

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) and acknowledge that today we had a very momentous day. It was the first conference held by the White House on mental health and mental health issues.

I had the pleasure of cochairing the children's mental health segment, and I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have opened a new day. I was very pleased to have with me Dr. Schnee from Harris County, Judge Eric Andell and Gerald Womack. Dr. Schnee and Gerald Womack were representing the MHMRA, Mental Health and Mental Retardation Agency for the County of Harris.

It is very interesting to note that crises bring about ideas and collaboration. I would hope that that was not the case, but I think the fact that we have been given the opportunity now to seize this moment, that we should begin to fight mental health issues in a way that we provide more resources, more insight and action.

In our session we found many interesting points that were made, and I would like to share some of those with you. One, we need to collaborate more, from the Department of Education, to Health and Human Resources, to the Department of Justice, but as well we need to collaborate with local and State government. All of us need to be concerned about providing more mental health services and more services to the American public.

We must fight against stigma. We must ensure in particular that our children who have been receiving special education do find that special education, albeit it is a very good program, it is not the only way out, that our children can have access to the needed mental health services that they may need to have.

We heard from Sue, an adoptive parent, who had 22 children. She asked us, do not leave out the parent. Provide the kind of holistic approach where parents can be included, so that children who are troubled with behavioral problems will be able to have a supportive home system.

We have found that 60 percent of the teenagers in juvenile detention have behavioral, mental or emotional problems. We are finding a large number of our teenagers have attempted suicide or committed suicide. This is particularly prevalent in all of our various racial and ethnic groups, and particularly in groups that, we were told, are immigrant groups, like the Pacific Asian population who are facing deportation. If, as a juvenile, they have committed some grievance and wind up being taken to a juvenile center, they have the potential now under the 1996 immigration law to be deported.

We are finding in youth who are gay and lesbian that they are being attacked as being different, and therefore have a high degree of suicide. No group should be left out, no group should be stigmatized.

We also determined that there are not enough child psychiatrists in our Nation. One community, one large county, had one half-time child psychiatrist. When they were referring children to get services, they went to the county and were told, "We can only take care of children ages 5 to 9. We do not have any services for children under 5 years old." It is well-known in the study of the brain that there is a great impact on babies, 0 to 3, and in fact that the fact that we have an ability to diagnose mental illness now and to do so by determining the brain's illnesses, if you will, so that we should not leave anyone out.

We also have found out unfortunately that with HMOs we have had less care as it relates to mental illness. There has not been a continuum of care. If a pediatrician sees a child that is troubled and refers that child to a psychologist or psychiatrist for help, with the parents' consent, the HMO willy-nilly may decide to change and not allow the continuum of care, and therefore that child breaks the cycle of care with that psychiatrist, which tells me that it is now time to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. It is now time to ensure that there is a continuum of care and to realize that HMOs must serve us and we not serve them.

A parent from Indiana said we must stop forcing parents to hit their heads against a brick wall, to provide services for them that they can reach out to, that they can get to. It is all right to say take your child over here across town and you cannot get a bus or train or cannot get the resources to get them to that.

Then we must realize that the resources that parents have, that people of all economic levels have, must be consistent, so that Medicaid goes only to the cardiocare. So if you are a parent and you are a cardholder and have Medicaid, you may not be able to provide the kind of care you need for your child, or vice versa.

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It is important that we talk to HCFA and others so that the continuing of funding sources will be provided.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that this was an eye-opening day. I will be offering a piece of legislation, Give a Kid a Chance omnibus mental health legislation for our children of America.

It is time to get to work. It is time to pass good health care and good mental health care.

TIME TO PASS COMMONSENSE GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAUR) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. DELAUR. Mr. Speaker, before we begin our commentary this evening,

I want to congratulate my colleague, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and my colleague from California who spoke earlier about the White House Conference on Mental Health.

I had the honor to participate in that event as well today, and just very, very quickly, I think it is clear that we need to focus on the issue of mental health. It is so critical in our society.

One, we cannot divorce the head from the rest of the body. We need to have the recognition that mental illness is an illness like other physical illnesses that people have. We need to destigmatize it.

We need to provide, most essentially, insurance coverage in the same way that we provide insurance coverage for physical illnesses. There needs to be parity for mental illnesses. We should consider that good mental health is good public health, and we need to promote that effort. So I compliment my colleague on her comments.

Mr. Speaker, this evening I am pleased to join with other colleagues, because we recognize that this is an important week for this Congress. Two weeks ago the United States Senate did the right thing. It is now time for the House of Representatives to do the right thing. That is to pass gun safety legislation for children in our country.

Thirteen children every single day are killed by guns in America. By comparison, there was an interesting statistic, that we lose one police officer every other day. That means it is more dangerous to be a child in America than it is to be a law enforcement officer. That is wrong. We need to pass commonsense gun safety laws in order to protect the children in this country.

Democrats in this body are a minority. We need votes from Republicans, from the other side of the aisle, to pass any piece of legislation. I believe that 85 percent of the Democrats in this body will vote for commonsense gun safety legislation to protect our youngers. We need 20 percent of our Republican colleagues in the House to say no to their leadership and to join us to try to do the right thing.

We can in fact pass strong bipartisan gun safety legislation for children in this body. That has been the historical past. In 1995 with the Brady Bill, with an assault weapons ban, these pieces of legislation happened because thoughtful, reflective people came together on both sides of the aisle to say that this makes sense for our country. We have the opportunity to do that again this week. I happen to believe that American families and American children are counting on us to do our jobs.

What we have seen in the last couple of weeks, there were a number of us who wanted to try to pass this legislation before we left for the Memorial Day break, but we were told that we needed to come back to have hearings, that there needed to be a more thoughtful approach to how we dealt with this.

What has happened in the interim, and I think it is important to note this, unfortunately, the National Rifle Association, they asked for this delay and they received a two-week delay from the Republican leadership in this House.

That was designed to give the NRA time to generate a campaign of fear in an attempt to influence this vote, to water down the provisions that were passed by the United States Senate around which there was agreement that these were good pieces that everyone could agree to.

The NRA has generated that campaign of fear. That is what they have been doing. I just want to read briefly from a letter that was sent out over the weekend from the NRA. It is an astounding example of big money propaganda, but it has little relationship to the truth.

If I can just read one or two excerpts, and I quote, "What the Clinton-Gore-Lautenberg-Schumer legislation would do is to impose a cradle-to-grave massive Federal regulatory scheme on gun owners throughout America, and that is no exaggeration."

The second item, this legislation, "It gives the Federal Government open-ended authority to issue phone-book sized volumes of new Federal red tape on Americans who buy and sell firearms. It gives the Federal Government authority to keep names and addresses of citizens in FBI files, even after they are cleared as honest people entitled to buy firearms. It imposes virtually unlimited Federal fees across the board, whether you are selling guns, buying guns, or organizing or attending a gun show."

The final item, again I quote, "None of this has a thing to do with the Littleton or Georgia school attacks or any violent crime anywhere in America. It has everything to do with an attempt by gun haters and the enemies of your Second Amendment freedoms to dismantle the Second Amendment, one step at a time."

That they could comment to say that the Nation has not focused its mind, hearts, and energy on what happened in Littleton, Colorado, or in Conyers, Georgia, this is mind-boggling. They say it has nothing to do with this event. It has nothing to do with Georgia?

I say, I do not understand where these people come from. This has everything to do with Littleton, Colorado, and with Conyers, Georgia. This has everything to do with parents who today are afraid to send their children to schools. They are afraid of utilizing what has been the route to opportunity and success in this country, the classroom, the schoolroom.

I heard a fifth-grader last night in Orange, Connecticut, say that schools used to be the safest place to be. She, this little mite of a person, was reading her little statement at a town meeting, and she said, "I have had to ask myself and ask my classmates whether or not

this could happen in my school. And I have to answer that yes. And it makes me sad and it makes me afraid."

All we are asking for in this body, again, on this side of the aisle, is let us pay attention to the hue and cry of the American public in asking us to try to do something to bring some sense out of fear and some sense out of chaos. Parents and teachers are pleading with us to respond. We are in the midst of a national crisis.

Frankly, in my view there is no need for this kind of propaganda where the safety of our kids is concerned. We do not need to be engaged in hyperbole. We need to be very careful about this issue. We need to be very thoughtful and reflective about this issue.

Our message to the NRA is that this is the people's House. This is not their House. The American people desperately want to see gun safety legislation for their children, and those of us who are charged with the responsibility of bringing their voices to this people's House have an obligation to try to do the will of the public. We should heed their voices this week.

I am optimistic that we will pass good gun safety legislation, because while the NRA was generating this campaign over the last few weeks, there was another campaign that was going on in this country, a campaign by moms and dads, and teachers and grandparents, a grass roots campaign in America, people writing, calling, and having town meetings like the one that I went to last night on a beautiful Sunday evening in Connecticut, in Orange, Connecticut; 200 people willing to sit for almost 3 hours to express their views on how we try to deal with youth violence in this country.

Everywhere that I go these days people come up and they ask me, what is Congress doing to try to address this issue of gun violence? I went to a meeting where I was talking about social security and Medicare, and a woman stopped me as I was leaving. She grabbed my arm and she said to me, Rosa, she says, you are going back to Congress next week. Is there anything that is going to be done about the violence? She says, can you do something about gun legislation?

She says, I have two grandchildren. Both of them were forced to leave school 2 weeks ago because they had to be evacuated out of school in Indiana. She lives in Connecticut, her grandchildren are in Indiana, scared to death because these kids had to be evacuated from their classroom because of the fear that is out there.

I remember reading a story in the wake of the Littleton shooting where a Colorado parent said that his 5-year-old asked him, and I quote, "Dad, are they just shooting the big kids, or are they shooting the little kids, too?" Do we want to live in a country where 5-year-olds fear for their lives? Our 5-year-olds should be learning the ABCs. They should be playing outside at recess. They should not be worrying about gun violence.

I view this week as a test for this institution as to whether or not we have the courage to act. We have a chance to make such a difference in peoples' lives, to do the right thing, to allay some of those fears of parents, to begin to make a difference in keeping guns out of the hands of young people. But it must be a real deal, commonsense gun safety legislation, not watered-down legislation that is filled with loopholes.

We could make some very small changes in our laws that could make a big difference in people's lives: Close the gun show loophole and apply the Brady background checks at gun shows, require child safety locks to be sold with every gun, raise the eligibility age for owning a firearm from 18 to 21, and ban the sale of high capacity ammunition clips.

The issue of youth violence is not an easy one, it is a complex one. We need to have parents take greater responsibility for their children. We need the entertainment industry to take responsibility for its products. We need to ensure that our children have access to the mental health care that they need, that we talked about today at this conference.

But we must also curb our children's access to guns. We should pass this commonsense gun safety legislation this week. The American people I believe are depending on us.

Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. McCARTHY) is someone who is truly a leader in this House of Representatives on this issue, someone for whom we have in this body, all of us, a tremendous amount of admiration; a woman who has demonstrated such unbelievable courage in the face of tragedy in her own life, who has taken on this issue of gun safety, and taken her own personal experience and turned it in a way to drive energy and vision and inspiration to trying to bring some sense to this issue of gun safety.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY).

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, my good colleague, the gentlewoman from Connecticut, mentioned that I came here to Congress to try and make a difference in people's lives. Six years ago I used to work in my garden a lot. I worked as a nurse. My husband and I used to go skiing in the winter, and my son was starting a new job. Then, on December 7th, Pearl Harbor Day, an incident happened on Long Island which certainly affected my life and many lives on Long Island.

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That day I lost my husband. That day my son almost died, and my world became upside down.

It is almost 6 years now, and I take this issue of gun safety very, very personally because, as my son started to

recover, he said, "Mom, what is going on out there? Why are people shooting each other?" It was at that point that I vowed that I would try and make a difference. It was at that point that I vowed that, if I could save one family going through what we on Long Island went through, then that would be my job.

As a nurse, I have always looked at things as holistic. I have always looked at things as common sense. I said, well, obviously we have just got to tell the story, obviously we have just got to reach out to the American people and say, listen, we can make a difference out here. We can save people's lives. Never once did I ever think of taking away the right of someone to own a gun that never came into my mind.

But there was more that we could do to make sure that criminals did not get their guns. There was more that we could do so that children did not accidentally find a gun and use it. There was more that we could do to save families from going through the pain that we all did.

Then in 1996, my Representative decided to vote to repeal the assault weapons bill. But what people did not realize is how hard I fought to make sure that large capacity clips could not be used in this country. People said, well, that would not have made any difference in the Long Island railroad shooting. It would not have helped my husband, and it would not have helped my son, and it would not have helped the people in the beginning of the car.

But I would have to say it would have helped three young people on the other end of the car because Colin Ferguson used a clip that had 15 bullets in it. He was able to get two clips off before courageous people were able to tackle him. With the assault weapons bill, we brought that down to 10 bullets a clip.

I will be very honest with my colleagues, I did not know enough about guns, I did not know enough about what was going on out there. But one of the things I did find out from asking my hunters, "Do you use these large capacity clips? Do you use these to go hunting?" They said "Oh, absolutely not. You are not allowed to. You have to be a sportsman." I said, "Well let me get this right. Large capacity clips, people can buy them up to 15, 30, sometimes 60, sometimes 90 clips in one round, but we will give the animals in the forest, we will give the birds a better chance than a human being."

I could not understand that. Why did we have to fight so hard to get it down to 10 clips? Colin Ferguson did not miss one person with the bullets that he used. If we had had that law passed then, maybe three young people on the other end of the train would have survived. We do not know. Because the good news is, once the law was passed, we do not have a count on how many people were saved because we do not have a statistic anymore.

But I remember that debate back then, because I was part of it. I remem-

ber the NRA leadership at that time saying this is the slippery road. We are going to take away the right of everyone to own a gun. That has not happened. That was back in 1994. Now here we are in 1999. We have had eight shootings in our schools. We have lost too many children and too many were wounded.

We should be focusing on so many different issues. The gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) talked about mental health. As a nurse, I can tell my colleagues that is something that we have to work with especially in our schools. Our children seem to be under so much pressure today. We have a lot of things that we can work on together, working with the parents, working with the schools, working with our community police to try and stop these tragedies. But people are forgetting because they do not make the newspapers. When we lose 13 young people a day, that is a Littleton every single day. We cannot lose focus on that.

But one of the things that upsets me, again, the NRA leadership. I keep saying the word "leadership" for a reason, because I have a lot of NRA members in my district. I talked to them, and I said, "This is what we are trying to do. Do you see anything wrong with this? Is there anything wrong with a child safety lock?" They said, "CAROLYN, we already store our guns correctly. We take those precautions." Do my colleagues know what, almost every hunter does.

We are not concerned about those that actually know how to store their guns, but we have so many people today that just go out and buy a gun, do not learn how to use it, bring it home, and leave it in the home. That is inviting disaster. That is inviting disaster.

What we are trying to do is modest, and they will say, the NRA leadership, that it is not going to save anyone's life. I have heard this debate for so long, and, yet, when I look at other countries, other countries that do not have the killings like we do, they have the same social problems as we do, they have drug problems, they have alcohol problems, they have mental health problems, and yet they are not losing over 30,000 people a year or they are not losing over 5,000 children under the age of 18 every single year.

There is something wrong here. All I am asking is for this House to put forward what the Senate put forward. All I am asking, let us try to see if we can bring gun violence down in this country. Let us see if we can do this.

As I said, what the Senate has put forward are modest steps. Do I think that we should be able to do more? Yes. Will that debate hopefully come in the future? I hope so. But this week let us see where the House is, because a week ago Thursday, I sat with the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) on the juvenile justice committee, and I sat there. I am usually a very optimistic person, but by the time we left

that committee hearing, I said, oh, my God. We are not going to get anything done. The NRA leadership is going to come into this committee and water down those modest bills that were passed. Child safety locks. Closing the loopholes in our shows, our gun shows.

Yet, if my colleagues listen to the NRA leadership, and unfortunately so many of their members will read this and get scared, they will get scared because they will say they are trying to take away my right to own a gun, there is nothing in the bills that we are trying to be passed, hopefully this week, that will take away the right of a legal citizen, a legal person to buy a gun.

Will there be some inconveniences? Yes, there will be. But do my colleagues know what? Again, talking to gun owners, women gun owners, men gun owners, they are willing to take that inconvenience if it can save a child's life, if it can save someone's life.

We see statistics that gun violence has come down in this country as far as homicides. What no one talks about is what it is costing this health care system, because medical technology, thank God, are saving people. That is not a statistic.

My son is a statistic. He survived. He was not supposed to live. But there is no count on him and what it has cost this country to get him where he is today and the struggles that he has to go through on a daily basis to keep what he has worked so hard to get.

People do not realize, when someone is injured as severely as Kevin was, he has to have physical therapy three times a week. He has to work out every single day. He is one person. Multiply that by all the accidents and certainly intentional shootings that happen in this country on a daily basis.

We have estimates from \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year that it is costing our health care system, \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year. Gosh what we could do with that money. Gosh, we could push that into education. We could put that into our health care system. We could help our senior citizens. We could help our veterans. Yet, they do not want us to do anything.

There are many Members here, good Members that are petrified of the NRA leadership, and they should be. They should be.

What I am asking the American people, what I am asking every mother, every father, we need to hear from your voice starting now and going through until we get good legislation passed that could hopefully save a child's life, hopefully save a family from going through the grief that so many families go through, because I have to tell everyone I think, there are so many of us as victims that have been fighting so long for this, many victims before me, and the only reason we got involved is because we did not want another family to go through this.

That is my job. That is why I am here. It is a job that I would love to be able to finish and go home to my garden, go home and maybe have some time to go skiing. But until that job is done, I am going to stay here, and I am going to fight tooth and nail, because that is what the people of my area voted me in for.

We have a long way to go. I am asking those Members that I know will have a tough time to stand up. But if the American people do not stand with them, they are going to have too many Members here that are going to be afraid to vote on legislation that could save lives.

Let us have a chance for a change, let us try and do the right thing for a change, let us see if we can do common sense legislation and maybe, and this is the good news, maybe we will see a drop, even more so in homicide. Maybe we will see a drop in suicides in our young people. Maybe we will see accidental deaths come down even more.

But it will be amazing if we see a drop in the amount of money that is spent on health care on a daily basis for those that are surviving. We have an opportunity here. We have a moral obligation here. The women of this Congress have to stand up and stand together. But, again, the American people on a grassroots front have to have their voices heard, because I will tell them, the NRA leadership will win again; and we as Americans will actually be the losers.

I thank my colleagues for taking this stand. I thank them for standing with us to try and make a difference.

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Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my thanks to the gentlewoman. We thank her for her courage, we thank her for her optimism. She is truly an inspiration for all of us. And what she has said, I, too, and I know my other colleagues here tonight believe, as she does, that the American people will stand tall with us. They have to know we are willing to take that first step, and I believe that they will be with us.

I want the gentlewoman to know that she gives us all really great courage to try to do the right thing and we thank her so very much.

The gentlewoman also said one thing about inconvenience, and it will be an inconvenience in the same way that seat belts are an inconvenience in this country, the same way that metal detectors at airports are an inconvenience. But they happen to save lives, and so we swallow hard or we get annoyed, but we buckle up and we take whatever jewelry or change out of our pockets and we go through those metal detectors because it does make a difference.

I thank the gentlewoman for making a difference.

I would now like to recognize the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE). And as part of this debate

and as part of this discussion, because some of us who are here tonight have been the subject of commentary that would say that the only thing that we believe as part of the issue of youth violence is gun legislation, and that is so totally not the case. There are a number of people who were at the mental health conference today and precisely there because there is an unbelievable need in our schools to integrate mental health services for our youngsters.

That is part of this puzzle. That is so much a part of this puzzle of youth violence, of engaging teachers and administrators and law enforcement people to understand and to recognize signs of difficulty that students may be having and to help them to get the services that they need. And I know my colleague from Texas is a big proponent of that effort in the same way that she is a proponent of trying to do something about gun safety legislation in this country. We are not one-dimensional people on the floor of this House tonight.

And so I yield to my colleague from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for her leadership and for the really smart and determined approach to the challenge that we have before us, allowing us to hear from the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. McCARTHY), a person who does not walk as a victim, although she has been a victim. She is a surviving victim who lost her husband and saw her son fight for his life. But I think what we have seen this evening is persistence.

I spoke yesterday to a group of graduates, and I challenged them at the Morning Star Full Gospel Baptist Church as to whether or not they were a part of the membership or the movement. Many times Members of Congress are not perceived to be in a movement. In fact, some would argue that that is not a good forum to legislate, being in a movement, because it suggests that we only hear one side, that we are so single-visioned or tunnel-visioned that we cannot see all shapes and sizes.

But I think we have cause now to be in a movement around an issue that needs the energy of a collective group of individuals, Republicans and Democrats to say, now is the time to pass this legislation. Not because we have tunnel vision, because we do not want to look back over our shoulders and see any more violence that we might have prevented, such as that at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado; Georgia, Jonesboro, Pennsylvania, and other places unnamed.

My colleague is right. I think it is important for the American people to realize that we are not one-dimensional. And I mentioned the legislation, Give a Kid a Chance, the omnibus mental health services bill. And I am looking at it now, and it is 18 pages. We are not one-dimensional. There is a

need for comprehensive mental health services for children. There is a need for the entertainment industry to be responsible.

I believe, as I see my colleague here from New York, that there is a need for us to be in a movement. And why is that? Because I grew up in the generation that saw John F. Kennedy shot dead with a gun, the same generation that saw Robert Kennedy shot dead with a gun, and then saw Martin Luther King shot dead with a gun. Yet I did not rise up and castigate the second amendment, as my friends in the National Rifle Association suggest that we have done.

I did, as a council member, pass gun safety and responsibility legislation, holding adults responsible for not putting away their guns. And we saw a 50 percent drop in accidental shootings by children. Not one hunter in the State of Texas was prohibited from using his or her gun.

And yesterday, again in another speech before the State Department of Corrections in the State of Texas, I challenged my fellow Texans. I said, I know we are known to love our guns here. I might have been on foreign ground, I said, but it is important for me to say to my fellow Texans that we in Congress are not taking away anyone's guns. We are not dismantling the Second Amendment. The Senate bill, the provisions that were passed and that will hopefully be passed in this House if we are part of a movement, has nothing to do with anyone's love and admiration for guns, anyone's gun collection, antique gun collection. What it has to do with is saving lives.

I am really tired of hearing "guns don't kill, people do." But people take guns and kill, and they do it dangerously, they do it criminally, but they also do it accidentally. They do it by way of the fact that there are 260 million guns in this country, even more than people in the United States, and children get guns. And I believe it is now imperative that we become part of a movement.

I would almost say to the gentlewoman from Connecticut that we appear on this floor every single day and that we reach out to those who would come by train or bus, or however we do this, to be part of a movement, because I believe if we lose this time, all the work that I may do, that we may do collectively on mental health, with the entertainment industry, working with parents and teachers and providing more school counselors, which many of my colleagues have been involved in, along with the gentlewoman from Connecticut; people like the gentleman from California (Mr. MILLER), so instrumental; the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY); the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR); the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST), my colleague, we could call the role.

So many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have worked on

so many issues that I take great offense at hearing the term "tunnel vision" when there are so many things we are working on. But if we do not get to the gun issue, we are going to lose it and the multiple ammunition clip that was passed in the Senate. Yes, we did something back in 1993, but we left out all the used and secondhand ammunition clips that are still in the cycle of commerce.

I just want to share with my colleagues, as I respond to a few points and as I move toward concluding, something about this thing called blindness to the fact that we have so many guns. Speaking to an undercover agent of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency, and I spent a good few hours with the gentleman, he said he can buy guns on almost every street corner. Of course, they only have about 2,000 agents. Not enough to do the job we need them to do.

But he went to one lady and said, "I'm going east to shoot a police officer." And this is not something I would like to say, but she sold him a gun and she said, "By the way, if you're going to do that, why don't you take a silencer. Make your job better. And if you get caught, don't remember my name."

This is someone purchasing a gun out of the back of a station wagon, someone's so-called personal collection. And that is the reason why we need regulation of our gun shows and we need to ensure there are instant gun checks, because probably if that person was not an undercover agent, as he was, an instant gun check might be able to find out that that is a criminal trying to do criminal acts. But we have refused to do that.

And, yes, my colleague indicated that a week or so ago the Subcommittee on Crime of the Committee on the Judiciary, of which I am a member, had a hearing in order to propel this legislation. I hope they were serious. I hope the chairman was serious about that hearing, because what that means is we should be prepared to mark up this legislation.

And we had representation, in trying to fair, from the National Rifle Association. And, frankly, I am glad we did. I do not want anyone to suggest that in this movement that we have here on the floor of the House that we are not listening to everyone's claims in opposition. And, boy, did they have an opposition.

The National Rifle Association thought almost everything we proposed was wrong. Unfortunately, they did not see the value in ensuring that guns should be kept out of the hands of children, that we should require people to have their guns locked up, that we should close the loophole on the gun show sales.

I want to share with my colleagues briefly some of the things they believe, and they are sending out to their members, although I know a Captain Spivey of Harris County, a National Rifle As-

sociation member, and he stands with me, a constable, a police officer, and says, "You are right. Pass those laws. I am with you, and I am an NRA member."

I wonder how many members of the NRA would step aside from their leadership and stand with us.

Listen to some of these points that they are saying that our bill will do.

The President, or Executive Director Wayne LaPierre, says that our legislation "Can prevent your law-abiding son from inheriting his grandpa's shotgun collection." Our bill deals with selling them at events, not inheriting the legacy of someone's grandfather or father, their beautiful gun collection. That is not true.

"Considers legal guns in private hands subject to intrusive Federal regulation, even in the privacy of your own home." I will stand here tonight and every night to say that we do nothing to go into an individual's home and take their guns. There is no one knocking on doors and asking people to dispose of all their guns. This is not true.

So I would just simply say to my friends in the National Rifle Association, when they write someone like Michael, and I am reading a letter they have sent out across the country, that they should tell Michael the truth. When they send a letter to tell Michael that he needs to act immediately, and I am reading a letter from the National Rifle Association of America to Dear Michael. "In the next 2 weeks your Congressman, Congresswoman is going to cast the most critical gun vote in over 5 years."

They name a few Senators. They throw the names of Bill Clinton and AL GORE in this letter to suggest that this is wrong. They lump in every gun ban group in America, saying they are all lumped together. Then they say, "Don't let anyone tell you the vote that is going to take place in the House is about instant checks at gun shows. That is the party line, but don't buy it.

"What this legislation is about is, it will impose a cradle-to-grave massive Federal regulatory scheme on gun owners throughout America. And that is no exaggeration."

They tell their readers to read a fax sheet, and they say, "We cannot beat this without you. But if you help now, it will be enough to win. The great thing about our country is when you call, when you write, and when you get your views heard, you have an enormous power, Michael. If you help us today, you can beat the national media, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and all the enemies of the Second Amendment who would dismantle the foundation of freedom in this country, brick by brick."

I love the Bill of Rights. We did a lot with it in this last session in the Committee on the Judiciary. We held the Constitution in our hands a lot in dealing with impeachment. But I would simply say to my colleagues that I would hope that we in America are bet-

ter than this letter. I really hope we understand what the second amendment is all about. I hope we understand the First Amendment, the Bill of Rights, and I hope we understand the Declaration of Independence, that we all are created equal.

I hope the National Rifle Association and its leadership will become part of a movement that says we count our children first. And that movement is to promote and care and love our children, that we are not putting our guns away to block our use of them and to strip us of the Second Amendment; we are putting our guns away to protect our children and give them a future and help them to have children and grandchildren.

I think we need to be in this movement. My commitment is to join my colleagues as many times as we have to, to come to this floor and say that we will pass this legislation. And it will also be my commitment to address any member of the National Rifle Association with a cool head, warm heart, reasoned mind and ask them to join me to ensure that letters like this, scaring our decent Americans all over this country that love peace and freedom, should say what is really right: that they will join us and do the right thing.

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I thank the gentlewoman for allowing me to share with her. I also hope that we will pass all the mental health legislation and all of the regulations, if you will, fair regulations, on violence to our children in the media, fair, keeping in mind the First Amendment.

I hope we will also work with law enforcement, everyone. But at the same time, we cannot ignore this crucial time now to pass gun legislation that will protect us now and in the future.

I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and her time.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) for her eloquent words and for her leadership and for pointing out so clearly that the document from which she quoted in fact is a fund-raising letter. It is a letter prone to hyperbole in order, in fact, to scare people. It is a campaign of fear. It is a campaign of rhetoric.

I, too, hope and believe that there are people out there even who receive that letter, who understand probably better than most about the necessity for safety and gun safety legislation, that they will understand the hyperbole, understand the rhetoric, but also understand that they are caring Americans and care about the safety of their families, which they do, and of other families.

It gives me great pleasure to yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY). And I want to continue to emphasize the point that those of us who stand here tonight are not one-dimensional. We do not react to this issue of youth violence in a cavalier or knee-jerk way that says that the only resolve is gun legislation.

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) has spent her career fighting for lowering the blood alcohol level to lower the incidence of drunk driving. She works tirelessly on promoting after-school programs in our schools, which is part of this issue, so that young people have a place to go and a place to be during those hours where the greatest amount of crime occurs. She has spent time talking about lessening the size of our classrooms for safety and accountability in education and of providing safer schools for our youngsters so that they can, in fact, achieve their desires and their dreams.

So as part of what she does on a daily basis to understand the complexity of the problem and knowing that we have to move on all of these areas, including the gun safety issue, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY).

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAUR) for ordering this special order this evening. It is truly an honor for me to spend some time with her and my good friend the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE) to talk about this very important legislation.

And I am very glad that she mentioned that we work together on just a whole range of issues, education, health care, and we know that we have to address the violence in our society in just so many different ways, and my colleagues talked about it this evening, that this is not the only answer.

But as I talk to people in my district, as I talk to the mothers, the fathers, the children who are afraid to go to school, I realize there is a madness in this country and we have to work on doing something about the guns.

My colleagues and I have talked about how different it was when we were in elementary school. I do remember, a long time ago, when Ms. Margot in first grade would get upset when someone was chewing bubble gum and leave the classroom. These kids are going to school and worried about whether someone has a gun. This is madness. And so, as a grandmother and a mother, I feel it a personal obligation to represent all these families across America.

Every once in a while in our congressional career we feel that there is an urgency to do something and do it now. I think of the pain of the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY) when she lost her husband, the pain of the gentlewoman from New York as she watches her son Kevin fight back, the pain of all those parents in Littleton, in Conyers, the pain of all those family members.

Every day 13 youngsters are killed because of guns. We have a responsibility and an obligation to do something and to do it now. And each week and nearly every day since the tragic shootings in Littleton, Democrats have

called for urgent passage of meaningful gun legislation. We filed discharge petitions. We held press conferences. We raised our voices loud and clear. The NRA just cannot be allowed to write our gun laws anymore.

I want to assure my colleagues that I, along with my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAUR), the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY), the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. STENY HOYER), we are going to address this every moment we can.

The gentlewoman and I and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) came prepared to offer gun control legislation to the Treasury, Postal Appropriations bill. It was hard to believe. We had on our desk the wires from Conyers that had just happened that morning. And yet the GOP leadership stalled. They did not act. They did not heed our calls. They did not take up the meaningful legislation that our Senate colleagues have passed. They even canceled the Treasury, Postal markup rather than consider our common sense gun control amendments.

Hard to believe, is it not, that the GOP leadership could be more afraid of the NRA than they are of violence in our schools?

Now the leadership's delay has given the NRA the chance to strategize and mobilize. My colleagues referred to the letter that the NRA sent to their members in a fund-raising drive. Undaunted, the NRA is back in full force. The letter says, and I quote, "pulling out all the stops to win this battle." But we have news for them. We will not let them win. We will not back down. This battle is over the safety of our children at home, in our schools, on the playground, and it is a cause worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot back down in the face of the NRA. We must stand firm. Like our Senate colleagues, we must have the courage to reach across the aisle and pass meaningful bipartisan gun control legislation. The American people want action now. We have got to get the guns off of our streets and away from our children.

I cannot tell my colleagues how many people came up to me during this recent work period in our district and said, "how could you not do something? You were elected to do something? Nita, I know you are a leader on modernizing our schools. I know you want to put computers on everyone's desk." And then they tell me that the kids are afraid to go to school.

We are going to continue to make sure that we have after-school programs to tutor our youngsters to provide them with the academic support they need so they can be what they want to be, so they can reach for the sky and fulfill their dreams. But they are afraid to go to school. These kids have to go to school with gun detectors. This is madness.

And we know we have to look at the whole picture, as my colleague mentioned. We really have to talk about why it has become such a violent culture, why the kids have to watch these violent episodes on TV and the movies and the Internet. We understand, as my colleague said, that this is not a one-dimensional issue.

But there is a madness in this country. They should not be able to buy guns when they are a kid. I mean, how is it that they cannot go to a licensed gun dealer and buy a gun until they are 21 yet they can buy a gun from a secondhand dealer at a gun show? It does not make any sense.

But we are not even talking now about the comprehensive bill of the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY). We want to work on that. What we are saying is the Senate passed common sense legislation. No one should be celebrating that. Because unless it passes our House and unless the President signs it, it is not law.

So let us make sure that we pass the common sense legislation that passed the Senate. And as we are doing that, let us talk about the larger issue and pass more comprehensive legislation. But let us not wait.

And I know that my colleague and I and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN McCARTHY) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and other members of our caucus are going to be speaking to mothers and fathers and families all around the country. And I hope they are listening tonight. Call your member of Congress. Tell them to pass the legislation now. We have the power to do it. We can do it. We must do it. We must save lives. Let us do this now.

I want to thank my friend and colleague the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ROSA DELAUR) for her leadership on just so many issues. I know how she cares about Head Start and pre-K and how she is fighting to make sure our young people are nurtured all the way through, and this is part of that great effort. Let us deal with this now.

I thank my colleague again for leading us in this great effort.

Ms. DELAUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) for her comments. And I just want to highlight something that she said, which is the wonder of the body that we serve in and what can be done. She said that every now and again in our congressional career comes a moment where we have an opportunity to make a difference, to do something.

I happen to view, as my colleague does, that this is an historic opportunity. We are not so glued and fixed in a calendar and in a schedule that we cannot move when a need arises in the country for us to move.

Thirteen children dying every single day from gun violence is a national crisis. The kinds of unspeakable violence we have seen in school settings across

the country, the pleas from parents and grandparents, from children, to make our schools safe places to be in says to those of us who hold a public office we need to act and to move to try to help us with this problem.

We cannot be so fixed in our own agenda, in our own schedule, in everything that only we concern ourselves with to say we cannot change what it is that we do here so that we can meet this challenge, meet this need, take this opportunity to say, yes, we can act and act in the best interest of the American public. And that is all we are talking about. We have this opportunity this week. We would be derelict in the responsibility that we have been entrusted with if we walk away from that responsibility.

And again, my colleague said it, the Senate passed modest legislation, legislation that has consensus from the gun industry, from the sports councils, from others. Our duty and obligation is to pass that kind of legislation in this body.

I thank the gentlewoman and I thank my colleagues for joining us tonight.

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NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk to our colleagues about what I think is one of the gravest issues to face this Nation, certainly in the 13 years that I have had the honor of serving in this body.

I come before our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Republican Party but as someone who believes that national security issues rise above party politics. I am very proud of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that both times I ran for mayor of my hometown I was the nominee of both the Republican and the Democrat Parties. In fact I today enjoy significant support from Democrats back in my home district in Pennsylvania.

In Congress, Mr. Speaker, I have taken great pride in working with Members of the other side on national security issues, and I have been the first to acknowledge that many of the struggles that we have won in this body against the White House involving national security were won only because we had the support of strong leadership on the Democrat side as well as the Republican side. I give those comments today, Mr. Speaker, because I want to focus on what is happening with the debate surrounding the Cox Commission of which I was a member and the resultant information that has been put forward to the American people about a matter that needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Mr. Speaker, it is my contention that when the administration got a preliminary view of the Cox Committee report in early January, in fact we gave it to the administration sometime around January 2nd or 3rd, they got a chance to see a document that nine of us, Democrats and Republicans, had worked on together for 7 months in a very nonpartisan way. We did not care where problems had occurred, in which administrations they were in. If we saw evidence of our security being harmed or potentially harmed, we laid the facts basically where they were. We did not attempt to spin them or distort them or attempt to have them be other than what they in fact were. We did that because we wanted to have the integrity of our report kept intact once it was completed. No member of the Cox Committee released any information to the media. We swore to ourselves that we would not in fact jeopardize our findings. We gave it to the White House the first week of January and we asked for a very quick response to assist us in making that report available in a declassified version so the American people and our colleagues could read it and talk about it. As we all know, that took 5 months. But what gave me the first indication that this report was going to be spun politically was about a month later, in February. In fact it was February the 1st. Sandy Berger, the National Security Adviser to the White House, issued a statement that I have a copy of to selective members of the Washington media, responding to the 38 recommendations that we made in our Cox Committee report that were still classified. Without asking any member of the Cox Commission, Sandy Berger released the White House's spin in response to those recommendations.

Two days after he released that spin, I had the occasion of asking the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, in a closed National Security Committee hearing in front of 40 Members from both parties if he agreed as the head of the CIA with our findings that our security had been harmed. Now, Mr. Speaker, this was 2 days after Sandy Berger released public information about our still classified report. George Tenet said, "Congressman, we at the CIA haven't finished reading the document yet." Which meant, Mr. Speaker, that the White House, before the CIA had even completed reading our report, was spinning it publicly to try to deflect attention away from the White House and any responsibility of this administration. That is not what the nine members of the Cox Committee did and that is not the approach we used. We did not spin anything. Yet that was my first inclination that this White House was not going to deal in an honorable way with the findings and the conclusions that we drew from our extensive research into the results of the transfer of technology both legally and illegally to China.

Mr. Speaker, that spin continues today. Since the report was released

some 2 weeks ago, the administration has sent Bill Richardson, a friend of mine whom I served with in this body, out a road show traveling around the country convincing the American people that the only issue in the Cox report is Chinese espionage, the stealing of our W-88 nuclear warhead design, the stealing of our nuclear design technology. And the reason why the White House has wanted to spin the Cox Commission report in this way is because they can point to this stuff to having occurred before the Clinton administration took office. So what Richardson has been saying publicly, on national TV shows, on the talk shows on Sunday mornings is, "Look, when this administration in 1995 found out that China had stolen some of our designs, prior to us coming into office, we took aggressive steps to stop it. These problems didn't happen under the Clinton administration. They happened under previous administrations."

I am here tonight, Mr. Speaker, to challenge that notion and to offer to debate Secretary Richardson anytime anyplace in a public format on the issues that I am about to unveil. First of all, Mr. Speaker, even though the Cox Committee report did not just focus on the nuclear laboratories and their security, let us talk about the labs for a few moments, because if you listen to Secretary Bill Richardson traveling around the country, he would have us believe that the only problems with the labs were problems that started under previous administrations which he has now cleaned up. That is hogwash, Mr. Speaker. Let us look at the facts.

Mr. Speaker, it was in 1993 and 1994 when Hazel O'Leary was appointed to be the Secretary of Energy by President Bill Clinton that she decided that the color-coded ID system used in our Department of Energy labs which said based upon the color of the chain and the ID that you wore around your neck, you would only be allowed access to certain parts of our laboratories. It was the way that we kept people out of illegally accessing information that they did not have the proper clearance for. When Hazel O'Leary came into office, this long established practice that had been under previous administrations, Republican and Democrat, was overturned because she thought that color-coding was discriminatory. So what happened, Mr. Speaker, was in 1993 and 1994, the Clinton administration did away with that identification process which made it almost impossible for the lab directors and others to know whether or not a person was in a correct area of a lab gathering information and access to data that they should not have had.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if that was a good decision back in 1993 and 1994 which maybe the President would say was the case, why then did this administration 2 weeks ago move to reinstate the policy that Hazel O'Leary did away with in 1993 and 1994? If it was good back in