

communities as law enforcement officers. Allowing access to these weapons means our law enforcement officers have to carry heavier firepower that they do not want to use.

In 1994, every major national law enforcement organization worked hard to pass the assault weapons ban, and now, this President and our congressional leadership have abandoned these peace officers by letting the ban expire. This is particularly stunning given the world we live in after September 11, 2001. Yet they have now made it easier for terrorists to arm themselves in our country.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. We do not need these weapons in our communities. They are an invitation to death and destruction and a threat to our freedom. This Congress needs to restore the ban immediately to protect our constituents and our children.

I urge the Speaker to schedule a vote as soon as possible and ensure that assault weapons do not come flooding back into the United States.

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

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

THANKING SYLVIA NUGENT

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

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, there are many ways to serve our country. We are most mindful of the men and women serving on the front lines of the war on terrorism, who risk or even lose their lives for our freedom and security.

But as Ken Towery, a remarkable man who has been a POW in World War II, a Pulitzer Prize winner and Presidential appointee reminds us, "Not all men are called upon to respond to battlefield conditions. But all men and women will face many, many situations where courage and duty and responsibility are required and where the true measure of their worth is how well they respond to those challenges."

One way to serve our Nation is by working on the staff of a Member of Congress. It is the Members themselves who receive most of the attention, positive and negative. It is our names on the ballot and in the newspapers. We are the ones who cast the votes on legislation and are ultimately responsible for all that is done in our name or on our behalf.

But as each Member knows, everything we do is assisted by and made possible by the men and women who serve on our staffs.

I am extremely fortunate, for I have had and have today a group of exceptional individuals who have worked

with me as I have tried to represent the people of the 13th Congressional District of Texas. At the center of everything I have tried to do for my constituents and for our Nation has been my chief of staff, Sylvia Nugent.

Sylvia comes from a heritage of service to the country. Her father, Vernon Herrington, is a retired FBI agent, having served in the Bureau for more than 25 years. Sylvia grew up learning a sense of patriotic duty as her family moved around the country in her father's various stations.

Sylvia has been married to Dr. Rod Nugent for more than 36 years. And first, she raised her family and volunteered in her community, contributing much. As her children matured, however, she became more involved in politics, becoming active in several campaigns in Texas.

In 1994, to my good fortune, she became the campaign manager for my first race for Congress. Then she served as chief of staff for my office until August 31, 2004. Sylvia is now a grandmother, and she and Dr. Nugent are preparing for the next phase of their lives.

In some ways, Sylvia has not been a typical congressional chief of staff. She was a bit older than most when they entered government service. She has been based in the district; whereas, most chiefs of staff work out of Washington. Yet, the exceptional qualities of patriotism and commitment to service which she exemplifies do represent the best of the people and the work which goes on in the legislative branch of government.

Sylvia is exceptionally gifted. Her intelligence and knowledge help her to get to the root of a problem quickly. Her emotional intelligence and perceptiveness, her people skills, are even more impressive. She is someone to whom a person on an airplane flight will pour out their problems and leave rejuvenated after hearing her counsel. Underlying all of her talents and abilities is a caring heart that wants to help and serve.

She made sure that, in all of the work which my staff and I undertook, we remembered that we work for the people of the 13th Congressional District of Texas, that our efforts are funded by the taxpayers, and that our mission is to help people and serve our Nation. Whether it was locating a lost Social Security check or obtaining military medals earned by a veteran 60 years ago, she was committed to helping the people of the 13th Congressional District. Whether it was cosponsoring a rural health care bill or passing the bill to create the Department of Homeland Security, she was committed to doing what was right for the country.

As she supervised all of the constituent service, communication and legislative work in my office, she also helped advise and guide staff members and interns on their careers and lives, leaving her mark for years to come.

Having raised four outstanding children of her own, she brought those nurturing abilities to all with whom she came in contact.

Most importantly, everything she did was motivated by a love of country and a desire to serve and improve. Sylvia has responded to challenges and to opportunities with courage and duty and a sense of responsibility beyond what was required. In a way, her commitment and dedication have been extraordinary, but in another sense, it is the same kind of commitment and dedication that has made America great and continues to ensure that Americans do their duty in whatever circumstances they are placed.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I have been tremendously blessed. And my family and I will continue to be blessed to count Sylvia and Rod Nugent among our dearest friends. But the Congress, Texas, and the Nation have also been fortunate to have had the service of this extraordinary lady.

CONGRESS COMMITS SHAMEFUL ACT OF OMISSION

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today, this Congress committed a shameful act of omission. When today's congressional session ended, so too ended the assault weapons ban that has helped to keep our streets safe for the past decade.

In 1994, President Clinton bravely ushered the assault weapons ban through Congress. This act took its political toll on not only President Clinton but also the Democratic Party, but he stuck to his guns, so to speak, and strongly supported passage of this important legislation.

As a result, the use of military-style automatic weapons in crimes dropped from 4 percent in 1995, before the ban had taken effect, to 1 percent in the year 2002. In fact, according to the Department of Justice, the proportion of banned assault weapons traced to crimes has dropped by 66 percent since 1995.

The refusal by the House Republican leadership to bring up an extension of the assault weapons ban and the failure of President Bush to push for its renewal is about much more than gun control. This issue is about nothing less than the very security of our Nation.

Today's failure to extend this important law will make Americans less safe. In fact, al Qaeda, in their training manuals that were recovered from Afghanistan, specifically cited the ease of obtaining automatic rifles and machine guns in the United States. To many terrorists around the world, America is known as the great gun bazaar.

Let us break down the facts: First, al Qaeda, our worst enemy, has specifically instructed terrorists on how to

exploit America's gun laws to obtain the weapons they intend to use to kill Americans.

Next, the United States had a proven and effective law on the books that made it difficult to purchase these deadly weapons, and this law needed to be renewed.

Finally, President Bush, who claims to be a huge homeland security supporter, stayed silent. Why did he remain silent? Why did the President not act? I believe the answer is really pretty simple.

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The National Rifle Association, the NRA, refused to support President Bush's reelection bid until after the renewal date for the assault weapons ban came and went, that was today, came and went untouched by the White House. This President has been cowed by the NRA. The sad irony is that last week Vice President DICK CHENEY made the outrageous claim that it is absolutely essential on November 2 that Americans make the right choice because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we will get hit again. I quote that from the Vice President's remarks.

This misleading connection in addition to insulting the intelligence of the American people wrongly asserts that a vote for JOHN KERRY and JOHN EDWARDS is a vote for terrorism. Instead, al Qaeda will be poised to hit us again because in large part on September 13, 2004, today, the Republican leadership has allowed Islamic militants and others to once again purchase American machine guns, all for the reelection of the President. How very, very shameful that is. If we truly want to secure our homeland, we need to pursue policies that are smarter than those that would decriminalize deadly weapons to elect someone to office. By the way, virtually every major law enforcement organization in the United States of America supports extending the ban.

That is why I have introduced a new SMART security platform for the 21st century. H. Con. Res. 392 is legislation to create a sensible, multilateral, American response to terrorism. SMART security is stronger on national security than President Bush claims to be. SMART security will stop the sale of weapons to oppressive regimes and regimes involved in human rights abuses. SMART security will pursue enhanced inspection regimes and regional security arrangements to ensure that state sponsors of terrorism do not get ahold of more light weaponry, or even deadlier chemical or biological weapons.

Let us talk for a moment about presidential flip-flops. When it comes to keeping assault weapons out of the hands of terrorists, George Bush speaks out of both sides of his mouth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES ON MEDICARE REFORM

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the President spent some time recently taking, and I concede this, well-deserved credit for last year's Medicare bill, for foisting last year's 678-page, \$534 billion Medicare law on seniors and the rest of the American public. The fact that he is proud of this law, a law that hands HMOs \$12 billion in bonus payments, HMO insurance companies get \$12 billion in bonus payments while raising seniors' premiums by 17 percent, a record amount, raises a larger issue: How have seniors fared under the last 3½ years of the Bush administration? It is not a difficult question to answer. The facts speak for themselves.

We remember several months ago the President actively lobbied for the Medicare overhaul that would treat seniors without drug coverage like second-class citizens, forcing them out of traditional Medicare and into private insurance company HMOs.

Members will remember that vote. It took place in the middle of the night. It was a 3-hour vote, the longest in congressional history. There was more campaign payoff money on that vote from insurance companies and drug companies to Republican Members of the Congress. We all remember that. The President put his weight behind that new Medicare law that lines the pockets of HMOs to the tune of \$12 billion, that lines the pockets of drug companies to the tune of \$182 billion, and explicitly blocks seniors from access to competitively priced prescription drugs. The insurance companies, as I said, got a payment of \$12 billion. The drug companies' profits went up \$182 billion and Republican leadership and the President did very well in this campaign year with contributions from the drug companies and the insurance companies. They could certainly afford it after legislation that will create and bring to them those huge profits.

After that, the President spends millions of dollars of our money, of taxpayer money, of dollars that could have gone to a prescription drug plan, could have gone to seniors to reduce the cost of seniors' drugs, but the President spends millions of dollars of our money on ads touting the new Medicare bill with the slogan "same Medicare, better benefits," even though the President and his advisers knew his handiwork would be directly responsible for the largest premium increase in Medicare history, 17 percent,

the largest premium increase in Medicare's 38-year history, not to mention deductibles that will for the first time that seniors have to pay increase year after year after year.

Do not believe anyone that tells you the Bush administration is not responsible, in spite of the ads the President is running, is not responsible for the 17 percent premium increase just because he says premiums are calculated by a formula. Yes, they are calculated by a formula written in the bill that the drug and insurance companies wrote that the President pushed through. That is like pouring gasoline on a campfire, then blaming someone else when the forest burns down.

The President's Medicare law, inflated by a \$12 billion HMO slush fund and an outright prohibition on bulk rate prices, bringing the price down, swelled the overall cost of Medicare which in turn increased the premium that seniors pay. America's seniors know it. You and I know it. Everyone in this Chamber knows that is why premiums went up, because of the deal the President made with the drug companies and the insurance companies.

In his budget proposal this year, the President recommends cutting \$60 billion from the Medicaid program, \$60 billion, even though Medicaid covers 70 percent of the nursing home care provided in this country. Without Medicaid, two-thirds of America's seniors in nursing homes would have to find some other source of care. For many of those seniors, there is no other source of care. For others, families have to patch together the care any way they can, even if it means they become impoverished.

Medicaid provides health care, nursing home care and home health care to nearly 5 million seniors living below the poverty line, 149,000 people in my State of Ohio alone. The recession and massive job losses have left States struggling to finance their full financial obligations to Medicaid. If the Federal Government does not do its part, the Medicaid program is in jeopardy. The Bush administration is simply not doing its part because of its budget cuts to Medicaid and because of the tax cuts which have gone overwhelmingly to the 1 percent wealthiest Americans.

The President's hand-picked Social Security Commission came up with a privatized plan to drain \$1.8 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund over the next 5 years. Privatizing Social Security, privatizing Medicare, cutting Medicaid is no benefit to seniors. It is the wrong direction for our country.

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

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