

On Sunday, September 26, the President will host a reception here in Washington. The Group of 24 comprises a cross-section of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Group of 24 seeks to address economic growth-related issues in the developing countries and to strengthen their financial and monetary situation.

Mr. Speaker, while I welcome the president coming to Washington for these important international meetings, I would like to see Sri Lanka's Head of State return to our Nation's capital for a State visit.

Earlier this year I wrote to President Clinton asking that he formally invite the president. The last presidential visit from Sri Lanka to the U.S. was in 1984. President Clinton did respond to my letter, although he did not commit to extending such an invitation. However, as South Asia continues to assume a growing importance in U.S. foreign policy considerations, I hope and I will continue to push for a State visit.

Mr. Speaker, next week Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kadirgamar, will be making an official visit to Washington. Our Sri Lankan Caucus will be setting up a briefing with our Members and our staff with the Foreign Minister tentatively scheduled for next Thursday. I look forward to a productive meeting that will expand the dialogue between our two nations.

Mr. Speaker, bilateral U.S.-Sri Lanka relations have always been strong since Sri Lanka won its independence from British colonial rule in 1948. In addition to our growing trade relations, the U.S. and Sri Lanka have a shared stake in promoting security, stability, and democracy in South Asia. Sri Lanka continues to work to promote tolerance among the various religious and ethnic communities that make up its population. It is a country that shares many of our values, and we have many common interests that must continue to be pursued.

Mr. Speaker, I hope next week's visit by Sri Lanka's president and foreign minister will contribute to this process of closer relations with the United States, and I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to join me in continuing to work for closer ties between our two countries.

GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight again because we still have not passed legislation to add direction to the issue of gun violence in America.

Given that we have been plagued by gun violence in our schools across the country, to the most recent shootings involving Jewish children in Los Angeles and members of a Baptist church in

Ft. Worth, Texas, it is clear that there is an overwhelming need for gun legislation. We have an opportunity as a body to address this issue.

The juvenile justice bills from the House and Senate which are currently in conference committee can provide the American public with the action they deserve on this critical issue.

I urge my colleagues to support my bill, which would require child safety locks on handguns, a bill which would require all sellers at gun shows, flea markets, and other weapon markets to run an instant background check on every one of their purchasers, and a bill which would close the loophole in the Brady law which would prevent felons from acquiring guns. We should also raise the handgun purchase age from 18 to 21 to effectively protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, events around the country illustrate the need for these changes in our laws to be enacted. Thirteen children under the age of 19 are killed each day because of guns. In 1996 alone, 4,643 young people were killed by firearms. Guns cause one in four deaths of teenagers age 15 to 19. Firearms are the fourth leading cause of accidental death among children ages 5 to 14.

Each year gun violence is getting worse. From 1984 to 1994, the firearms homicide rate for 15- to 18-year-olds increased over 200 percent, while the non-firearm homicide death rate decreased 12.8 percent.

How many more shootings, Mr. Speaker, must occur before this body will take substantive action? How many more children must be slaughtered by guns before we pass laws to protect them? Is it necessary for every congressional district within each State to experience some traumatic, violent event before we act on the issue of gun violence?

Gun violence affects all Americans regardless of age, class, religion, or socio-economic status. Many countries around the world do not have the same level of gun violence as the United States. This is a problem that has a clear solution, legislation to stem the tide of violence that has plagued us as a Nation.

Mr. Speaker, in my State of California alone, the number of incidents of gun violence over the course of 10 years is unacceptable.

In Berkeley, Kenzo Dix was gunned down by a 14-year-old schoolmate when he was accidentally shot when the two were playing with a pistol. In Los Angeles, a 14-year-old boy was accidentally shot in the head and killed by a friend showing off his father's handgun. In Oceanside, 4-year-old Christopher David Holt unintentionally shot and killed himself with a .357 Magnum revolver he discovered in a concealed compartment at the head of his grandfather's bed.

Of the 5,000 children who die each year because of guns, which averages out to 13 per day, nearly 500 deaths are accidental.

My child safety lock act, Mr. Speaker, which I introduced in the 105th and 106th Congress, would have prohibited any person from transferring or selling a firearm in the United States unless it is sold with a child safety lock. This bill and other legislation currently in the conference committee will address this issue.

We must have the ability to cross party lines, Mr. Speaker, forget our political and ideological differences, and pass legislation to avoid the continued senseless bloodshed and loss of innocent lives around our country.

I urge my colleagues to support legislation which will create a safer environment for all Americans and preserve the future of our children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MINK of Hawaii addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HURRICANE FLOYD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, two of us will be talking on the floor and maybe others will join us later on.

Mr. Speaker, according to FEMA, the route many take to visit Disney World in Orlando, Florida, is Interstate 95, and it was designed to withstand the 500-year flood and more.

When Hurricane Floyd, with its mighty wind and its rushing waters, swept through North Carolina, it caused Interstate 95 to close. Indeed, as this photo shows, and I will pass a couple of them so my colleagues can see it, Highway 301 split in two, washed away, left impassable.

In fact, initially more than 500 roads were impassable. Railroad tracks, and I think my colleagues will see that in this, railroad tracks were broken up and rendered unusable. Bridges were closed. Helicopters or boat, transportation mediums few in North Carolina, has been the only means of travel for many throughout the hurricane impacted areas.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Floyd left in its wake the worst flooding in the history of the State of North Carolina. And more rain fell yesterday. The people of North Carolina need help. They need help now. It is not charity they seek but a chance, a chance to recover, a chance to restore, a chance to rebuild, a chance to put their lives back on track. It is the kind of a chance that we as Americans afford each other when tragedy of this magnitude strikes.

At least 42 persons are known dead. Many more are unaccountable for, still missing. The Tar, Neuse, Cape Fear, and Lumber Rivers are all above flood

stage. Even as the 20 inches of rain that fell begins to clear, the flooding remains. Dangerous and powerful currents are flowing, sweeping citizens away, like the family of four from Pinetops, like the 18-wheelers being driven along I-95, or like the sedan pushed in the pile of water, at least 4 feet of water, in Wilson, North Carolina.

Thousands and thousands of homes remain now underwater. Trees are down. Power remains out for nearly 50,000 households. Now, that is down from the more than 1.5 million that were initially without electricity. Water and sewage systems are in disrepair. Shelters are housing thousands of citizens.

Today the FEMA director said in North Carolina there are 35,000 homes affected. More than 100,000 hogs have been lost, 2.4 million chickens, 500 turkeys killed. Disease and contamination is a real and dangerous threat, as animals' carcasses clutter the roads.

Coffins dredged up by the flooding have been seen floating in Goldsboro and Wilson. Gasoline from flooded stations is now in the water. Industrial waste is mixing with the other toxic material, creating an unsafe and unsanitary health environment.

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Yet among all this tragedy there are bright spots. The President released more than 520 million to FEMA to address immediate needs, then visit my district last Monday, and my colleagues joined me there, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE). The President's visit brought hope even to those who were hopeless, and we appreciate the effort of FEMA to provide the ready made meals ready to eat, ice, blankets, water, temporary housing, grants and loans, and emergency generators. We also appreciate the hundreds and hundreds of individuals from around this country who are on the grounds helping us out. The private sector is also responding. Red Cross has opened more than 49 shelters in our State. The Salvation Army has 31 mobile kitchens.

Yet much more, much more help and support is needed from citizens around this country and from my colleagues right here. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I intend to join with Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis from other impacted areas to try to send a legislative package for further relief for the President to sign. As a part of that package, we need to update the law so that farmers and small business persons can be treated in a way that actually help them to recover. Actually more loans may not do that because many of them will indeed not survive.

Farmers and fishermen are among those who have been hit the hardest by Hurricane Floyd. Our loss already to date we know in North Carolina exceeds more than \$1.3 billion. We will, therefore, need more resources, and

that will also be a part of the legislative package.

Mr. Speaker, the people of North Carolina are resilient, and we will come back from the situation, but we will need the help of all America, and, Mr. Speaker, I urge America and my colleagues that in the spirit of North Carolina to work with us, and I thank Americans who have helped and respond to us, and I urge my colleagues to be responsive to the need.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GREEN of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NORTH CAROLINA NEEDS THE HELP OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity, and, as my colleague from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) has just shared with us, I want to talk for a few minutes about some of the real damage that has affected not only my district, but my State, and the truth is some of this can be said for a number of other States and communities up and down the east coast.

I have here with me this evening three charts. The first one is a chart from Wilson County. That is somewhere over 100 to 110 homes there, what we would call mobile homes or trailer homes in North Carolina and across the country. But as you can see, the early stages, all of these homes are under water in some form, and all of them, all, had to be removed and spent their time in shelters.

As bad as this looks, in some places in eastern North Carolina tonight there are thousands of citizens of our State who went into shelters on Wednesday night, one week ago, fearing the worst from Hurricane Floyd, not realizing that a week later they would be there, and fears greater than they had ever anticipated have been realized. Not only have they been in shelters with people they did not know, they are in shelters with their children and with people who, many of whom

have not had an opportunity for a bath in a week, but with the help of federal and State and the good graces of individuals they have been fed, they have been provided a place to stay, and as bad as the conditions are in some places, people are scrambling to help make it better with FEMA's help. And I must, this evening, pay tribute to Director Witt who, I think he and his people have just done an outstanding job in coordinating it.

They had no idea that a week later they would have, in some cases, no home to go home to, no jobs to accept when they went back because the businesses they worked for were gone. If they happen to be farmers, their farms are under water. All the crops this year are gone because in North Carolina we had a bad drought this summer, and what crops were left are now totally under water and gone.

If they happen to have been a tobacco farmer and were able to salvage something, those tobacco barns are under water, and what little tobacco they had in those barns, they are under water. Their tractors, all their equipment and in some cases their homes, their clothing, and the only thing many of them had when they left were the clothes on their back.

It is a tough situation, and in some cases places in my district are still under water, but in places east of us are even worse. There are whole houses under water, and the water has not yet subsided a week later.

This is an additional photograph taken also in Wilson County. As you can see, this was a commercial building, but behind it was supposed to have been farm land. It looks like a lake. I cannot tell you what kind of crops were in it because they are under water.

This is a photograph of one of the towns. I traveled on Monday with the President and a number of other people from the district and Secretaries to Tarboro and over to Pitt County where the East Carolina University is, and today they are facing the brunt of it because the tidewaters have almost reached their high point.

And for those who would think that when we talk of hurricanes they think of the coastline of North Carolina which sticks out; they were talking about the coast. I remind folks that these are areas that have never been affected by flood, some of them not for 500 years that we know of. They are above the 500-year flood plain, and they are flooded.

Most of these people do not have flood insurance because there was no reason to have it. They have lost their businesses; in some cases, their homes; and as I said earlier, every single thing that they hold dear with their memories. Fortunately for most of them, they still are alive.

We have lost a lot of life. Tonight there will be more that will lose their life before it is over with, and we will find them when the waters go down.