

I ask my colleagues on the left, I ask my Democrat colleagues, to join with us and complete the reforms of campaign finance reform.

GATOR NATION

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the University of Florida's first-ever men's basketball national championship. Coach Billy Donovan and his young, explosive team beat UCLA, one of the most storied college basketball programs ever, 73-57. The Gators took the lead in the very beginning and never looked back.

Truly a testament to the power of youth, the Gators were led by four sophomores and one junior. Coach Donovan himself became the second youngest coach to win a national title. In addition, he is now one of three people to coach a national champion and play in a Final Four.

Florida is now one of only seven schools to win a national championship in football and basketball. While the University of Florida has had a reputation as a football school, this championship proves that Gator basketball has arrived.

I congratulate the University of Florida on their victory. It is great to be a Florida Gator.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAMPBELL of California). 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.

PORT SECURITY

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, members of the public might be surprised to learn that we are defending United States ports against the threat of nuclear weapons for the most part with a faith-based honor system.

Here is how it works: there is something called the C-TPAT program. Now, foreign interests, so far 10,000, have indicated interest, file paperwork with the Department of Homeland Security. Now the Department of Homeland Security is a little understaffed. We have to have tax cuts for the rich people. So they do not have enough people to process these things. But once you file that form with them, you are considered to not be a threat because you filled out the paperwork. So far 5,800 have filed. About a third of them have been visited once. One site visit and then you are certified for 3 years. One site visit.

So all you do is you get all the terrorists with the AK-47s and the kaffias to get off the property for a day and you say, look, good place, security plan, legitimate business, you get the stamp of approval. Now you are no longer considered a high risk in terms of what you might put in a container. What you then have to do is when you want to ship a container to the United States, you have to send the shipping invoice a day in advance before it is put on the ship. So what you do is you say this container contains 200 birdbaths, because, of course, you would not say 199 birdbaths and one small tactical nuclear weapon. You would not do that. But we do not check those containers until they get to the United States of America, and then we check a very small percentage of them here using high technology.

Now, today we have the Assistant Secretary, Mr. JACKSON, in, who told us what their future plans are. Now, remember we have this threat. Things are coming to the United States of America. We do not really know what they are, on this honor system. We have not inspected those facilities. Even if they had been inspected, they were only inspected one day every three years. They have set a goal here, and he said that their goal is 100 percent inspection of all containers as they depart a U.S. port headed into our country.

First I thought that was a misprint. I thought his staff screwed up his testimony here. No, he meant it. He is saying we know that these containers, when they come to the United States, might have a nuclear bomb inside; so their goal is that they will check all those containers with our technology within a very few years before they leave the port to an interior city. He did not really respond when I asked if that meant our ports have become sacrifice zones.

They are so uncertain of the faith-based honor system, the C-TPAT system, and what is going on overseas that they want to put in place technology at taxpayer expense, technology to check 100 percent of those containers for nuclear weapons before they go from U.S. ports to inland U.S. cities.

When I asked him if maybe we might extend that perimeter overseas and require that all containers be inspected overseas for nuclear weapons, he was saying that would be very difficult, but he actually admitted it might be possible given the technology recently modeled in Hong Kong.

But the Republican majority on the committee said no way, we are not going to allow the inspection of those containers overseas. It would slow down those Chinese goods flooding into the United States of America and other things manufactured overseas. It would hurt commerce. There would be trucks lined up for miles back into mainland China with goods on them waiting to come to Wal-Mart here.

This is fairly extraordinary to me. The Republican majority and the Re-

publican administration are admitting that there are potential threats in these containers. They have put in place a faith-based honor system, but they are working hard to see that we will check those containers after they have arrived at an American port before they go to another American city. Those of us who live a little bit inland will be thankful for that, but I really do not agree with the philosophy that turns our ports into sacrifice zones.

No. We need to check 100 percent of these containers for threats meaningfully with high technology equipment overseas before they come to the United States of America.

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

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

REMEMBERING ALICIA BONURA AND ASHLEY BROWN

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, every day parents send their children to school with the faith that they will return after their classes, their sports practice, or even clubs after school. As a father of four, I know the feeling. I did the same for many years on different occasions. We as parents send our kids off, and we trust that we will see them that night for supper.

But for two Beaumont, Texas, families last Thursday morning, it did not occur that way. West Brook High School students Alicia Bonura and Ashley Brown were playing in the soccer playoffs after school that day. That morning their parents wished them good luck and sent them on their way, anticipating news of a win upon their return. When they sent their daughters to school, they had no idea of the nightmare that would unfold that afternoon. Tragically, their star soccer players never came home.

It was supposed to be an exciting day. Mr. Speaker, Beaumont, Texas, has suffered through a rough year with many families still feeling the effects of Hurricane Rita. The West Brook High School girls soccer team and their successes were good news to this storm-torn city.

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The Bruins were coming off a 14-5-2 record, and they were traveling to

Humble, Texas, to take on the Houston Lamar Redskins in the Class 5A playoffs. The game had already been postponed once and it was raining again, but the game was set to take place at 5 p.m. in Humble. Unfortunately, the team never made it to the game.

Around 2 p.m., about 28 miles from home in Devers, Texas, the chartered bus carrying the team, the coach and one parent chaperone swerved to miss debris that had fallen off a truck in front of them. The bus rolled onto its side into a muddy ditch.

Sadly, senior Alicia Bonura and sophomore Ashley Brown lost their lives in this tragedy. Six other girls were hospitalized in serious condition. Goalie Devin Martindale lost her arm in this accident. The other five girls were Lauree Thibaut, Allison Forman, Sarah Beach, Courtney Garrod, and Sarah Babin. Two of those girls have been released from the hospital and are back home.

News of the accident quickly spread back to the town and West Brook students set up a vigil in the high school gymnasium where friends and faculty prayed and hoped for the best. Soon the students were hit with the horrendous news that two of their own had been killed in this catastrophe.

According to the Beaumont Enterprise, the girls are remembered for "loving soccer, loving their school and loving everyone they came in touch with."

Alicia Bonura, in addition to playing soccer, had played basketball, she ran cross-country, and was a trainer for the West Brook football team. She played the drums in the band and sometimes she sang vocals as well. She is remembered for her wonderful laugh and a smile that would light up a room. She was ranked number five in her class of 535, and she recently decided to attend Texas A&M University to study mechanical engineering.

On her MySpace Web page she wrote: "I love to smile and love life in general and I love God. He is such a fantastic guy." Under people she would like to meet, she writes, "I can't wait to meet God." Moving words from one of God's children.

Ashley Brown was a freckle-faced girl with long red hair. Her friends said she always made people laugh and was a free spirit and had a smile that would light up a room. Her teachers said that her fellow students gravitated to her. She was an active member in her youth ministry at her church, Calvary Baptist. Besides soccer, she loved singing, playing volleyball, skiing and playing the electric guitar.

Ashley had a bulletin board in her home covered in photos and memorabilia. In the middle of the board there was a handwritten note stating the following: "You can't choose how you are going to die, but you can choose how you are going to live."

Mr. Speaker, in her 16 years on Earth, Ashley Brown lived life to the fullest, and she is going to be missed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to extend prayers and condolences to Alicia's and Ashley's parents, relatives, friends, and the community of Beaumont, Texas, the students and teachers and the coaches at West Brook High School and the Bruins girls soccer team. We hope that they find happiness in their fond memories of these special girls.

Alicia and Ashley truly led remarkable lives. They clearly touched so many people in their short time on Earth. Heaven is certainly brighter with Alicia and Ashley there, and the community of Beaumont Texas should take comfort. They now have two extra guardian angels looking down on them.

Mr. Speaker, that's just the way it is.

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

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

COSTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask permission to take the time of the gentleman from New Jersey.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

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, every week I stand here and talk about commonsense approaches to reducing gun violence in this country. And yet this body sees fit to chip away at existing gun laws. So tonight I want to talk about the effects of gun violence in terms that everybody in this body can understand, dollars and cents.

Throughout America, our States are experiencing extraordinary budget problems, forcing them to cut spending on many important initiatives. A great deal of these budget woes are caused by skyrocketing health care costs, and the continued cuts to Medicaid aren't going to help the situation.

Of course, Congress will not allow funding for the Centers for Disease Control to study the true economic cost of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources.

Independent sources have shown gun violence costs our economy over \$100 billion every year. In fact, each gun death costs our economy \$2.8 million. Gun violence increases law enforcement spending. Gun violence costs the economy billions in lost productivity. And while Congress won't let us learn the exact amount, gun violence costs our health care system more than \$2 billion every single year.

Since gun violence plagues so many low-income communities, victims are often uninsured. And who picks up the

tab for uninsured victims of gun violence? American taxpayers, that's who. So even if you don't think about gun violence as an important issue, you are paying for it.

It is obvious something must be done, and it is also obvious that this body has no plans to intervene in this public health crisis. So it is up to our local communities and neighborhoods.

Across the country people are fed up, but they are trying to make a difference in their own area. I have been to many events that have had politicians, school officials, law enforcement officers and others telling young people about the dangers of guns. But not once has anybody turned the microphone around and asked the kids what do they think.

So many young people live on the front lines of the gun violence epidemic. The rhetoric on both sides of this issue must stop, and we must start to learn to listen.

This isn't about the second amendment; this isn't about kids dying. Many of the people who disagree with my views on the gun issue will say, Guns don't kill people; people do.

But what that doesn't mean is we can't take steps to make sure guns don't fall into the hands of the wrong people. This isn't about taking away guns from law-abiding citizens who hunt or shoot skeet, nor is it about depriving law-abiding citizens from defending themselves and their families. In fact, we can save so many lives without affecting a single lawful gun owner in this country.

This is about keeping guns away from felons and gang members. This is about making sure our police departments have the tools they need to track down illegal guns. This isn't about running honest gun dealers out of business. It is about cracking down on the 1 percent of corrupt gun dealers who sell 57 percent of the guns used in crimes.

Gun rights advocates have as much stake in this as anybody else. Many see gun violence as an inner-city problem. But let's not forget that gang violence and drug crime also started out as an inner-city problem. We acted too late, and now gangs and drugs are commonplace in suburbs and rural communities.

So as we head home for the spring recess, I ask my colleagues to do something we don't do very often or very well: listen. It is time to listen to the people being affected by gun violence. Listen to our young people in underserved communities. Listen to our police departments who are losing officers to illegal guns every week. And listen to the families who have lost loved ones due to gun violence.

The answers to this epidemic of gun violence do not reside in this Chamber or on K Street, but in the hearts and minds of the people that we represent. It is time that they are heard.