

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.

One hundred and eighty-five years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark the symbolic birth of democracy in a land where those principles to human dignity were first espoused. This past Saturday, March 25, marked the 185th anniversary of the Greek struggle for independence. It was an historic day for all people who treasure freedom.

In 1821, after four centuries of Ottoman rule, Greeks rose up in arms, fought valiantly and finally achieved a dream centuries old, freedom from Turkish oppression. In setting their blood for liberty and winning their freedom, Greeks showed the world their deep and abiding commitment to democracy. This celebration also marks the beginning of one of America's most valued and rewarding friendships.

The flag of revolt was blessed by Bishop Germanos of Paleion Patron at the monastery of Aghia Lavra, and for 7 years, a handful of rebels in fierce fighting were able to contain the combined forces of the Sultan's Ottoman Empire. The confrontations at Valtetis, Dervenai, as well as Missologhi, where Lord Byron fought and died, rank among the most glorious and important pages of Greek history.

□ 1915

The exploits and victories of the Greek navy under Miaoulis, Kanaris, and Sachtouris, inspired the people of Europe, who finally brought pressure upon their governments to intervene in the fighting and compel the Sultan to recognize Greek independence.

On October 20, 1827, at the battle of Navarino, the Turkish fleet was finally defeated by the British, French and Russian navies which had joined in the effort, and by September 14, after many centuries of foreign rule, freedom for the Greeks was regained by the Treaty of Adrianople of 1829 and, later, by the London Protocol of 1830.

I commemorate Greek Independence Day, Mr. Speaker, each year for the same reasons we celebrate our Fourth of July. It proved that a united people, through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. Both our nations share an illustrious history in defense of this cherished ideal. Both countries have shared a common commitment to the principles of equality and freedom, and in many ways, the American experiment might not have been possible without the Greek experience. Indeed, as Thomas Jefferson noted, "To the ancient Greeks we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves, American colonists, out of Gothic darkness."

The ancient Greeks created the very notion of democracy, in which the ultimate power to govern was vested in the people. As Aristotle said, "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost."

It was this concept, Mr. Speaker, that the Founding Fathers of the United States of America drew heavily upon in forming our representative government.

Constitutionally, democracy has made the American way of life possible. For that contribution alone, we owe a heavy debt to the Greek people, but the contribution of democracy was not the only contribution made by Greek patriots to American society.

The ancient Greeks contributed a great deal both to our cultural heritage, as well as to European culture, in the areas of art, philosophy, science and law. In the preface to his poem "Hellas," poet Percy Shelly wrote, "Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their roots in Greece."

Greece has also given another gift to America. Nearly 1 million Greeks came to America's shores and enriched this great country of ours. Greek Americans have followed the rich tradition of their ancestors. They have made their mark in many professions, including medicine, science, law and business, among others. Some of our most illustrious citizens claim Greek ancestry. The welfare and progress of the Greek community, both here and abroad, is of great importance to all of us.

Greek independence was a model for our new Nation and continues to be an inspiration for all those living in the darkness of oppression. Throughout history, Greece has represented an ideal in man's search for liberty. The principles of Greek democracy represent the greatest contribution a nation has ever made to society.

The democratic tradition that began in Greece and continues in the American experience is taking root in an increasing number of countries, and the implications for world peace, while still very uncertain, are nevertheless the most promising they have been in decades. Democracy and freedom are the guiding beliefs that give hope to millions around the world and fuel the democratic revolution that is today sweeping the planet.

Mr. Speaker, remembering the sacrifice of the brave Greeks who gave their lives for liberty helps us all realize how important it is to be an active participant in our own democracy, and that is why we honor those who secured independence for Greece so many years ago.

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

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

U.S. IN IRAQ UNTIL 2009

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

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, for a President whose party controls both Houses of Congress, the Supreme Court and, of course, the White House bully pulpit itself, George W. Bush has certainly had an awful lot of explaining to do lately.

With all the power at his disposal, starting with a knee-jerk legislature all too ready to follow his lead, lock, stock and barrel, the President should not have to constantly redefine his mission and America's. That is exactly what he has done and what he is doing.

Before the war, he offered only a strained rationale as to why we needed to attack Iraq. First, it was getting rid of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Then the rationale was deposing a dictator who provided refuge to al Qaeda, and finally, it became spreading liberty throughout the Middle East.

Once things started to turn south, President Bush redefined what he meant when he declared "an end to major combat operations" only a year into the war. Now he is redefining what it means to be in a civil war.

Mr. Speaker, let us be perfectly clear. Iraq is not in danger of falling into a civil war. The country is in the very throes of a civil war conflict as we speak. Some people have this false notion that an Iraqi civil war would resemble two sides fighting and fighting it out with antiquated rifles in a field that looks kind of like Gettysburg.

Unfortunately, the sectarian violence that currently plagues Iraq is pretty similar in appearance and scope to the Lebanese civil war fought in the 1970s and 1980s. Then, like now, religion was manipulated to encourage fighting among different sects. Alliances shift rapidly so that no one ever really knows who is on their side and who is not; and worst of all, innocents are killed on a nearly daily basis as a result of the infighting.

As if the failure to acknowledge what is really happening in Iraq was not bad enough, only a week ago, the President attempted his most strained leap of logic yet. During a press conference, which, by the way, after 6 years in office he is finally conducting with regularity, the President stated that American military forces would remain in Iraq until 2009, at the earliest, that another President would have to end it.

After initially implying that the war would not cost much and would not take long to fight, the President needs to explain to the American people why the decision to bring our troops home from Iraq will, as he says, "be decided by future Presidents."

Mr. Speaker, given the current instability in Iraq, which 150,000 brave U.S. troops who have not been able to quell after more than 3 years of war, why in the world would we plan on American forces remaining in Iraq until 2009? It