

to see a diplomatic solution—everyone here. I do not know of anybody in this body that does not want to see that happen.

But I also know, and I think the administration knows this as well, that the actions of this body, candidly, over the years are the main reasons that we are where we are. But, again, I will close; I know I am getting redundant. Our majority leader in his wisdom—and I know the majority leader decides who serves on committees. He decides who the chairman is of those committees. I realize that with that you have a great ability to keep people from expressing their will or rising and really wanting to do something in a bipartisan way.

I am coming to understand, especially in recent weeks, what bipartisan means to our majority leader is whatever he decides is “bipartisan.” Even though the majority of the people in this body would really like to weigh in on this policy, to do so in an appropriate way so that we do not, in fact, do something that does something to harm the negotiation, but does something to strengthen our hand in these negotiations.

That will not occur. To me, that is a disservice to this body. It is a disservice to this Nation. It is a disservice to every Member. No doubt, when each of us do not have the opportunity to express ourselves through amendments, what that really means is the folks we represent back home have no rights to have their concerns expressed or voted on.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the order of February 29, 1960, the hour of 12 noon having arrived, the Senate having been in continuous session since yesterday, the Senate will now suspend for a prayer by the Senate Chaplain.

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

Let us pray.

Sovereign God, ultimate judge of the leadership of this Nation, thank You for loving us and calling us to be Your people. Make us worthy of the honors You have bestowed upon us. Today, give to our lawmakers Your grace and peace so that they may use their talents to empower people to live lives of purpose.

Lord, invade the thinking of our Senators with insights and inspiration that they could not produce on their own. May Your omniscient wisdom guide them as You strengthen them to do Your will.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Heather Anne Higginbottom, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources?

Mr. RUBIO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “nay” and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) would have voted “yea.”

The result was announced—yeas 74, nays 17, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 272 Ex.]

YEAS—74

Ayotte	Gillibrand	Moran
Baldwin	Grassley	Murkowski
Baucus	Hagan	Murphy
Begich	Harkin	Murray
Bennet	Heinrich	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Paul
Booker	Heller	Portman
Brown	Hirono	Pryor
Burr	Hoeven	Reed
Cantwell	Isakson	Reid
Cardin	Johanns	Rockefeller
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Casey	Kaine	Schumer
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Tester
Collins	Leahy	Toomey
Coons	Levin	Udall (CO)
Corker	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Feinstein	McConnell	Whitehouse
Fischer	Menendez	Wicker
Flake	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Mikulski	

NAYS—17

Barrasso	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Blunt	Lee	Sessions
Boozman	McCain	Shelby
Cornyn	Risch	Thune
Cruz	Roberts	Vitter
Enzi	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—9

Alexander	Crapo	Inhofe
Boxer	Graham	Kirk
Coburn	Hatch	Schatz

The nomination was confirmed.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Anne W. Patterson, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Ambassador, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs).

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher Murphy, Robert Menendez, Christopher A. Coons, Angus S. King, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Amy Klobuchar, Benjamin L. Cardin, Dianne Feinstein, Tom Udall, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Bernard Sanders, Barbara Boxer, Brian Schatz, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Michael F. Bennet.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, under the previous order the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Anne W. Patterson, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Ambassador, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “nay” and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) would have voted “nay.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 273 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin	Coons	Kaine
Baucus	Donnelly	King
Begich	Durbin	Klobuchar
Bennet	Feinstein	Landrieu
Blumenthal	Franken	Leahy
Booker	Gillibrand	Levin
Brown	Hagan	Manchin
Cantwell	Harkin	Markey
Cardin	Heinrich	Menendez
Carper	Heitkamp	Merkley
Casey	Hirono	Mikulski
Collins	Johnson (SD)	Murkowski

Murphy	Rockefeller	Udall (CO)
Murray	Sanders	Udall (NM)
Nelson	Schumer	Warner
Pryor	Shaheen	Warren
Reed	Stabenow	Whitehouse
Reid	Tester	Wyden

NAYS—36

Ayotte	Fischer	Paul
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Heller	Roberts
Burr	Hoeben	Rubio
Chambliss	Isakson	Scott
Coats	Johanns	Sessions
Cochran	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Corker	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	McCain	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Vitter
Enzi	Moran	Wicker

NOT VOTING—10

Alexander	Graham	McCaskill
Boxer	Hatch	Schatz
Coburn	Inhofe	
Crapo	Kirk	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 54, the nays are 36. The motion is agreed to.

NOMINATION OF ANNE W. PATTERSON TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Anne W. Patterson, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Ambassador, to be an Assistant Secretary of State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 15 of the 113th Congress, there will now be up to 8 hours of postcloture consideration of the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it seems hard to believe that tomorrow will be the anniversary of the deaths of 20 little boys and girls in Newtown, CT. Not only those little boys and girls, but six educators, whose lives were taken by an unspeakable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Their names are Allison, Avielle, Charlotte, Daniel, Olivia, Josephine, Ana, Dylan, Madeleine, Catherine, Chase, Jesse, James, Grace, Noah, Jack, Emilie, Caroline, Jessica, and Benjamin.

These little boys and girls were 6 and 7 years old. They were murdered. Although their years were few, their lives have touched and will continue to touch us all.

As it did a year ago, my heart goes out to the families of these little angels, and to all those affected by this tragedy. I honor the ultimate sacrifice of Victoria Soto, Dawn Hochsprung, Mary Sherlach, Lauren Rousseau, Rachel Davino, and Anne Marie Murphy—teachers and educators who died trying to safeguard the children in their care.

These six educators devoted their lives to teaching Newtown's children how to read and write, how to add and subtract, how to be good boys and girls,

and how to grow into good men and women. They gave their lives to keep those children safe. They are a source of hope in a world that sometimes seems hopeless.

It is hard to comprehend the type of tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook, let alone to recover from it. But I am inspired by the families in this community who have found purpose in the face of despair.

There is a Tibetan saying that says, "Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength."

The Dalai Lama says that whatever trouble you have experienced, and however deep your heartbreak, "If we lose our hope, that's our real disaster."

The families of Newtown have channeled their pain into activism, raising awareness about gun violence and mental health issues in this country.

I have met with them on a number of occasions, and their bravery in the face of such pain is truly an inspiration not only to me but to all of us.

I am proud of how hard my caucus fought this year to pass safeguards that would keep guns out of the hands of felons and people with severe mental illness. That is why 85 percent of the American people agree with us. Why should someone who has a severe mental illness or someone who is a criminal be able to purchase a gun? They shouldn't. Those who are trying to stop that legislation from going forward should be embarrassed and ashamed of themselves.

I personally am happy with my vote to keep military-style weapons off the streets and to improve our mental safety. But at a time when more than 30,000 Americans are killed by guns each year, it is shameful that the Senate can't pass gun safety legislation that would protect our most vulnerable citizens—our kids, our children, our babies.

So I told the families of the 26 innocents killed a year ago in Newton, and the 173 children killed by guns since December 14, 2012, that Senate Democrats will not give up on them, and that is still the fact. We will not give up on the victims of 26 school shootings that occurred since the Newtown massacre, including one in Sparks, NV, where a young man came with a gun. Who stepped forward to save the children? A teacher. He was killed. Two others were injured in that assault. I will not give up on the families and friends of those gunned down at a movie theater in Colorado, a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, a shopping mall in Oregon, and every day on the streets of America's cities.

Last December I promised the families a meaningful conversation about how to change America's culture of violence. I want everyone within the sound of my voice to know that the conversation is not over.

The American people will prevail on this issue. When 85 percent of the American people believe in an issue—when 85 percent of the American people

believe in not only an issue but in a quest, in fairness, it is going to happen. It is only a question of when it happens.

I urge the families and friends of those killed in Newtown to never lose hope. Never lose hope.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, John Adams, America's first Vice President—and second President—and whose bust sits right above us looking over the Senate every day, once said:

Facts are stubborn things. And whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.

It has been more than 3 years since President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law. In that time, its opponents have made every effort to misinform the American public about this law and the vital benefits it provides the American people.

But as Adams said, facts are stubborn things, and I want to make sure the facts about the Affordable Care Act do not get lost amongst the criticism and false claims.

So here are the facts.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, 100 million people have received free preventive care, more than 7 million seniors have saved nearly \$9 billion on prescription drugs, and 25 million people who lacked health insurance will finally be able to get the coverage they need.

The Affordable Care Act has also helped slow the growth in health care costs. National health care spending grew by 3.9 percent each year from 2009 to 2011—the slowest rate on record.

I can remember not too many years earlier the annual rate increase in health care costs was in the neighborhood of 6, 7, 8, 9 percent a year. It is a dramatic reduction.

That means we will save huge sums of money down the line. For example, the CMS projection of national health care expenditures in 2019 has dropped by \$574 billion in 3 years. That is \$574 billion in reduced projection of national health care costs in the year 2019.

While there is more than just the Affordable Care Act at work in those savings, it certainly has played a part.

The health insurance marketplaces are open for business, and every day we hear how the Web site healthcare.gov is working better. It is picking up steam. It is handling more and more consumers.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday that—and I am quoting—"the number of applicants who dropped a plan into their virtual grocery carts was climbing at a rapid clip."

Those are the facts. The Affordable Care Act is helping millions of people. It is improving millions of lives.