And I didn't think too much about it because I was running at full speed as a new mayor. I was 36, 37 years old. The violent crime in our city was peaking. There were too many shooters in that hot summer. I will never forget. And I would run to every street corner I could where there was a shooting in our city. And I would stand there, and I would say: This is not who we are. This is not America. This is not Newark. We are going to overcome this. And I would give street-level sermons telling people about the vision for our city. And, God, we would eventually turn down the violence.

But in those early days, a month into my office, I show up on a street corner, and there is a body covered by a sheet and another one being loaded on the back of an ambulance. And I barely paid attention to the humanity on the street. I didn't even ask for the names. I was too busy ministering to the living.

I get home that night to steal a couple hours of sleep in my early days as mayor. And I will never forget sitting in my bedroom with my BlackBerry, going through it, and I saw the name on the homicide report. At that moment in my life, something broke in me that will never fix. It wasn't an anonymous name that I didn't know. It wasn't just a cold issuance of another crime in a big city. The name was Hassan Washington. Four floors below me he lived with his grandma, a kid I promised to help with his dreams.

I will never forget his funeral for as long as I live. Perry's Funeral Home—God bless them, those professionals. I entered that funeral home as the newly minted mayor. And I was so upset when I saw it was in their basement room because going in that room was like descending into the bowel of a ship, a narrow staircase. And I get into this room. We were piled in on top of each other like we were chained together in grief, and people were crying. Everybody was showing up. Everybody was there for what is an American tradition: almost every day, another boy, another Black boy in a box killed by a gun.

And I wish I could tell you that I was strong in that moment. I wish I could tell you that I was mayoral, that I was a leader and the father of a city, but I wasn't. I felt shame. I felt hurt. I felt embarrassment.

I tried to lean on other people in that room. There were folk I had known for years, but, finally, I had enough. I had to run. I left there. I jumped in my SUV, drove to my new office in City Hall. And for the first time—not the last but for the first time as the mayor of New Jersey's great and largest city, I sat in that office, and I wept over a dead boy. And all I could think about was climbing through the feelings of shame and hurt and pain. All I could think about was that funeral in that basement room, packed full of people. All of us were there for his death, but where were we for his life?

What a morbid thing we have been doing here tonight, reading the names of dead people killed in our country, hoping that somehow—somehow we could change. Well, I will tell you this right now: We are in a distraught moment in our Nation, where most of us agree on solid steps. It won't solve all the problems, but it would make a difference. It would save a Hassan. It would save a Shahad. It would save the 3- and 4-year-olds, the names I have read.

The question is, How courageous are we? How much do we truly love one another? What will we do? This is a moment in American history that could be the inflection point. If we act now, we could end some of this nightmare. If we fail to do anything, we will be back here again. The list of the dead will be longer. The heartache and the pain and the wounds and the grief and the sorrow and the shame will be deeper in America, the world's greatest country.

We must demand of each other a greater love. We must end the poverty of empathy. We must free ourselves from this prison, from this dungeon. We must release ourselves from these chains. We must demand that this Nation be the Nation we want it to be, be the Nation we hope it should be, be the Nation that those in military uniform died for—a nation where we make real the greatest principles of humanity, the greatest calling of every faith that there is—not words, but real, true, manifestation of the principle and the call.

Will we be silent? Will we be ignorant? Will we avoid? Will we do nothing? Will we be passive? Or will we truly be a nation that loves one another?

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, Marcia Reitman Currie from New York; Mitchell Wright, Jr., from Missouri; Nicholas Tarpley from Pennsylvania; Reuben Lewis III from California; Rhyce Wingate-Bey, Maryland; Robert Crochiere, Massachusetts; Samuel Lamont Smith-Williams, Tennessee; Spencer Wilcox, Oregon; Anthony Castillo, New York—we didn't come close to finishing this list tonight. We didn't make a dent in the list of those names of the people who have died from gun violence in 2021 alone, a year in which almost 10,000 people have died in less than 3 months in suicides and homicides and accidental shootings.

It is a choice. None of this is inevitable. Almost all of it is preventable. It only happens here in the United States of America because other countries make different choices.

Congress goes the next 2 weeks on a district work period. We wanted to come to the floor tonight to make clear that we are not going to forget those who have died through the inaction of this body, their national leaders; that we are going to renew our commitment to be better and to change and to begin that process in the wake of the shootings in Boulder and Atlanta by making sure that everybody hears the names of those who have died.

I yield to Senator BLUMENTHAL to wrap up for the evening.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, there is no last word tonight. There is no final saying here. There are no final names. Nora Beller, Tito Roman, Aaliyah Eubanks, Dominick Boston, Brad Keel, James Ray Huddelston—we could be here a long time. But the tragedy is there will be more names, 100 more, at this time tomorrow night.

And every one of these names is a future cut short. Every one of them is a life that could have given so much, bringing more light and joy, pride, grace, dignity.

My colleagues have come to the floor with great eloquence. I want to thank them. But the most eloquent part tonight is the names. And we should take inspiration from the courage of their families, the strength of the survivors, advocates, and activists who are forming a political movement that is creating ripples turning into waves that will overcome. They will overcome the intransigence and cowardice of colleagues who fail to heed the American public, and they will be held accountable.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the clock struck 12, and the chaos of whistles, bells, and sirens echoed down Michigan Avenue. All across Chicago, you could hear—feel—the jubilance erupting in the streets. Women of all ages sat on the hoods of Studebakers and Model Ts, waving American flags as they rode through The Loop in celebration.

A decades-long fight for equality had finally come to an end. Just days earlier, on August 26, 1920, U.S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby had issued a proclamation. The 19th Amendment had been ratified, and women in America had secured the right to vote, once and for all. And though this victory was monumental, America still had a long way to go.

Nearly a century later, on the morning of Saturday, November 7, 2020,

jubilance once again erupted in the streets of Chicago. Drivers honked their horns all along Michigan Avenue, while passengers leaned out of their windows, waving American flags. Joe Biden had finally been declared the victor of the 2020 Presidential election, his running mate: KAMALA HARRIS, the first African-American and first woman Vice President of the United States. The scene in Chicago was a fitting tribute to the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment's ratification.

This month, America celebrates Women's History Month. And the people of my State are proud of the leading role Illinois has played in America's long struggle for gender equality. In 2018, Illinois lawmakers ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Our State attorney general, along with the attorneys general of two other States, is now pressing in Federal court for the ERA to be officially recognized as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as it should be.

We are proud of the remarkable women our State has produced. Some were Illinoisans by birth, others by choice. They include Ida B. Wells, the courageous journalist, anti-lynching leader, and suffragist; Jane Addams, the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and a cofounder of the Hull House, a Chicago landmark; Mamie Till Mobley, a mother who forced the world to reckon with the brutality of racism when she opened the casket of her only son, Emmett; Betty Friedan, author of ''The Feminine Mystique,'' a book that inspired a new wave of American feminism; Gwendolyn Brooks, poet laureate of Illinois from 1968 until her death in 2000 and the first Black woman inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Sandra Cisneros, a renowned writer and educator whose work is taught in classrooms across the country; Jeanne Gang, a world-class architect whose work graces the skyline of Chicago, including the tallest building in the world designed by a woman, the St. Regis Chicago; Jackie Joyner-Kersee, one of the world's greatest track and field athletes and the founder of the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Foundation, which offers athletic and educational programming to kids in my hometown of East St. Louis, IL; Precious Brady-Davis, an environmentalist and transgender woman who has shed light on the experiences of transgender parents; Oprah Winfrey, the host of a daytime talk show you may have heard of—her career as a talk show host actually began on ''A.M. Chicago''; Hillary Clinton, the first woman to be nominated for President by a major political party, she may have represented New York in the U.S. Senate, but her roots are firmly planted in Park Ridge, IL; Michelle Obama, another former First Lady who broke barriers—she is the pride of Chicago's South Side, and I am grateful to call her a friend; and my colleague in this body, Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH, an American hero.

In 2018, the people of Illinois elected Juliana Stratton as our 48th Lieutenant Governor, the first woman of color ever elected to hold a constitutional office in our State. She is a dynamo and part of a new generation of women who are taking their rightful place as political leaders in our Nation. In the 2020 elections, women across America turned out in historic numbers, and voters elected a record number of women to higher office.

But we still have a long way to go. America lags well behind other developed nations when it comes to gender equality in our government. Women account for fewer than 30 percent of our representatives in either Chamber of Congress. Countries like Finland, Sweden, and New Zealand are far closer to 50 percent, meaning complete gender parity.

So it is certainly welcome news that President Biden has nominated 12 women for Cabinet and Cabinet-level positions, including Janet Yellen, the first female Secretary of Treasury, and Congresswoman DEB HAALAND, who would be the first Native American to ever serve as a Cabinet Secretary.

While the past year has been one of historic triumph for women, it has also been one of unprecedented challenge. The pandemic has disproportionately devastated women. In December, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the United States lost 140,000 jobs in a single month. A staggering number that is even worse than it seems, women accounted for every single one of those job losses. Men, meanwhile, managed to gain 16,000 jobs that month.

Working women, and especially working women of color, have been hardest hit by this pandemic. When schools across the country were forced to shut their doors, these women were thrust into the dual roles of breadwinner and primary caregiver. They shouldered the burden of keeping our families and children safe. This is essential work. And just as frontline workers need PPE to safely do their jobs, working mothers need economic relief to do theirs.

That is what the American Rescue Plan President Biden signed into law this month delivers. It expands the child tax credit, offering up to $3,600 per child; it invests in our families, by increasing the value of SNAP benefits and expanding childcare assistance; and it gives every working American $1,400. The American Rescue Plan will help working mothers weather this once-in-a-century public health and economic crisis.

After a year of COVID lockdowns and losses, America is finally beginning to feel a sense of hope that the end of this pandemic is coming, and looking at the headlines, it is hard not to share that optimism.

Under President Biden, we are vaccinating more than 2 million Americans a day. As of last week, more people in the United States have been fully vaccinated than our total number of coronavirus cases since the beginning of the pandemic. By the beginning of summer, we should have a large enough supply of vaccines to inoculate every adult in America. This is one of the greatest scientific feats in modern history.

A major reason we were able to develop COVID–19 vaccines at such lightning-fast speed is because of the pioneering research conducted over decades by a brilliant scientist, one of the unsung heroes of our world. Her name is Katalin Karikó. Like many American heroes, she is an immigrant. She began her research in a lab in Hungary, when it was still under Communist rule. Back then, she believed that synthetic messenger RNA could hold the key to treating some of the world's most debilitating diseases.

She followed that dream across continents, immigrating to the United States in the 1980s. But people—and, let's be honest, men—doubted her at every turn. Her grants were rejected. She faced demotions. She was even threatened with deportation. One of the few institutions that supported Katalin's work was the National Institutes of Health. The experts at NIH didn't just follow the science; they supported the visionary behind the science. And that investment paid off. Her research into messenger RNA eventually blazed a trail for the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, which are helping curb the spread of COVID–19 at this very moment.

As we turn the corner of this pandemic, let us remember that it was not a miracle that got us here. It was science. It was dedication. It was the work of trailblazers like Katalin Karikó.

As I mentioned, Betty Friedan is one of the great women leaders to come out of Illinois. In her seminal work, ''The Feminine Mystique,'' she asked: ''Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves?''

As we celebrate women's history, let us also renew our commitment to investing in women's futures. Who knows how many Katalin Karikós are out there, ready to change the world?

For our own good, for the good of humankind, let's ensure every woman has an opportunity to ''become themselves.''

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as a Member of Congress, I have cast a number of important votes over the years, votes on whether to send our Nation's brave servicemembers to war or to impeach a President, but perhaps the most important vote I have ever cast was 11 years ago this week, in support of the Affordable Care Act.

Since the law's passage in 2010, the ACA has provided health insurance to more than 23 million Americans, including nearly 1 million Illinoisans. That is almost 1 out of every 20 people