ballistic missiles; no restrictions on funding proxy groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, militias in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen. Wow. Those are all important elements.

But the deal does deliver two things: America lifts its blockade of the Iranian ports, and Iran lifts its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. But those were the conditions before the war started. So the one positive thing it delivers was already in place before there was a war. So no improvement because of the war.

President Trump has recklessly squandered American lives and treasure. He has recklessly weakened America's standing in the world. He has recklessly raised costs for American families here at home.

This is absolutely the embodiment of why the Founders gave the question of war, not to the President, but to Congress. It is why we have to stand up for the constitutional vision that we swore an oath to when we became U.S. Senators.

Is there any Senator here who didn't swear that oath to the Constitution? Is there any Senator here who hasn't read the Constitution and read that the question of war was assigned to Congress, not the President?

Here is how Madison described it. He said: The Constitution supposes, what the history of all governments demonstrates, that it is the Executive most interested and most prone to war. The Constitution has accordingly, with studied care, vested the question of war in the legislative branch.

Does anyone need a clearer explanation than that, under our Constitution, a President cannot take us to war and that there was very careful reasoning that went into making that decision: because Executives are too prone to go to war, and no one person should be able to put the lives and treasure of America at risk.

That isn't to say Congress always gets it right. This Chamber and the House Chamber, they had a debate over the authorization to go to war in Afghanistan. These two Chambers, they had a debate over going to war in Iraq. I believe they got it wrong on both occasions. But there was an opportunity to seek information, to compare ideas, to wrestle with the prospect—an appropriate debate on such a monumental question.

Now, this Chamber and the House Chamber have started to exercise their