

important to be aware that under this proposal, under this bill, if you hand over your firearm to a partner during such a trip, even for a short period of time, you could potentially be held criminally liable if that individual doesn't hold the proper hunting license. It is an absurd overreach that would penalize the innocent traditions that bind our communities together.

The only conceivable way to enforce such a law is through the creation of an expansive, Orwellian national gun registry—yes, a national gun registry. Now, it is here that we arrive at the true purpose or, at least, the true inevitable outcome of this legislation were it to become law.

Universal background checks only work when you have a national gun registry. This bill would require a registry, even though and notwithstanding the legitimate policy concerns embraced by Congress when Congress prohibited the creation of such a registry in the Firearm Owners' Protection Act.

However, the ATF has already compiled a database with over 920 million records, a direct challenge to both the letter and the spirit of the Firearm Owners' Protection Act and Public Law 112-55. Let's not compound the problem created by the ATF's illegal and constitutionally problematic registry by enacting a law that cannot be enforced without the creation of a national gun registry.

Registries lead, inevitably, to gun confiscation. If you don't believe me, if you don't want to take my word for it on that, just look to the public statements made by some of my colleagues in the Senate and our counterparts in the House. They told us confiscation is the goal.

As our friends at Gun Owners of America have reminded us, without this invasive registry, enforcement of S. 494 is unfeasible. We are staring down the barrel of a system that would monitor the most personal and responsible uses of firearms among citizens.

Now, the Senator asked us to pass this major legislation without any debate, without any meaningful opportunity for amendment or further discussion. This isn't how Congress works. This certainly isn't how the U.S. Senate should work, certainly not on a matter so significant and so directly tied to an enumerated constitutional right as this one.

This bill should, of course, go through the Senate Judiciary Committee, a body on which I serve and a body where Members routinely can and do debate, offer amendments, and raise these and other policy and constitutional concerns.

I also want to speak for a moment to what was referenced as the gun show loophole. It is not, in fact, a loophole. There is no such loophole. The effect of the law is that, if you are a federally licensed firearms dealer, you have to perform these functions before you sell it, with or without you being in the presence of a gun show. If an FFL

shows up at a gun show and sells guns, the FFL has to conduct the background check. It isn't a loophole.

Moreover, we are talking about a tiny, minuscule percentage of people who even do these things. We are looking at the overwhelming percentage. According to the Department of Justice bureau that collects crime statistics, a tiny percentage of people who even buy them at gun shows go on to commit crimes with them—like less than 1 percent. Very few of them even buy them in any retail establishment, opting instead to buy them on a clandestine market in an illegal way.

So, at the end of the day, we have to evaluate this law just like we would any law—but this law in particular, given that it touches on a constitutionally protected, enumerated right. We have to look at both the law's impact on criminal behavior, which is negligible, and on the law's tendency to punish the law-abiding.

It is not the law-abiding who typically will go to illegal sources to buy a gun. It is not the law-abiding who refuse to dot the i's and cross the t's. It is typically the law-abiding who are willing to go through that process. We shouldn't be adding more redtape that is going to affect mostly the law-abiding, touching on very few of those actually bent on violent criminal activity.

This bill would do precisely that. It would punish the law-abiding citizens for the actions of criminals. It is time to accept this fact, and it is time for us, really, to choose between the various tensions that we feel pulling on us. I am confident that, at the end of the day, we should choose common sense over fear. We should choose liberty over control. We should choose the rights of the law-abiding many over the criminally minded few.

On this basis, Mr. President, and for these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 173

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, as I listen to the objection of my colleague from Utah, I am really struck by the absurdity and exaggeration involved in opposition to these common-sense measures that would simply save lives. The idea that we haven't debated background checks—what could be more untethered to reality? We have debated background checks for as long as I have been in the U.S. Senate and before then, when I was attorney general seeking to champion universal background checks. We have debated them in the Judiciary Committee ad nauseam. And we have shown, through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, that we can break the hold of the gun lobby that is the source of those absurd and ridiculous arguments.

Background checks take no guns away from any law-abiding citizen. They simply assure that people who are dangerous to themselves or others

don't have them. That is the purpose of red flag laws, which I have also championed, and many of the other measures that we seek to pass—the repeal of PLCAA, which guarantees unbridled immunity to gun manufacturers; ghost guns, which we seek to ban because law enforcement finds them so dangerous; and numerous other commonsense measures.

I am here on behalf of a bill, Ethan's Law, S. 173, which ought to be common ground for everyone. It simply requires safe storage. And we know that 500 Americans every year, including more than 100 children, die from unintentional firearm injuries, many of them involving weapons that are unsafely stored.

There are loaded and unlocked guns in the homes of 4.6 million American children, and many of them perish because their parents or their neighbors' parents fail to safely store those weapons.

Nobody knows it better than Kristin Song. Her son died as a result of an unsafely stored weapon just after his 15th birthday. He was with a friend, and a firearm stored in a Tupperware box was used in play by these two young boys. Ethan Song died, and Ethan's Law, which I am seeking to pass by unanimous consent today, is in his memory. It was passed by the State house of representatives in Connecticut and our State senate. And 26 States—red, blue, purple—already have some form of safe storage and child access prevention laws on the books.

We know from the record of these laws in Connecticut that they work; they save lives. And we know also that gun owners believe that safe storage ought to be the law, ought to be required, ought to be mandated so that lives are saved.

In fact, even the firearms industry—including the National Rifle Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation—agree that safe storage is a critical part of responsible gun ownership.

The NRA tells gun owners that “[s]trong boxes and security cases . . . are inexpensive and give . . . quick access to . . . firearms in a defensive situation.”

The NSSF tells gun owners to “[a]lways make absolutely sure that firearms in your home are securely stored out of the reach of children and . . . unauthorized persons.”

Ninety percent of the guns used in unintentional shooting deaths by children were left unlocked and loaded. The numbers are outrageous and depressing, but we can do something, and we should do something. And that is why I am here today to urge that we pass a bill that ought to be common ground—bipartisan common ground—and show that, in fact, democracy can work. We can pass measures that save lives that should be bipartisan. There ought to be no Republican versus Democratic debate on this floor or anywhere else. It ought to be a matter of

common sense and common agreement across the aisle.

Mr. President, so as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 173 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; I further ask that this bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

No single gun owner will lose a gun—none—as a result of this measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I oppose S. 173 for a simple reason. It is unconstitutional in a number of ways.

First, the bill infringes on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens by placing burdens on a citizens' right to keep and bear arms within a home.

Second, this bill thrusts the Federal Government into an area that is reserved to the States, thus violating the principle of federalism.

The laws in Connecticut and the laws in North Carolina should reflect the values and behaviors of those respective States. Simply put, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't fit the needs of our constituents.

Thirdly, Congress does not have the power under the commerce clause of the Constitution to pass the bill.

A law-abiding gun owner with a firearm in their home doesn't qualify as interstate commerce, and the Federal Government has no right to infringe upon it.

Fourth, this bill duplicates existing laws and practices that are in place at the State level.

My colleague mentioned some of those. He mentioned State laws. For example, in North Carolina, we have criminal penalties for adults who improperly store a firearm in a way that allows a minor to obtain it and commit a crime.

Finally, this bill would make it harder for law-abiding gun owners to defend themselves and their loved ones.

At a time when our cities and our towns are plagued by waves of crime—often made worse by the soft-on-crime policies of Democrat politicians—it makes no sense for the Federal Government to make it illegal for homeowners to quickly defend themselves inside their own home.

Just this year in North Carolina, in my own State alone, there have been at least 13 documented instances of defensive gun use in the home—defensive gun use. In these instances, North Carolina residents have used guns to defend themselves against home invasion, assaults, domestic violence, and residential burglars.

No matter what somebody believes about the Second Amendment, we share the desire to protect our kids and to keep them safe. We all want our kids

to be safe. That is why gun rights groups across the country have safety courses, online materials, and in-person training to teach citizens—both young and old—how to safely own, operate, and enjoy firearms.

Now is not the time for more unconstitutional proposals that will not ultimately keep people safe. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, 10 years I have been in this incredible institution, the U.S. Senate, and I am stunned that we are still having this debate.

We know, if you read our Constitution, that we formed our form of government with lots of high callings, but the first is to provide for the national defense.

It is astonishing to me that the No. 1 killer—the No. 1 threat—the No. 1 issue facing our children in America is death by gun violence. This is a purview of the Federal Government as is written by our Constitution.

And the Second Amendment, like the First Amendment, is not absolute. You can't yell "fire" in a crowded movie theater. There are limitations on our fundamental rights.

Don't take my word for it; take the Supreme Court of the United States. A conservative Court in the Heller decision made it very clear that government can take steps—reasonable steps—to protect our Nation.

So what does it mean in a country when the top killer of our children is gun violence, and we cannot take commonsense steps like the ones spelled out in the law that was just objected to? Safe storage of weapons, this is not an infringement of someone's right to own a gun. Safe storage of weapons, this is not taking away someone's gun. Safe storage of weapons, this is not a violation of someone's fundamental rights.

What it is, is a reasonable step to protect children because 90 percent of the kids in our country who are dying by suicide or unintentional shootings are in homes where a loaded gun is easily accessible to children—children as young as 3 years old getting their hands on these weapons.

Over 40,000 Americans die in a year to gun violence, and the response of this body is to do nothing. Forty-thousand Americans, the No. 1 killer of our children, and instead of seeing this as a crisis, as far as having special hearings and gatherings to put our minds together in a bipartisan way, how do we stop our children from dying, how do we stop our children from being slaughtered—instead of this being something that is concerning us to do something, we do nothing.

And I am sorry, inaction is complicity in this violence. If you object to this, what is your idea to protect our children? If you object to this, what is your idea to stop so many kids, so many Americans from dying? Tell me

what it is because Martin Luther King said it plain, in another point in American history, in another crisis. He said: What we will have to repent for as a nation is not just the vitriolic words and violent actions of the bad people but the appalling silence and inaction of the good people.

And so I know this body. I know the good, hard-working, dedicated Americans who serve here. But the inaction is appalling. The inaction is complicity. The strongest Nation on the planet Earth gives the implicit messages to our children and their parents: We can't protect you. So you know what we are going to do? We are going to teach you how to hide because we are now in a nation where there are more active shooter drills than there are fire drills.

What message is this to our children and our families that we are saying we are going to do nothing? Another year will pass, another 40,000 Americans are going to die, and we do nothing to protect you.

That is unacceptable to me. We are better than this. We are stronger than this. The very ideal of liberty should be that our people should not live in fear. But by our inaction, we have a nation where people all over our country are now chained to fear, shackled by grief, communities ripped apart, families in mourning. And a simple step in America, a simple Federal law like seatbelt laws, a simple Federal law like the safety of our airplanes, a simple Federal law to address the No. 1 cause of killing of our children, that if you have a loaded firearm at home, you should lock it up and keep it away from a child, we can't do that.

Well, Merry Christmas, America. The most urgent and basic thing this body should do is to protect children. And the No. 1 cause of child death in America, what have we done this year? Nothing—nothing.

This is a time we should act. This is a time we should join together. I call on my Republican colleagues to put forth one idea that will save a child from gun violence, to show that your allegiance is to safety and security.

No other country deals with this. We are an aberration when it comes to deaths by gun violence. No other nation allows their children to be slaughtered—Canada, New Zealand. I can tell you the nations that have taken action and, as a result, have seen a dramatic drop in the numbers of deaths.

We are an exceptional country, but in this case, being the exception is horrific to too many. And so I am disappointed to sit here and witness an objection, but I am relentless. We must be undeterred because change is not always easy. But in this case, we, as a country, with thousands of our children dying every year, must stay determined to make the change necessary for us to protect the people of this great Republic.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

ISRAEL

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, on October 7, Hamas launched the deadliest terror attack in Israel's history. Hamas's vicious and unprovoked slaughter targeted innocent Israeli civilians and killed 1,200 men, women, children—from babies to Holocaust survivors.

Not since the Holocaust has there been a deadlier day for the Jewish people. Yet some extreme individuals and organizations are trying to minimize, distort, and outright deny what happened that day.

We cannot let that happen. That is why Senator RUBIO and I hosted a screening last week for our colleagues to show them exactly what Hamas did on October 7.

The videos, many taken by the terrorists themselves, are disturbing. They are graphic. The images and sounds in those videos, I will never forget. I encourage all Members to see for themselves what Israel is fighting against—pure terror; pure, pure evil.

On October 7, Hamas violated a long-standing cease-fire when they chose—they chose—to start this war. Hamas took deliberate and preemptive actions against innocent civilians, including dismemberment, torture, and mass rape, in what only can be described as barbaric terrorism. As any other nation would, Israel has responded to this unprovoked attack by acting to defend its own population, as they have the absolute right to do.

At the same time, Hamas has stated over and over and over again that they will not stop until there are a thousand more October 7s, until they destroy Israel and all of the people living there, and it is time that the world listens. This is why it is not surprising that at the end of last week, Hamas broke the agreement that was put in place to temporarily pause the fighting, to bring more humanitarian aid into Gaza, and to rescue the hostages brutally taken by Hamas.

Let me be clear. There is no equivalency, no equivalency—zero, none—between the terrorist actions of Hamas and the efforts of Israel to stop them from doing this again or, God forbid, committing a worse attack, as they have repeatedly promised to do. We must all remember this, especially now, as we work to deliver aid to Israel.

It has been nearly 2 months since October 7, and rockets continue to rain down on Israeli cities. More than 130 hostages remain in Gaza. We continue to learn more and more about the violent acts of rape, of torture, of murder committed by Hamas. It is all ongoing. Yet Congress hasn't passed the supplemental security assistance that Israel desperately needs to defend itself.

The security assistance includes support for Israel's lifesaving Iron Dome missile defense system—it protects them from Hamas and Hezbollah, from the rockets that rain down on them night after night after night—as well as other key defense resources and tools. It also replenishes our own defense stocks that have been drawn down to support Israel in this time of need.

To my knowledge, Congress has never used conditions on security assistance in order to strong-arm Israel, and now is not the time to start. Conditions would undermine Israel's ability to defend itself and would send a signal to the world that America's support for our ally is weakening, which is exactly what Iran and its terrorist proxies—it is what they all want. Our aid could make the difference between whether or not there is another October 7.

Now I turn to Members of my own party. Here we are. We all want the same thing. We all want peace in the region for both Palestinians and Israelis, a two-state solution with a secure State of Israel living side by side with a peaceful Palestinian state.

But let me be clear. Hamas—Hamas—is the one currently preventing this goal. Hamas launched the attack on Israel. Hamas targeted, Hamas murdered, Hamas raped and kidnapped innocent people. Hamas is threatening to do this over and over and over again. Hamas is a terrorist organization. They are terrorists. They must be stopped permanently. It is the only way we will get closer to peace and stability in the region.

I also understand and I share your concerns about the need to minimize civilian casualties and the suffering in Gaza. Every innocent civilian death is a tragedy. To truly end the suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians, Hamas must no longer control Gaza.

For nearly two decades, Hamas has stolen resources from the Palestinian people. They have used these resources for terrorist purposes. Instead of building infrastructure to improve Gaza's economy, Hamas built terrorist tunnels. Instead of launching programs to combat poverty, Hamas launches rockets to combat Israel. Instead of shielding their own people and lifting them up, Hamas uses their own people as human shields.

Israel must dismantle Hamas for both Israelis and innocent Palestinians. And while we help Israel, we can and we must continue to work with the Israeli Government to make sure that they are doing everything—everything—in their power to prevent the loss of innocent life.

As we partner with Israel and other nations in the region to deliver humanitarian aid in Gaza—food, water, medicine, emergency shelter, sanitation—we must make sure that this aid actually reaches civilians in Gaza. This aid and these resources will save Palestinian lives if they are allowed to reach them.

So, my colleagues, to all of my colleagues, we all agree on these goals. They are reasonable, and we are utilizing existing channels with Israel to make sure they are taking these steps—all without conditioning aid to Israel.

Let's be clear. Providing Israel with aid is not a blank check. As all of my colleagues in this Chamber know—every one of them knows this—all foreign aid is bound by a set of rules. This has been consistent for decades and has not changed. These are different from conditions specifically targeting Israel.

Now is the time to stand with Israel as they work to dismantle Hamas, stop its ability to cause more harm to Israelis and Palestinians, and free all the remaining hostages—all of them.

Conditioning aid to Israel after the worst terrorist attack in history would only embolden Israel's enemies, signal to them the limits of America's support, and open the door to more violence.

This is why I am calling on my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to pass this aid without conditions. If we are serious about preventing another October 7; if we are serious, really serious, about preventing more gruesome images like the ones my colleagues saw last week—torture, kidnapping, rape, murder, beheading; if we are serious about preventing all of this and serious about a future where the people of Gaza are not ruled by a brutal and barbaric terrorist organization, then we should not delay.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

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. 317, Nathalie Rayes, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tammy Duckworth, Tammy Baldwin, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Mark R. Warner, Peter Welch, Jack Reed, Christopher Murphy, Jeanne Shaheen, Tina Smith, Mazie Hirono, Margaret Wood Hassan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Nathalie Rayes, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.