

CBS Mornings

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7:17:53 a.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Republican Sen. Cassidy]

NATE BURLESON: Still ahead, Republican Senator Bill Cassidy will talk with us about the latest mass shooting in America. Does he believe there is anything Congress should do about this?

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7:30:22 a.m.

8 minutes and 19 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Sen. Cassidy Reacts to Deadly Shooting at Mall in Allen, Texas]

TONY DOKOUPIL: And the mass shooting in Texas is renewing a lot of questions including a big one, what can be done to end this cycle of gun violence in America? In this latest instance, eight people killed with an AR-15 style rifle, including children, and we can all agree it happens far too often. So to talk about some of the potential answers, we are joined now by Republican senator, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana. Senator, thank you very much for being here.

SENATOR BILL CASSIDY (R-LA): Thank you for having me.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOKOUPIL: We have so many important issues in this country, but the gun issue is so urgent, it seems like all we can talk about sometimes. And I know you always say as a physician, don't just do something, think. So when something like this happens. What do you think?

CASSIDY: Well, first, we have to say that one, it is a tragedy. I mean, your heart, oh, my gosh, it's a tragedy in of itself, and then the children there that just breaks your heart even more.

KING: Yes.

CASSIDY: I would say, though, that we have the response to the Uvalde shooting, the Save Our Communities Act, a bipartisan bill, which has yet to be fully implemented. If you think about the three things that usually result in a mass shooting, motivation — domestic violence, criminal gang activity, or someone who is mentally ill. The Uvalde response bill has something to address each of those. I will say that it's a big bill. I'll also say the administration has been slow to implement portions of it. Let's get it out. Let's push it and let's see what effect that has.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Polls Show Majority Want Limits on Guns, Assault-Style Weapons]

DOKOUPIL: Well, then just to clarify it for people breaking out that big bill into individual points, we were looking at a Fox News poll earlier this morning that shows 80 percent plus support or almost 80 percent support for things like criminal background checks, moving the age of gun purchases up to 21, even almost 80 percent support for a 30-day waiting period. Of those issues, this is Republicans — this is Republicans with support at that level. Would you support any of those actions?

CASSIDY: Let's look at what we already have. I would support it if it makes a difference, perhaps. Let me phrase this. In the Uvalde response bill, we increase the time period for the background check to occur. Does it have to be 30 days? No. It has to be long enough to be effective, and for those who are considered higher risk, we gave a longer period of time for authorities to be able to do a background check and it is predicted that if this had been the case, you can look at the shooting in Charlotte — in South Carolina, I'm sorry, the one where the man walks into the African-American church, that would have given them time to prevent that. So, it is not the length of time, it's the adequacy. I think in that bill, we increase the adequacy.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Gun Violence Is Leading Cause of Death Among Kids in America]

DOKOUPIL: I mean, there's definitely evidence, though, that criminal background checks, if universal, would make a difference. In the states where they have them, they have a lower homicide rate. We've had people under the age of 21 buy guns illegally, do terrible things with them, so raising the age could help. I mean —

CASSIDY: But can I respond to that last word?

DOKOUPIL: — yeah. Sure.

CASSIDY: So again, in the Uvalde response bill, a lot of the people who have bought weapons when they were younger had a record when they were an adolescent, that would have been a red flag. They turn 18, those records are sealed. They go out and buy a weapon, because the reason to not let them buy is now sealed. Under the Uvalde response bill, we allow a judge to say wait a second, you're going to unseal those. You can look at those, pull them out and see whether or not this person should or should not have a weapon. So I would argue that we address the situation that you brought up, but it has to be completely implemented.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Sen. Cassidy Reacts to Deadly Shooting at Mall in Allen, Texas]

KING: But in the meantime, guns are the — which is shocking to many people — guns are still the leading cause of death for children more than motor vehicle accidents, cancer, heart disease.

BURLESON: It is shocking, Gayle.

KING: Every time — it blows me away every time I hear it. Every time that there is an incident, someone always comes up, but in this case, in this case, in this case, what can be done right now? What can be done right now? Because it's no longer a matter of if it can happen to you, it almost seems like a matter of when it could happen to you.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Gun Violence Is Leading Cause of Death Among Kids in America]

CASSIDY: So Gayle, I think if I'm correct, most of those deaths among children are accidental. Yes, we read about the shooting in the mall, but most of them are accidental. It is up to a parent to make sure that a child does not have access to a weapon. I've sponsored legislation that would give a tax credit, that would allow parents to lock up their gun, give them a tax credit to buy the safe, so they can lock it up so the child cannot get there.

DOKOUPIL: Why not go further and mandate that people who own guns have lockboxes? I know gun owners often say, well look, I need to get to that gun quickly. That's why I own the gun in the first place. But why not make it a law, not just an encouraged action?

CASSIDY: Tony, what if you're poor? What if you're buying the weapon because you're thinking, in your inner city neighborhood, somebody is going to break in? That's increasingly common that such people are buying weapons. And all of a sudden you're poor, but now you've got to buy something else? I think you have to step into people's lives, and when you step into their lives, it is a little bit more complex than a wonderful show like this where we say, well, what about this solution? What about that solution?

KING: Are there behind-the-scenes conversations with Republicans about, listen, this has gotten out of control. We really need to do so — at this point, I don't even know what you need to do.

NATE BURLESON: Right.

KING: But are there behind-the-scenes conversation? Because I always know there's a public conversation and there's a private conversation among parties and both sides. Is there anything going on behind the scenes?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Polls Show Majority Want Limits on Guns, Assault-Style Weapons]

CASSIDY: Again, I'll go — I keep saying this, but it's just so true.

KING: But nothing changes.

CASSIDY: You've got to implement the Uvalde response bill. Let me give you an example of a conversation I had. The superintendent of education in Louisiana calls me up and says, we are

not allowed to use this money to harden schools. What? In the Uvalde response bill, we saw that some schools are very vulnerable and we put dollars forward so that there would be a place for somebody could be screened before they go in and perhaps cause harm.

BURLESON: Yes.

CASSIDY: The rule is coming out of the administration where that you can't use it to harden schools. I call Secretary Cardona. Okay, I will correct that. But he has only issued that correction for three schools, three states.

BURLESON: Yes.

CASSIDY: So we've got to push that money out and see what happens.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Gun Violence in America; Sen. Cassidy Reacts to Deadly Shooting at Mall in Allen, Texas]

BURLESON: Senator, we understand that there are complexities to this, and I want to maintain a certain level of sensitivity, as I ask this question, because we do have victims that are dealing and still healing. But one bystander who was treating one of the victims said he found one victim without a face. And this points to the issue of the types of firearms that people are walking into these malls with, walking into our schools, our churches and it seems like these assault rifles are being used more and more. What are we doing about giving these weapons of war to people who shouldn't have them?

CASSIDY: Yeah. So in the Uvalde response bill, which again, has to be fully implemented.

DOKOUPIL: I hear you.

KING: Yeah.

CASSIDY: If you go back to the shootings that I described, they are either gang related, domestic violence, or they are going to be someone who is mentally ill.

BURLESON: Okay.

CASSIDY: Now, in each of those, we attempt to address it. Now, Nate, I don't know anything about you, man, except that you're a former wide receiver and you've got a tie that I never thought you could wear on TV.

BURLESON: Thank you, man. You did your research.

DOKOUPIL: It works as a bandana.

KING: I take that as a compliment.

CASSIDY: It's a great tie. But if you had a weapon, I would have no problem with it. What we did is if somebody has got a criminal background, and they obtained whatever weapon it is, AR-15 or not and they obtain it illegally, we attempt to go after the person who bought it for that criminal, who allowed that criminal to obtain it illegally. We have to recognize that we can ban these weapons, but there's millions already out there and somebody who decides to obtain one illegally probably can. So we need to stop that illegal transaction. We can say let's ban them. They are already out there by the millions, so what do we do? Go out and confiscate —

KING: Do you believe —

BURLESON: But we have to do something.

KING: Yes, do you believe, Senator, you're doing all you can do? Do you believe that?

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CASSIDY: Oh, yeah, as I was mentioning, I had a conversation with Secretary Cardona. We have these dollars out there to harden schools. This was after Nashville.

KING: Mhmm.

CASSIDY: And at the time, they weren't going to release them unless there was a previous history of threat at a school. Wait, we're trying to be ahead of a threat, not react.

BURLESON: Yeah.

CASSIDY: And so I can look at what I'm doing in terms of mental health, in terms of attempting to implement the Uvalde response bill and other things to say that I am leaning into this issue.

BURLESON: Yeah. We wanted to touch on the economy, but that just means you have to come back.

DOKOUPIL: Yeah. Yes. We've got a lot we can get to.

BURLESON: I'll let you borrow my tie, to spice up the outfit a little bit.

CASSIDY: No, no. Let me see the next one, man. Let me see the next one.

KING: Did you hear he said, spice up your outfit a little bit.

CASSIDY: I forgot my tie. My friend lent this.

DOKOUPIL: It's a loaner. All right.

KING: You look fine.