

black were trailing at half time 18-13. That all changed when they rallied in the second half to capture the lead and win. Not just win, but win big, 54-47. They are the girls basketball champions of Texas.

Congratulations, Lady Wolves. Your parents are proud of you. Plano is proud of you. America is proud of you, and I salute every one of you.

God bless each one of you and God bless America.

Mr. Speaker, the following are the names of the players and I would like to congratulate them one and all:

Becca Feagin, junior; Mary Rich, junior; Rachel Hester, senior; Alexis Morgan, senior; Lindsay Hughes, senior; Katie Mekanani, sophomore; Taylor Shead, junior; Tawni Ichimura, senior; Kristen Nash, senior; Kathleen Nash, junior; and Micah Garoutte, junior.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AMERICA IS A NATION OF LAWS

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

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, it is often said that America is a nation of immigrants, but there is also another important point, not to be ignored. America is a nation of laws. We are increasing border security, and security is very important in this day and age, in this tough world that we live in. We are increasing border security by constructing fences, bolstering our border patrols and escalating our surveillance capabilities.

It is of first and most importance to our Nation that we step up and halt this mass influx of foreign trespassers known as illegal immigrants. To grant amnesty to these trespassers is to say: You crossed our border illegally, you broke our laws, and now we are rewarding you with U.S. citizenship. Congratulations.

That is absolutely the wrong way to go. A guest worker program is nothing more than amnesty wearing make-up. It is easier to look at, but it is still ugly underneath.

For legal immigrants, we must replace our outdated bureaucratic procedures with updated technology. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services currently processes 7 million immigration applications in our country every year. They do it using Windows 95 and paper printouts. This system is obviously and absolutely flawed. We need to fix the process for immigrants to come here legally.

That is why I introduced the Comprehensive Immigration DATA Act,

H.R. 4412, to modernize the immigration application process by creating a Federal, computerized database that more efficiently and effectively tracks immigrants applying for visas or for U.S. citizenship.

It is time that we step up in terms of our governmental policy, to make sure our government bureaucrats here in Washington are being responsive to our Nation's needs and to be accountable. The best way we can do that is by giving them the technology to do their jobs, and that is what I am trying to achieve with this bill. It is good in terms of policy for legal immigrants. It is the right thing to protect our borders, and it is good for our national security.

Mr. Speaker, it is progress that we need to make as a country.

FIREARMS CORRECTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS ACT

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. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing on H.R. 5005, the Firearms Corrections and Improvement Act. But I don't want to let the name of this legislation fool you. This bill only serves to improve the chances of somebody getting away with a gun crime.

This bill proposes changes that will undermine Federal law and endanger public safety. These are not mere technical corrections, but a blatant attempt to restrict use of the ATF's National Trace Center's database. Previously, the NRA's friends in Congress have inserted language into appropriation bills to restrict access to some important ballistic information.

H.R. 5005 will make restriction access the law. The ATF's gun tracing program helps local police solve gun crimes by analyzing the unique marks made on bullets and cartridges and cases when guns are fired. The images of these markings can be compared with other images in more than 200 Federal, State and local law enforcement laboratories.

But H.R. 5005 would make it a crime for police departments to share information from the database of other departments. Say a police department in my district on Long Island obtains ballistic information from the ATF and a similar shooting occurs in New York City, the Long Island department wouldn't be able to share that information.

In fact, the officer who did share this information could be arrested. That is absolutely insane. Instead of cracking down on criminals using guns, this bill treats police officers like criminals.

Since 9/11, responders in New York and throughout the Nation have gone to great lengths to increase interoperability and information sharing, and now H.R. 5005 comes along and makes information sharing between police de-

partments a crime. Again, some Members of this body put their allegiance to the NRA above common sense.

The tracing program provides law enforcement agencies with valuable information about gun trafficking that can prevent crimes from happening. Tracing helps the public identify gun dealers and traffickers who are supplying illegal guns in our communities, but this legislation would prevent the use of trace data as evidence in any State or Federal court or any non-ATF administrative proceedings.

This bill cuts local law enforcement out of the loop. Without this tracing data local law enforcement officers will not be able to pursue civil action on suppliers that have been implicated in crimes without the ATF's involvement. We all know the ATF doesn't get the resources to get involved in every civil issue regarding gun crimes, but H.R. 5005 does not stop at limiting access to tracing the database. The legislation also makes it more difficult for local police to receive reports of multiple gun purchases. Law enforcement can use these reports to discover whether straw purchasers or gun traffickers are replenishing their inventory. But if this bill becomes law, police will no longer be able to access this information.

The bill also prevents the ATF from maintaining a database of firearm purchase information. This provision would hurt investigations by local law enforcement to determine the point of sale origin of firearms that can help locate an assailant.

As New York City Mayor Bloomberg pointed out in his testimony yesterday, if police can crack down on taverns that serve under-aged drinkers, why can't they go after gun dealers who knowingly sell to criminals?

And since 1 percent of the gun dealers sell 57 percent of the guns used in crimes, this information is vital for police to conduct investigations and root out dishonest gun dealers. This bill is the latest in a long line of misguided legislation that puts protecting the gun industry before keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. No other industry in the country has this kind of protection.

The gun industry already has immunity from litigation resulting from its negligence over incompetence. The industry can now sell military assault weapons to the general public. But now this legislation would protect the 1 percent of dishonest gun dealers who are fueling gun violence throughout this country with their irresponsible business practices. This legislation does nothing to protect the second amendment rights. Nothing in this legislation makes it any easier to hunt or defend themselves using a firearm.

Simply put, H.R. 5005 does more to promote gun crimes than gun rights.

I hope yesterday's hearings showed the public what a bad bill H.R. 5005 really is. I would like to thank Mayor Bloomberg for his opposition to this

legislation, and I would like to enter this testimony from yesterday into the RECORD.

I will work with Mayor Bloomberg and others from both parties to prevent the bill from becoming law. I wish I had had the time to read the mayor's full testimony, but I will say that I will use the last sentence. "On behalf of the members of the New York City Police Department, their families and all New Yorkers, I am urging you," and that is the Judiciary Committee, "in the strongest possible terms to reject this God-awful piece of legislation."

What we are doing here in Congress a little bit too often is taking away the rights of our police officers, taking away the rights of our criminal investigators to cut down on crimes. New York City has done an excellent job on cutting down on crime. We are actually one of the safest cities, and yet the guns that are coming from the outside of our city and being sold in our city that are totally illegal, we will be taking away that tool. That is wrong.

We as Americans should be protecting each other. Whether you live in a city, whether you live in a suburban area, whether you live in a suburban urban area, we have to do more. We need to change the rhetoric that is going on here. We need to protect people. And I will bring up over and over again what we can do to bring down gun crime in this country, certainly by saving people from dying but also reducing the health care costs that are in this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, the material I referred to previously is as follows:

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR,
New York, NY, March 28, 2006.

MAYOR BLOOMBERG TESTIFIES BEFORE THE
HOUSE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME,
TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Scott, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and give testimony on H.R. 5005—the misnamed Firearms Corrections and Improvements Act. My name is Michael Bloomberg, and I am the Mayor of the City of New York.

I want to be very clear that I am not here today to engage in an ideological debate. H.R. 5005 has nothing to do with the 2nd Amendment and the right to bear arms, but it has everything to do with illegal guns and the dangers they pose to our police officers and citizens.

That's why I am here—because the bill this Subcommittee is considering would explicitly impinge on our ability to fight illegal gun trafficking, and it would result in the shooting deaths of innocent people.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject it—and I am submitting letters from mayors around the nation, as well as from the former Chief of the ATF's Crime Gun Analysis Branch, who join me in opposing this legislation.

Why do New Yorkers care about illegal gun sales in other states? It's true that New York is the safest big city in America, and I'm very proud that we have reduced major crime by nearly 25 percent compared to 5 years ago.

But the harsh reality is that far too many people continue to be killed with illegal guns—and nearly all of those guns are pur-

chased outside of New York State. Last year, illegal guns were used to take the lives of more than 300 people in our city.

To protect all New Yorkers, we must not only root out and punish those who possess, use, and sell illegal weapons—and we are doing that more effectively than ever—we must also do everything in our power to keep guns out of the hands of those criminals in the first place. This requires us to look beyond our borders, because 82 percent of the guns used in crimes in New York City were purchased outside of New York State.

H.R. 5005 would make it immeasurably harder to stop the flow of illegal guns across our borders and into the hands of criminals by offering extraordinary protections to gun dealers who knowingly sell guns to criminals, and depriving local governments and their law enforcement agencies of the tools they need to hold dealers accountable.

Specifically, these obstacles would take the form of severe restrictions on our use of ATF trace data, which is perhaps the most effective tool we have in combating illegal gun trafficking.

Without question, the vast majority of gun dealers are law-abiding businesses—and we have no quarrel with them. Most dealers follow the law and take every precaution to ensure that their products do not fall into the hands of criminals.

But there is a very small group of bad apples—about 1 percent of all gun dealers—who account for almost 60 percent of all crime guns nationwide. That's an astounding statistic.

Imagine if 60 percent of all crimes in a city were committed on one block—would you pass a law that effectively prevented the police department from using every tool at its disposal to crack down on that block? Of course not! Yet H.R. 5005 would effectively prevent cities like ours from holding the 1 percent of bad gun dealers fully accountable for their actions. And that makes no sense.

When rogue gun dealers break the law, and their guns cause injury or death to innocent people, they should be compelled to answer for their conduct in a court of law—just as any other lawbreaker would. And when they hold licenses issued by state or local authorities, they should be called to account in administrative proceedings to revoke their licenses.

This is what happens to businesses in other industries when they act irresponsibly—think of a tavern that sells alcohol to teenagers and, as a result, loses its license. Why should an irresponsible firearms dealer—which poses a far greater threat to the overall safety of our citizens—be given special protections from state and local authorities?

In non-criminal proceedings to revoke a rogue gun dealer's license, trace data is the single most powerful way to demonstrate unmistakable patterns of illegal conduct. It's pretty simple: Gun dealers with inordinately large numbers of traces to crime guns are gun dealers that make it their practice to sell to straw purchasers. Yet H.R. 5005 would ensure that this devastating evidence never sees the light of day. Studies show that when dealers are subject to enforcement efforts, or even if they suspect enforcement efforts, the number of crime guns later traced to those dealers falls off sharply.

Yet by forbidding the use of trace data in civil and administrative proceedings, H.R. 5005 would make it far more difficult to bring civil suits against rogue gun dealers, and far more difficult to bring administrative actions to revoke their licenses.

And my question to you is—why? Why is this in the best interest of the American people? Why is this in the best interests of your constituents? Why would Congress protect the irresponsible gun dealers who help crimi-

nals get guns? Why is it good public policy to make cities fight the war against gun violence with one hand tied behind their backs?

Is it to benefit special interest groups? Or the one-in-a-million person who is prosecuted for a purchase that is negligent but not criminal? Is it for these few ideologues and extraordinarily unusual cases that you are willing to facilitate the shooting deaths of thousands of innocent Americans across this country every year?

I cannot believe so. Nor can I take those answers back to the parents of the slain members of the New York City Police Department, including the families of Detectives James Nemorin and Rodney Andrews, who were murdered three years ago this month during one of the hundreds of 'buy and busts' that the NYPD carries out every year to take illegal guns off our streets.

Finally, of the other retrograde provisions in H.R. 5005, the worst of all is the provision that would actually treat police officers like criminals.

Under the terms of H.R. 5005, a detective who shares ATF trace information with another state government for use in a license revocation hearing against a rogue dealer would be committing a federal felony—a crime punishable by up to five years in prison. In other words, if an NYPD Detective talks to a New Jersey State Trooper about a problem gun dealer problem, that Detective could go to jail.

I would not expect that I would need to remind Congress of the horrific consequences that this country, and particularly New York City, suffered as a result of the federal government's failure to share information among law enforcement agencies, and to work together to "connect the dots" in order to establish patterns of criminality and threats of danger.

Yet incredibly, instead of demanding that our law enforcement agencies share information, Congress is considering making it a crime. As absurd as it sounds, this bill would not only erect new barriers to information, it could send police officers to prison in order to prevent them from holding the worst gun dealers accountable for their potentially dangerous actions. How in the world would you explain that to the public?

Members of the Subcommittee, I have been to too many police officers' funerals to believe this bill actually has a prayer's chance in hell.

But if it does pass, the next time an officer is attacked by an illegal gun—and I say 'next time' because until Congress gets serious about illegal guns, more police officers and many more citizens will be murdered—there can be no denying that all who vote for this bill will bear some of the responsibility.

That may sound harsh to you, but I'm not going to sugarcoat my words when discussing a bill that coddles criminals and endangers police officers and citizens—not only in New York City, but across this nation.

On behalf of the members of the NYPD, their families, and all New Yorkers, I am urging you in the strongest possible terms to reject this God-awful piece of legislation.

Thank you very much, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Today I proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nations of Greece and the United States.