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No. 67

## House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
May 11, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable FRED UPTON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

### GUNS

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, our responsibility in Congress is to find ways for the Federal Government to be a better partner in making our communities more livable for American families, to ensure that they are safe, economically secure, and healthy.

Since I have been in Congress just 3 years, there have been eight multiple shooting deaths on our school campuses, with young children shooting other children and teachers. The epidemic of gun violence amongst our

youth has tragic consequences in terms of loss of life, physical safety, the health of our community, to say nothing of the tremendous financial costs that are involved.

For all the attention to the Littleton massacre, this is, in fact, occurring every day. It is just that the pain is scattered from town to town, from city to city in isolated bursts that even without the massive national media coverage is nonetheless producing pain every bit as real.

Yesterday there was a conference at the White House on reducing gun violence amongst our children. It was assailed by some because it did not go far enough in suggesting steps that virtually every other country has done to reduce gun violence.

Over 5,000 American children are killed by firearms every year in this country. By contrast, only 15 people in the entire country of Japan were murdered with handguns last year. At the same time, it was attacked by apologists for gun violence, who contend that there really are no useful government initiatives to reduce gun violence other than stricter enforcement of laws, more prison time for criminals, and wider use of firearms.

I am heartened by the meeting and the discussion yesterday, because most Americans know that the people who hold the most extreme views are simply wrong. Just as there is no single identifiable cause of the Littleton tragedy, there is no single magic solution. But it is defeatist in the extreme and an abrogation of our responsibility as Americans, and especially as Members of Congress, to fail to do everything in our power to make a difference.

The research shows we can and that we will be supported by the vast majority of the American people if we do take action. For example, we must stop the travesty of allowing the gun industry to operate without protections for public health.

There ought to be the same scrutiny applied to real guns as applied to toy guns as far as consumer protections are concerned. We should not sell one more new gun in this country that does not tell us if there is a bullet in the chamber.

There ought to be no loopholes for the background check requirements of the Brady bill, which has prevented more than a quarter million known felons from buying weapons. We ought to extend that prohibition to deny people with a history of violent and reckless behavior the ability to purchase and own firearms.

The Federal Government should select a date in the near future when it will require that all the guns that we supply to our thousands of employees will be personalized so that that weapon cannot be used against them.

We ought to assure that people who manage their guns in a reckless fashion are held accountable. We ought to make the child access law pioneered years ago in Florida the law of the land, protecting families everywhere.

The leadership in this Congress ought to have the courage to insist that the proposals be debated in the House of Representatives as they are this week in the Senate.

Once this sees the light of day on the floor of the House, we will find that, in fact, there are men and women in both parties who have the conscience, have the conviction to stand up to the apologists for gun violence and take these simple, common-sense steps to reduce the tragic toll that gun violence has had in our communities.

An important first step will be the Comprehensive Child Violence Protection Act introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY). I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring her legislation and to urge the Republican leadership to finally find it in their hearts to allow

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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this to be debated on the floor of the House.

The carnage of Littleton will occur again today in dozens of instances across America. I hope that this is the last day that Congress is missing in action and that this Congress finally steps forward to do all it can to protect our families and their children from senseless gun violence.

#### TAX FREEDOM DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today, May 11, is Tax Freedom Day, which means, if the government began taking every dime of one's paycheck on January 1 of this year, one would have spent, on average, the last 131 days working just to pay one's local, State, and Federal taxes.

We call it Tax Freedom Day, but this year we really do not have much to celebrate. We have spent more days working for the government than we did last year. A later Tax Freedom Day indicates an ever-increasing national tax burden.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of this country cannot afford any more taxes. The typical American family already spends more than 38 percent of its income on taxes. That is more than most families spend on food, clothing, shelter, and transportation combined. In fact, the average American spends almost 3 hours of a typical 8-hour day working for the government.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to expect our hard-working families to shoulder the debt of a big government that routinely spends outside of its means. It is unacceptable that Americans must work at least 5 months of the year just to pay their taxes.

While taxes have continued to mount, so, too, has the Tax Code. Growing more complex, the Tax Code now totals nearly 3,000 pages. Mr. Speaker, the tax burden on our American families is out of control.

Since gaining the majority in 1994, this Congress has continued working to put more money back in the pockets of hardworking Americans. We balanced the Federal budget. We passed the first tax relief in 16 years, and now we have the first budget surplus in generations. Today, the current tax rate is between 1.2 and 2 percent lower than just 2 years ago. Now it is time, Mr. Speaker, to build upon that momentum.

Mr. Speaker, I have supported legislation to abolish the current Tax Code in hopes of establishing a flat tax or a national sales tax. In addition, I supported legislation to abolish some of the most outrageous and unfair taxes in our American families, like the death tax, marriage tax, and capital gains tax. Personally, I have introduced legislation to offer a tax credit for our military personnel.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican Congress continues to prove to the American people its commitments to lower taxes. But we cannot stop now. Lower taxes always should be a top priority. That requires cooperation between Congress and the administration.

This Congress and Congresses of the future must always remember that this money belongs to the people, and we must make every effort to return it to the people.

I hope that the next person elected to serve as President of the United States makes a commitment to simplify the Tax Code to ensure its fairness for the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, today we observe Tax Freedom Day. Let us now continue working to make sure that next year Tax Freedom Day falls on a day we can all celebrate.

#### TURKISH-KURDISH CONFLICT MUST BE RESOLVED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, as our military campaign in the Balkans continues, with the noble goal of stopping the ethnic cleansing that the dictator Milosevic has perpetrated against the Kosovar Albanian people, another similar atrocity continues to be perpetrated in the mountains of eastern Turkey against the Kurdish people.

There is a crucial difference between the situations in Kosovo and in Kurdistan. In the case of Kosovo, the forces of NATO are being used to stop the murderous rampage unleashed by Milosevic. But the Turkish regime that is responsible for the war against the Kurds is actually a member of NATO.

Unfortunately, because Turkey is viewed as a strategic ally of the U.S. and the West, the plight of the Kurds in Turkey has not been given adequate attention by the United States. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we may actually be contributing to the oppression of the Kurds.

The issue of Turkey's war on the Kurds and American support for Turkey was brought into sharp focus earlier this year with the apprehension of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdish independence movement. Mr. Ocalan has been fighting for autonomy for the Kurdish people, who are the victims of oppression by Turkey as well as Iraq, Iran and Syria.

Mr. Speaker, the Turkish regime refuses to even acknowledge the Kurds' existence, referring to them as "mountain Turks", prohibiting all expression of Kurdish culture and language in an effort to forcibly assimilate them, while jailing, torturing, and killing Kurdish leaders.

It is true that the Kurdish communities in Iraq, Iran and Syria also suffer terribly, and we should keep in mind the fate of the Kurds in

those countries—indeed, the U.S.-led Operation Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq is an action we can all be proud of. But, frankly, we tend to expect egregious human rights violations to occur under the Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian regimes. Turkey, on the other hand, is a member of NATO, touted as a democracy, a participant in Operation Allied Force. Turkey has received over the years millions of dollars in economic and, especially, military assistance courtesy of the American taxpayer. We have a right to expect better, and Turkey, as a member of NATO and a candidate for the European Union has an obligation to do better.

Furthermore, the mistreatment of the Kurdish population of Turkey is not the only example of Turkey's blatant violation of American values, ideals or interests. The continued occupation of Northern Cyprus and the blockade against Armenia are two other glaring examples where Turkey pursues the kind of policies that we should not accept from any nation, but particularly one of our allies.

Mr. Speaker, I was appalled when it was reported that American intelligence and diplomatic services actually helped a Turkish commando team to capture Mr. Ocalan in Kenya in February of this year. This shameful collaboration with Turkey has resulted in Mr. Ocalan being held in solitary confinement on an island prison in Turkey. He will be tried in a secret military-type court with no jury and no foreign observers.

The prosecutors are seeking the death penalty. There is little hope that Mr. Ocalan will receive a fair trial. In fact, the debate in the Turkish press is not about whether he will get a fair trial but rather when he will be executed.

According to a recent report by Amnesty International, Mr. Ocalan's defense lawyers are routinely beaten and harassed by Turkish police. The police have even tried to incite public riots against the defense team. The lawyers and their families have received telephone threats.

I should point out that this is in violation of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which states that lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

In the United States and in other countries where the rule of law is respected, we believe that everyone, even the most unpopular defendants, has a right to a fair trial. There is no place for a lynch mob mentality.

After 3 months in solitary confinement, denied proper access to his lawyers and being constantly guarded by armed soldiers wearing ski masks, Mr. Ocalan may be suffering a psychological breakdown. All of his meetings with his lawyers are monitored. It is quite possible that he has been subjected to torture.

But if Turkey does go ahead and hang Mr. Ocalan, the result would be to create a martyr for the Kurdish people and to unleash an all-out civil war that would be disastrous for all the people