

EXTENSION OF ASSAULT
WEAPONS BAN

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today over in the Senate, our colleagues are having a debate on basically assault weapons to certainly make sure that we renew that by September 13 and also making sure that we close the loopholes in the gun shows.

Mr. Speaker, the NRA today, once again, reached into their bag of tricks to kill a bill it actually supported. Earlier the Senate had voted to add two commonsense gun safety measures to the gun industry liability bill. One would extend the ban on assault weapons. The other would close the gun show loophole bill. Because of this, the NRA said, Jump, and its supporters in the Senate said, How high?

It marked a triumph of special interests in this country. Our Nation's police officers have worked hard to keep assault weapons off our streets. That is why Congress must revisit the assault weapons ban without attaching special interest handouts. Otherwise, assault weapons will go back onto America's streets in 195 days. That is the good news for terrorists and cop-killing criminals. That is the good news for drug dealers. That is the good news for the gangs that are across our country. Unfortunately, it is bad news for America's families and communities and police officers.

Since I took the floor in the House 1 week ago, 400 more Americans have died from gun violence; but instead of a sense of urgency, the House has stood idly by. Some seem content to let the assault weapons ban expire on September 13, the ban that has kept us safer for the last 10 years.

It has also respected the rights of gun owners, protecting the hunting rifles, shotguns, and pistols favored by law-abiding citizens. We do not have problems with people owning guns, but gun owners need to take responsibility on making sure certain guns do not get onto the street.

Only criminals have been kept from their gun of choice. This explains why 66 percent of gun owners support renewing the ban. The American people support it by even more overwhelming margins. Once again, our Nation's law enforcement officers are leading the fight to keep assault weapons, making sure that they are not back on our streets.

But today, I want to highlight one notable flaw in the assault weapons ban. A loophole in the law has allowed gun makers to create hundreds of copycat weapons. The MAC-10, this gun right here, has become the MPA-10. The AK-47 has clones, so many of them, they are too numerous to count. Cosmetically altering the TEC-9, for example, has resulted in the fully legal AB-10. Cosmetically. This is what the

gun manufacturers are allowed to do. The A-B, by the way, stands for "after ban," but one can see they almost look identical.

Another weapon advertised for its ability to circumvent the law is the Bushmaster XM-15. People might remember this gun. This was the gun used by the D.C. snipers. Residents of D.C. and across this country know what that weapon was able to do. During October 2002, the snipers used the gun to kill 10 people and wound three others. Bushmaster's slogan for the gun, "The Best—by a long shot," provided deadly accuracy for those in its cross-hairs.

I came to Congress to fight for gun safety. I have fought for commonsense, effective measures, which is why I have introduced H.R. 2038, which would renew the ban, while closing these particular gaping holes.

Let us face it, you cannot tell me that the American people want to see these particular guns back on the streets. You cannot tell me that you want to have our police officers coming across the drug dealer, the terrorists that possibly might be in this country, to come across these.

Another fact, by the way: our police officers have to wear special armor. These guns can go through that armor.

I came here 10 years ago when I was not in Congress to make sure that this bill went through, and now it is time for the American people to realize the power that they have. People always say they have no voice in government. Well, you can have a voice; but you have to call your representative here in Congress. You have to start calling the Senate again. You have to call the Speaker of the House and allow the bill to come up for a vote. We are told that it is not going to be able to come up for a vote. That is wrong, when the American people want to make sure this does not happen again.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Members are reminded not to refer to actions in the other body.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF
H.R. 1561, UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK FEE MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. LINDER, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-431) on the resolution (H. Res. 547) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1561) to amend title 35, United States Code, with respect to patent fees, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HEROIN GROWTH IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address one of our Nation's most difficult narcotics problems: Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has historically produced significant quantities of opium which is refined into heroin. Afghanistan's opium crops accounted for over 70 percent of the world's supply in the year 2000. According to the DEA, about 50 percent of the heroin in the American market originated in the Afghanistan-Pakistani border area in 1984.

We must learn from history and diligently work to prevent any Afghan heroin from entering the American market. While Europe is the primary destination for Afghan heroin today, we suspect that 7 to 10 percent of the illegal crop ultimately reaches the streets of our congressional districts.

Opium production in Afghanistan has resumed over the past 2 years. With the fall of the Taliban, Afghan growers resumed cultivation despite the renewal of the ban on poppy growth by the Karzai government. This problem could grow far worse. Only 8 percent of Afghanistan's cultivated land is presently used to grow opium poppies. If we do not prevail over this problem, the remaining cultivated land could easily accommodate more of this illegal crop.

These drugs are of great concern to all of us because they increase the worldwide supply and have the potential to fund terrorists and other destabilizing groups, and they subvert all of our efforts to assist Afghanistan. The new Afghanistan cannot survive on an illegal economy.

Drug proceeds are the source of a growing reservoir of illegal money that funds international crime across the region; that sustains the destabilizing activities of warlords; and that fosters local coercion and terrorism. Just like the challenges faced south of our own borders for decades, I am convinced that drug money and terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and throughout that region are locked together like a daisy chain. Our resolve to restore Afghanistan must include a broad, comprehensive plan to eradicate poppy production, not only to help the people of Afghanistan, but to cut off the funding of the terror organizations that threaten our own security.

I recently returned from a trip to Libya, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. We met with President Karzai and he reaffirmed my conviction that he means business. He is serious about tackling the heroin threat to his country. Together, we must prevent the institutionalization of the heroin cartels. We must support democracy's early days in post-Taliban Afghanistan. We must help them confront those that still threaten to destabilize their society through both the narcotics trade and terrorism. If we are to win the war in Afghanistan, we must recognize that narcotics play a large part in funding the radical anti-democratic elements.

We are pressing for increased coordination with the British on counter-narcotics; with the Germans on policing and police training; and with the Italians on justice sector reform. In addition to the traditional smuggling routes through Iran and Turkey, reports indicate a continued movement of heroin shipments north from Afghanistan through the central Asian states, Pakistan and India en route to international markets.

Our strongest partners in these efforts must be those consumer nations where the drugs are destined. The financial, resource, and intelligence requirements to defeat the scourge are not our sole responsibility. The administration must seek commitments from Europe and elsewhere to share this burden, where they get 90 percent of the heroin.

Let me give my colleagues an example of a successful international operation. Operation Containment is an ongoing effort by the DEA. They recently arrested 15 members of a heroin trafficking organization and seized 7.4 tons of morphine base in Turkey. Morphine base can be converted to heroin at a ratio of one to one with a chemical. This is the largest seizure of morphine base ever made. To put the magnitude of this seizure in perspective, the amount seized was more than four times the total worldwide morphine base seizures made in 2000.

There are legitimate uses of the chemical acetic anhydride in industry. Countries that produce this chemical must do their part by restricting or controlling its sale and transportation to legitimate consumers.

The Department of Defense has seen the magnitude of the transshipment problem with three separate seizures by the U.S. Navy operating in the Gulf region. The first seizure was made on December 15 when a motorized dhow was apprehended in the Arabian Gulf. Two tons of narcotics were seized, and three of the 15-man crew were identified as having possible ties to al Qaeda. On December 18, two more dhows were intercepted. Those seizures yielded drugs worth more than \$10 million.

I am passionate about this subject. I have chaired a hearing on Afghanistan just last week. Many of the members of my subcommittee have visited the region. The administration must extract commitments from the Europeans to pull their own weight. As leaders of the coalition of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Department of Defense must be compelled to address the growth, storage, processing, and transshipment of drugs in the region. The bullets and bombs used against our own troops are purchased with illicit funds. The Department of State and the DEA must be resourced adequately to address and to assist Afghanistan in reestablishing a viable criminal justice system so that their own poppy ban can be effectively enforced.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO 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 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.)

□ 1930

LONGEST MAJOR STRIKE IN UFCW ENDS

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

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to discuss the end of a long strike; in fact, the longest major strike in the history of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and the largest and longest strike in the history of the supermarket industry, a strike that saw the United Food and Commercial Workers hold the line in southern California.

The dispute, which involved some 60,000 UFCW members employed at 852 Safeway-owned Vons and Pavillions stores, Kroger-owned Ralphs and Albertsons stores, began back in October 11, 2003. Officials for the grocery store chain said their workers had a Cadillac health plan that the stores could not maintain in a market with nonunion competitors such as Wal-Mart. I am not sure I would call the plan in question a Cadillac plan, but the proposal to replace it was clearly a Yugo.

Supermarket workers in southern California average about \$12 to \$14 an hour, and most work less than 40 hours a week, not by choice. Under the employer's proposal, after 3 years an average worker would earn about \$12.30 an hour, that is \$369 a week before taxes are taken out, or about \$19,000 a year. That is a salary that can keep a single mom and her children just above the poverty line; but cut her health care benefits or shift several thousand dollars worth of health care costs from the company on to her and a self-supporting working family can be reduced to near poverty.

In fact, many workers will drop coverage because it will be too expensive and move over to Medi-Cal, which is California's Medicaid program for the elderly, poor, and disabled, as well as to other State and Federal programs for low-income workers. In my mind, this is safety net exploitation by employers. This marks a shift from the employer's books to the ledgers of the American taxpayer.

Thankfully, for 5 months the picket line remained strong, members remained united, and customers honored

the workers' picket lines. This is a testament to the rank-and-file UFCW workers and to the leadership of UFCW local leaders. To people like Rick Icaza, President, and Rod Diamond, Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW Local 770; to Connie Leyva, President of UFCW Local 1428; Michael Straeter, President of UFCW Local 1442; to George Hartwell, President of Local 1036, Greg Conger, President of Local 324; Bill Lathrop, President of Local 1167; and Mickey Kasparian, President of Local 135 of the UFCW, we say thank you to you, and we hope that you will express our sincerest congratulations and thanks to all of your men and women in your locals who fought and stood tall throughout this entire 5-month long process.

Every day support for the fight for affordable health care grew stronger. Community and religious leaders joined the cause. The southern California supermarket strike became a national cause as well. There were rallies, picket lines, and hand billing across America.

The men and women on the picket lines are genuine heroes. Their sacrifice for affordable family health care has motivated and activated workers across the Nation. To the Webb family in Los Angeles I send a special message of esteem and pride. Andre and Dee, you, like many of your brothers and sisters, persevered. Christmas was tough this past December, but you weathered these difficult times in a way that makes all of us who are parents so very, very proud. And Andre, your daughter A.J. wrote you a letter for Valentine's Day, which many of us had a chance to read during the father-daughter dance at school, which you will never forget. She understood your fight and offered the best reason to stand firm. At 8 years of age, A.J. is already giving us a glimpse of the next generation of leaders for America.

The labor struggle in southern California is one manifestation of a very large national debate on health care. Lack of access to quality health care and escalating health care costs are issues of concern to all Americans, particularly to communities that are minority and very poor, that suffer the highest rates of uninsured Americans, and are also among those that are least well covered because of disproportionate and disparate health care received by these communities.

The lack of insurance is devastating to millions of families across America. We must make every effort to find ways to extend coverage and to work to end the erosion of employment-based health care coverage due to rising out-of-pocket health care costs that make insurance unaffordable for many workers. If the supermarket giants, profitable, growing corporations, can launch an attack on health care benefits, then every employer is sure to follow. They have sounded the alarm that the American health care system is under siege.