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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God and Father of all, without whom our labor is but lost and with whom the weak are made mighty, make us worthy of Your mercies.

Lord, help our lawmakers to find strength in Your abiding love. Lift their minds to the pure serenity of Your presence, enabling them to meet life's challenges with faith and optimism. May they find delight in doing Your will because Your precepts are within their hearts. Remind them that all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. Deliver them from sins of commission and omission, as You liberate them from all lesser loves and loyalties, until they find in You their reason for being.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

FIGHTING TERRORISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the Justice Department released a transcript of the Orlando terrorist's 911 call in which he claimed responsibility for the attack and declared his loyalty to ISIL.

"What's your name?" the operator asked.

"My name," he said, "is I pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State."

It was 2:35 a.m., a half-hour into his terrorist attack. The terrorist would soon meet his end at the hands of law enforcement, and first responders would make their way through the aftermath of his ISIL-inspired hatred—the deafening hum of unanswered cell phones crescendoing around them.

CIA Director Brennan called this terrorist attack "an assault on the values of openness and tolerance that define us as a nation." He is right. The report he delivered to Congress last week was sobering.

Here is what seems clear to me.

It seems clear that this vile, hateful terrorist organization is going to keep bringing tragedies to our doorsteps until we defeat ISIL where it actually trains, operates, and prepares for attacks—places like Iraq and Syria.

It also seems clear that the President's current "containment" strategy has not been sufficient to defeat ISIL abroad or to prevent more ISIL-inspired attacks right here at home.

The President needs to finally lead a campaign to accomplish this objective.

Senators in both parties should work to fight terror beyond our borders and prevent attacks within them. This is an area where Republicans have long been focused. Now is the time for Democrats to join us too. Work with us to connect the dots on terrorist communications. Work with us to address the threat of lone-wolf attacks. Work with us to prevent more Americans from being inspired by ISIL, like the terrorist in Orlando.

Yesterday Democrats had a chance to support serious constitutional proposals from Senators CORNYN and GRASSLEY that would have helped to keep guns and explosives out of the hands of terrorists and improve the national background check system. While

a majority of the Senate voted to support these proposals, most Democrats voted against both.

So let me say this again. Senator CORNYN put forward a serious proposal designed to prevent known or suspected terrorists from being able to buy a gun, and Democrats voted against it.

Now, does that mean Democrats have decided to sell weapons to ISIL? Of course not. Democrats surely don't believe their leadership's claim that any Senator voted to sell guns to terrorists last night, just as Democrats really don't believe that every Democrat who voted against the Cornyn amendment to block such sales and take terrorists off the streets is guilty of voting to sell guns to terrorists.

We all agree that the Obama administration must prevent the sale of guns to terrorists. Disagreeing on how best to do that doesn't require amateur claims that we all know to be false.

So why don't we get serious. ISIL is not the JV team. It is not contained. We need to defeat it overseas if we want to prevent more terrorist tragedies here at home.

By working together in the Senate, we could give this President and the next one more tools to achieve that objective, and we could advance common-sense, counterterror solutions to keep Americans safer here at home.

This week we will have the opportunity to strengthen our ability to combat lone-wolf terrorists and connect the dots so we are better able to prevent terrorist attacks here in the United States. It is an example of serious, thoughtful policy where we can work together to make progress for the American people.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last night the Republican leader filed cloture on the McCain amendment. The Republican leader has committed to a Democratic alternative pending to the McCain amendment, and we have one. We have it ready now, and we will have it typed up and ready to go in a couple of hours.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the aftermath of last week's mass murder in Orlando that took the lives of 49 people, we saw where the American people stand on gun control. We know that gun safety is essential to making us a safer, more secure America. As an example of what went on in Orlando after that terrible morning, people stood for hours in long lines waiting to donate blood. People attended large gatherings to express their united grief. People left flowers and figurines at the scene of the murders. In cities across the country, people stood at candlelight vigils to honor members of the LGBT community and the Latino community who were slaughtered.

Here in the Capitol, Senator MURPHY stood on the floor of the Senate for 15 hours demanding that Congress act to stop gun violence. In Florida, families and friends of victims stood grieving at graveside services for their murdered loved ones.

Where were Senate Republicans? Where did they stand? Yet again, Senate Republicans stood with the National Rifle Association.

Yesterday, the leader of Gun Owners of America—the shadow organization of the NRA—said he believed that people should be armed in bars and taverns. That is what he said.

Last night, for the third time in as many years, Senate Republicans stood with the NRA in blocking common-sense gun legislation that would keep firearms and explosives away from suspected terrorists and other dangerous individuals.

Senate Republicans proved again that regardless of how brutal the massacre or how reasonable the solution, ultimately—it doesn't matter; there is never a good time—their actions will be dictated by the National Rifle Association.

A CNN poll released yesterday said 90 percent of Americans support expanded background checks and 85 percent of Americans support legislation keeping guns away from suspected terrorists. There is one reason that these proposals are not already law—the National Rifle Association—because they oppose anything dealing with guns.

How can Senate Republicans side with the NRA against the American people? Ninety percent of Americans support expanded background checks. If you are a criminal or a crazy person, you shouldn't be able to get a gun. Eighty-five percent of Americans sup-

port legislation keeping guns away from suspected terrorists. But the NRA doesn't support that, and so Senate Republicans don't support it.

Here is a little secret for my Republican colleagues: The NRA doesn't care about you. It doesn't care about your constituents. It doesn't care about the constitutional rights of its followers. The NRA and its leadership care about two things: Making money for gun manufacturers and making money for the NRA—and selling more guns.

The NRA wants gun manufacturers to be able to make more guns. There are never enough. The NRA wants to have more firearms sold. More guns sold means more money and more donations for their bottom line.

During times of crisis when Americans should be coming together to find these commonsense solutions, what does the NRA do? They raise every dollar they can by spreading lies and fomenting these conspiracy theories. The mail is out, folks. Look in your mailbox. Direct mail is their specialty. They circulate false mailers to their followers.

For example, "Congress is trying to take away your guns!" or "President Obama wants to confiscate your firearms!"

The NRA uses that money to fund ads against candidates who refuse to bow down to the gun lobby.

Taking a page from the Koch brothers' playbook, the NRA uses so-called dark money to influence elections through mysterious front groups awash in undisclosed campaign cash.

The NRA says they are spending money to protect gun owners. Well, it is clear what it is really about. It is about protecting the power of the National Rifle Association.

Since the Supreme Court's misguided Citizens United decision, the NRA has tripled its political spending to support their radical agenda, but Republicans in Congress have no knowledge of any of this. Senate Republicans pretend the NRA is simply a grassroots organization working for America's best interests. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is false.

The NRA used to advocate for mandatory background checks. It used to encourage reasonable legislation to keep guns away from dangerous individuals.

One month after the Columbine shooting in Colorado, where those two young men killed a lot of innocent people, Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice president of the National Rifle Association—the man who goes on TV all the time justifying what they do—testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime. Here is what he said:

We think it is reasonable to provide mandatory instant criminal background checks for every sale at every gun show. No loopholes anywhere for anyone.

Wayne LaPierre said that.

Now, in 2016, it is a different story. Just yesterday this same organization

pressured Senate Republicans to vote against closing loopholes he said should be closed.

Senate Republicans voted against the Murphy amendment that would have closed loopholes in our Nation's background check system.

Senate Republicans voted against Senator FEINSTEIN's amendment that would have closed the terror loophole, which simply allows suspected terrorists to legally purchase weapons and explosives. We believe it should be closed, but it is not. The loophole is still there because Republicans have always followed the NRA mandate.

That is how strong the NRA's hold is on Senate Republicans. Republicans won't even agree to keep guns away from terrorists.

The Republican Congress has become so thoroughly indoctrinated that it is now the legislative wing of the NRA. While the Republicans do the bidding of the NRA, innocent Americans are being gunned down in schools, churches, and nightclubs.

How many more mass shootings will we have to endure before Republicans realize that they are being used by the NRA? How many more people have to die before Republicans come to grips with the fact that the NRA is only concerned about its bottom line?

The American people are looking to Congress for leadership. They are hoping we will do something substantive to protect our communities from gun violence, but the simple truth is, we cannot protect the American people and protect the NRA at the same time. Public safety demands a solution that prevents dangerous people from possessing weapons, while the NRA exists solely as a fundraising vehicle for more guns, more bullets, and fewer safeguards.

It is time for Republicans in Congress to defend the people who sent them to Washington in the first place, and put the personal safety of their constituents over the needs of the NRA. It is time for the Republicans to tell the NRA: Enough murder, enough carnage, enough guns.

Mr. President, there is no one on the floor seeking recognition. I ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.