



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2022

No. 100

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, dressed in a robe of light, this is the day that You have made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Lord, we place our trust in You. You have guided our life's journey through many dangers, toils, and snares. Your amazing grace continues to sustain us.

Today, show our lawmakers the right path. Lead them by Your truth and save them with Your matchless love. You continue to be the God of our salvation, and without Your mercies, we would be consumed.

And, Lord, we thank You for our incoming summer pages, and, as always, we ask You to bless Ukraine.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021—Resumed

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3967, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3967) to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Tester/Moran amendment No. 5051, in the nature of a substitute.

Schumer amendment No. 5065 (to amend No. 5051), to add an effective date.

Schumer amendment No. 5076 (to the text proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 5051), to add an effective date.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, Democratic and Republican negotiators announced an agreement on a framework for bipartisan gun safety legislation, bringing the Senate one step closer to finally—finally—responding to the plague of gun violence that afflicts our Nation and terrorizes our children.

For the first time in a long time, the Senate has a path forward on legislation that will save lives, reduce gun violence, and keep our communities safe.

Make no mistake about it, we have a lot of work left to do before we actually pass a bill, but yesterday's announcement was a positive and necessary step in the right direction.

Now comes the important work of turning this framework into legislation and legislative language that can pass Congress and be signed by the President. We must continue working with the urgency that this moment demands because, if we can save even one life from gun violence, it will well be worth it.

Once the text of this agreement is finalized, and I hope it will be as soon as possible, I will put this bill on the floor, quickly, so the Senate can move quickly to make gun safety reform a reality.

As I said, I will put this bill on the floor as soon as possible once the text of the final agreement is finalized so the Senate can act quickly to make gun safety reform a reality. So I urge my colleagues to continue working with the same good faith and urgency that has brought us to this point.

Certainly, yesterday's agreement does not have everything Democrats wanted, but it nevertheless represents the most significant reform to gun safety laws that we have seen in decades. If enacted, this legislation will make it harder for mass shooters to access assault rifles by enhancing background checks for those under 21. It will prevent tragedies before they happen by helping States with their red flag laws. It will prevent gun violence at home by closing the so-called boyfriend loophole and establish new penalties for gun traffickers. It will make our neighborhoods safer by investing in mental health and community violence intervention programs. The lion's share of gun violence happens outside the national spotlight, and these intervention programs are some of the most effective ways to reduce crime and make our communities safer.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2899

Altogether, this framework is a good and necessary first step towards changing the reality of gun violence in America. It will lay the foundation for future action. Most importantly, this legislation will go a long way toward saving lives.

I want to thank Senators MURPHY, SINEMA, CORNYN, and TILLIS for working assiduously on this framework.

Senator MURPHY asked me for space to let the negotiators do their work, and I was glad to give it to them because we knew that any chance of getting something real done on gun safety was worth the effort.

I also want to thank my colleagues who were part of the bipartisan guns working group, including Senators BLUMENTHAL, MANCHIN, COONS, HEINRICH, and others.

I want to thank all the advocates, families, and volunteers who lost loved ones, who shared their stories, who marched to make a change. Without the advocates, the families, and the volunteers who lost loved ones, this bill wouldn't have happened because year after year after shooting after shooting, they didn't give up. They persisted, and it helped bring us to this important moment.

For decades, families across the country have seen the same dismal pattern play out whenever a mass shooting strikes the Nation—tragedy followed by inaction. From Columbine to Virginia Tech, to Sandy Hook, to Las Vegas, to Parkland, to Buffalo, to Uvalde, and to so many others, gridlock has prevented Congress from bringing solace to families in grief.

But no matter how many shootings have traumatized this Nation, these families have never given up in their hope of making change happen. Rather than curse the darkness, these families have responded to tragedy by lighting candles. They have shared their stories, they have marched for change, and they have done everything in their power to make sure no other parent, spouse, or sibling has to suffer the pain they have felt and live with every day.

The same is true for all the advocates, and there are so many groups who have worked on gun safety. Many members of these groups are survivors of gun violence. I have a person on my staff who is a survivor of Aurora. They all worked tirelessly for years to enact commonsense gun safety laws.

Despite decades of frustrating gridlock, I hope that yesterday's announcement brings some sense of accomplishment to these grieving families and to all of those who have marched and protested and written letters and tweeted because it is thanks to them we are at the threshold of progress.

Nearly 30 years ago, I was the author of the Brady background checks bill, and that was the last time Congress took meaningful action to address gun violence. It was a different era back then, but the lesson of that experience remains relevant today: The right law can decrease gun deaths. I believe that

there are tens of thousands of people alive today because the Brady law was passed in 1994. They don't know who they are, we don't know who they are, but it is virtually certain that that law saved thousands and thousands of lives.

I urge my colleagues to think of all the lives we can now save by turning this framework into law. Americans have waited long enough for us to take action. Too many lives—too many—have been already lost. Too many families—too many—have been left grieving.

While we can't undo the tragedies of the past, we can act now to make them less likely in the future. If this framework is enacted into law, it will do precisely that, and I urge all of us to continue working to pass gun safety legislation soon.

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Madam President, now on the PACT Act, as negotiations continue off the floor on gun safety reform, today, the Senate will move forward with the most significant expansion of veteran healthcare benefits in decades—in decades. In a few hours, the Senate will vote on cloture on the substitute amendment for the PACT Act, which Chairman TESTER and Ranking Member MORAN have been working on for months. It is my hope that we can finally pass this legislation in the next few days, well before the week is out.

The changes outlined by the PACT Act are long overdue. It would make sure any veteran suffering from toxic exposure in the line of duty could get the VA benefits they deserve. It would end the indignity that too many veterans face right now of carrying the burden of toxic exposure on their own and being forced to jump through hoop after hoop after hoop by the VA before they can get any benefits, and many of them never get them. As many as 3½ million veterans could benefit from the reforms brought about by this bill.

I urge my colleagues to keep working so we can push this bill over the finish line A-S-A-P because both sides want it, our veterans deserve it, and the veterans service organizations—the VSOs—have been telling Congress for years that change is needed at the VA. So before the week is out, the Senate should do its job and pass this bill.

SHIPPING REFORM

Madam President, now on the shipping bill, a few months ago, the Senate unanimously passed legislation to fight inflation by fixing unfair shipping practices that are clogging our ports and straining our supply chains. Tonight, the House will finally act on that bill and send it to the President's desk.

Inflation is the greatest frustration America has right now, and backlogs at our ports are one of the biggest drivers of price hikes that we will address through this bill.

By now, we have all seen pictures of scores of ships lining up in ports from Las Vegas to Savannah, to Seattle, to New York and New Jersey. These back-

logs have not only caused great harm for American exporters trying to send their products out into the world, they have also skyrocketed the price of goods coming into this country. The backlogs create a brutal double whammy that ultimately leaves American families paying the price.

I applaud Speaker PELOSI and all of my House colleagues for taking action on this shipping reform bill, and I want to thank my colleagues here in the Senate—Senators KLOBUCHAR and THUNE, the authors of the legislation; Chairwoman CANTWELL, who shepherded it through; and others for their leadership when this bill was before the Senate.

By reforming unfair shipping practices, Congress is taking a much needed step to lowering costs, clearing our ports, and relieving supply chains. I thank all of my colleagues for a job well done.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 969.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Ana Isabel de Alba, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

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 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. 969, Ana Isabel de Alba, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Richard Blumenthal, Alex Padilla, Christopher A. Coons, Gary C. Peters, Elizabeth Warren, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Baldwin, Tina Smith, Mark R. Warner, Edward J. Markey, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Jeanne Shaheen, Sherrod Brown, Margaret Wood Hassan.

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.