

Statement of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein

Senate Judiciary Committee

Executive Business Meeting

February 14, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand that we are going to be holding over nominations today, so I would like to take my time to talk about an issue that is extremely important to me.

A year ago, on this very day, seventeen people lost their lives in Parkland, Florida. It remains the deadliest school shooting in United States history.

It began with a young man who had a long and troubled history.

In 2012, this young man's middle school suspended him for fighting.

The next year, his mother called the Sheriff's department to report that he had anger issues and had thrown her against a wall.

Logs of 911 calls reveal a more disturbing pattern of violence in the home. Between November 2008 and June 2014, his mother made fifteen separate 911 calls to report disputes and disturbances.

In February 2016, a neighbor reported to law enforcement that an online post of the young man with guns seemed to suggest that he wanted to shoot up a school.

The young man eventually commits an assault at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and leaves the school on February 8, 2017. Three days later, on February 11, 2017, he buys an AR-15. He was able to buy at least ten weapons before the tragedy.

These were troubling signs. The signs, however, did not go unnoticed.

In September 2017, the FBI was alerted to a comment the young man made beneath an online video that said, "I'm going to be a professional school shooter."

In November of 2017, a family member actually asked law enforcement to take this young man's weapons, in light of his mother's death. Local law enforcement also received a separate tip that this young man was a "school shooter in the making."

In January 2018, the FBI got another tip about this young man's "gun ownership, desire to kill people, erratic behavior, and disturbing social media posts, as well as the potential of him conducting a school shooting."

Just a month later, he walked into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, armed with an AR-15, took seventeen lives and wounded seventeen others.

As a nation, we were devastated. After each one of these terrible shootings, the question remains of how we will face the next day.

It was the survivors of that shooting, the students, teachers and parents, who answered that question. They rose up and said: “Enough.” They asked us to take action to stop mass shootings from ever happening again.

Just a few months ago, on September 7, 2018, Aalayah Eastmond, a Parkland student declared: “The youth is urging our society to recognize the depth and seriousness of our gun violence epidemic in America.”

It is because of those voices that today I am introducing the *Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2019*.

We know that families and friends are in the best position to recognize early signs of trouble before tragedy strikes.

To solve this problem, California enacted a law in the aftermath of the Isla Vista attack that enables family members or law enforcement to ask courts for orders to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

Modeled on existing domestic-violence laws, when a judge believes there is sufficient evidence that someone is a danger to themselves or others, the order temporarily prohibits that person from purchasing or possessing firearms or ammunition.

The *Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2019* would create new grants to incentivize states into taking similar measures to prevent gun violence and enact these sorts of laws, commonly called “red-flag laws.”

I have said repeatedly, I thought that when the shooting took place in Sandy Hook Elementary, that would be the moment Congress would step up.

Unfortunately, despite our efforts gun safety legislation was not enacted.

I am grateful that last week Chairman Graham said he intends to hold a hearing on red-flag laws. As a nation, we should not have to endure one more shooting we know could have been prevented.

As communities across our nation mark the first anniversary of the Parkland tragedy, let us remember the hope that these young students have brought to all of us.

As the elected leaders of this body, we must take steps never to forget what happened in Parkland, Isla Vista, Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, Columbine, and countless other places across our country where gun violence has needlessly taken lives.

We have seen the costs of inaction. I hope my Republican colleagues will join me in remembering the victims of this attack and support this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.