

There are thousands of Federal Law Enforcement Officers, FLEOs, including those that bravely serve in the Department of Homeland Security. Of these thousands, some are injured in the course of duty. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to these individuals, especially given the difficult task they have of enforcing our laws and protecting our way of life.

In the Department of Homeland Security alone, countless FLEOs serve to protect the Nation from harm at our borders and ports of entry as well as our financial, cyber and transportation systems. On a daily basis, these individuals work diligently, often apprehending or detaining people suspected of criminal offenses, even if it means putting themselves in harm's way. Their work is absolutely necessary to the security and well-being of our country and it should be properly acknowledged.

While measures exist to award military personnel and State and local officers for their sacrifices, currently only 2 out of the more than 70 Federal agencies recognize their own valiant FLEOs. Therefore, it is imperative that Congress address and highlight the value of these distinguished men and women by establishing a Congressional Badge of Bravery. I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

HONORING AND REMEMBERING THE VIRGINIA TECH COMMUNITY

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. WITTMAN. Madam Speaker, today we remember and honor the students and faculty who lost their lives a year ago at Virginia Tech. The entire community has made a valiant effort to move forward while still honoring those who were lost and injured on that fateful day. As a proud alumnus of Virginia Tech this day has very personal meaning to my family and me. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims and the entire Hokie family today.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING COACH DAN McCAULEY FOR COACHING THE TUSCARAWAS COUNTY ROCKETS SPECIAL OLYMPICS BASKETBALL TEAM TO WINNING THE OHIO DIVISION IV STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker:

Whereas, Coach Dan McCauley showed hard work and dedication to the sport of basketball; and

Whereas, Dan McCauley was a leader and mentor for the Tuscarawas County Rockets Special Olympics Basketball Team; and

Whereas, Coach McCauley has been a role model for sportsmanship on and off of the court; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that along with his friends, family, and the residents of the 18th Congressional District, I congratulate Coach Dan McCauley for leading the Tuscarawas County Rockets Special Olympics Basketball Team to winning the Ohio Division IV State Basketball Championship. We recognize the tremendous hard work and leadership he has demonstrated during the 2007–2008 Basketball season.

THE DAILY 45: CHAVEZ CLARKE

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, everyday, 45 people, on average, are fatally shot in the United States. Sadly enough, one of the victims on March 29 was eighteen-year-old Chavez Clarke. This Chicago student was gunned down after Saturday classes at Simeon Career Academy, where Clarke was attending in hopes of graduating this summer.

One teenage gunman brought a gun to school because he knew security would be light, police said. Clarke's classmates were outraged. On April 1—instead of playing April Fool's Day pranks—three hundred anti-violence activists and Chicago Public Schools students joined local leaders in their fight for gun control.

If we, as adults, parents, and legislators don't hear the cries of our children, then, WE are the fools. Americans of conscience must come together to stop the senseless death of "The Daily 45." When will Americans say "enough is enough, stop the killing!"

VIRGINIA TECH ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 1-year anniversary of the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech University.

Madam Speaker, today, April 16, 2008, marks one of the darkest days in our Nation's history. A year ago today, 32 innocent lives were mercilessly cut short in their prime. A year ago today, families and friends lost their loved ones in a crime of unspeakable horror. A year ago today, we, the American people once again lost a piece of ourselves and our sense of security.

These poor people. Their poor families. These were real people that were killed. They were our sons and daughters. This was our American family that was impacted on April 16, 2007.

The shooting at Virginia Tech was the deadliest school shooting ever seen on our soil.

Far too many times we have stood here in this Chamber commemorating days like today. Days when we reflect on what evil can come to bear on good people and we make grand proclamations about how we will do everything we can to make sure that it will never happen again. Never again.

And here we are—again.

The cynics among us will no doubt throw their hands up in the air and claim that this is just the way things are. What can we do?

Can we ever stop these nightmares from happening in the first place, so we don't have to hear about another life needlessly lost? The answer is most likely an unsettling no.

The fact is that someday, somewhere, despite all of our best efforts, we will probably come together again sometime down the line and we will deliver similar speeches and we will once again feel the helpless confusion that we have become so uneasily and reluctantly accustomed to.

No, we can't say that there will never be another shooting of major proportions like the one at Virginia Tech, but we can say that we will do everything in our power to close any loophole we can find that would make it easier for another individual to commit such a heinous crime.

We have made strides in the right direction. In January, this Congress passed and the President signed into law the National Instant Criminal Background Check System Improvement Amendments Act.

This bill was a step in the right direction toward keeping guns out of the hands of the people who stand to do the most harm with them. In fact, based on his diagnosed mental illness, it is possible that the killer, Mr. Cho, might not have been able to acquire the weapons he used on his murderous rampage.

We can and will save lives as a result of the mechanisms put in place through the passage of this legislation. But in order for the Improvements to NICS to be truly effective, we must make sure that this Congress steps up to the plate and appropriately funds the legislation that we all supported. This measure is too important to play politics with, and I call on my colleagues to stand with me and do the right thing by fully funding the NICS Improvement Amendments Act.

But beyond keeping guns out of the wrong hands, we need to make sure that systems are in place that will keep our Nation's college campuses safe.

Last week I stood with the families of Virginia Tech victims and announced the introduction of the "Virginia Tech Victims Campus Emergency Response Policy and Notification Act," H.R. 5735, also known as the VTV Act.

The bill amends the Jean Clery Act and requires schools to provide warnings within 30 minutes after campus or local law enforcement officials have determined there is an emergency or dangerous situation on campus.

Had Virginia Tech quickly warned students that there was a gunman on campus when first two murders were confirmed, many of the victims may have sought shelter or stayed put. Instead, people went about their normal day with no knowledge of the danger they were about to encounter.

No notifications were sent until 9:26 a.m., when the school emailed students that there was a shooting, and to watch for suspicious behavior. At 9:45 a.m., the second round of shootings occurred. But by that time, students had already gone to their classes.

Many believe if the students had been notified earlier, they might not have gone to class and some might not have been exposed to the shooter.

If the warnings required by the VTV Act were in place on April 16, 2007, lives might have been saved.

Joe Samaha, father of Virginia Tech victim Reema Samaha said last week that, "If we do not learn the lesson, we will have lost our students for nothing."

Let's honor the memories of those students and work to be proactive and do anything necessary to make sure that we can deliver fewer and fewer statements commemorating tragedies like Virginia Tech.

This body has the duty to pass laws that protect Americans, and we can do just that, by supporting sensible legislation like the VTV Act to make sure that we do everything we can to avoid more gun violence.

So let's mark today's unfortunate anniversary by upholding the memory of those lost at Virginia Tech last year and promise to do better, work harder, learn the lessons and not let them be lost for nothing.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, yesterday I was away from Washington attending to personal matters and missed several votes. I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 5036, the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008, "no" on the Motion to Recommit H.R. 5719, "yes" on H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008, and "yes" on H.R. 5517, designating a post office in Humble, Texas.

WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, my wife Marie and I were among the thousands who joined President George W. Bush and Laura on the White House lawn today in welcoming Pope Benedict XVI to the United States.

It was among the most inspiring events of my 28 years in Congress.

Both men—extraordinary leaders for extraordinarily difficult times—spoke eloquently of the challenges, opportunities and duties of global citizenship. Both called us to work harder and more effectively for others, especially the disenfranchised, weak and vulnerable.

President Bush—speaking for us—said to the Pope:

"Here in America you'll find a nation of compassion. Americans believe that the measure of a free society is how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable among us. . . . Here in America you'll find a nation that welcomes the role of faith in the public square. . . . Here in America, you'll find a nation that is fully modern, yet guided by ancient and eternal truths. . . . Most of all, Holy Father, you will find in America people whose hearts are open to your message of hope. And America and the world need this message."

Pope Benedict said "I come as a friend. a preacher of the Gospel, and one with great respect for this vast pluralistic society . . ."

He said he hoped his presence would be "a source of renewal and hope." He reminded us that "Freedom is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility." And the Pope urged us to greater action:

"the need for global solidarity is as urgent as ever, if all people are to live in a way worthy of their dignity—as brothers and sisters dwelling in the same house and around that table which God's bounty has set for all his children. America has traditionally shown herself generous in meeting immediate human needs, fostering development and offering relief to the victims of natural catastrophes. I am confident that this concern for the greater human family will continue to find expression in support for the patient efforts of international diplomacy to resolve conflicts and promote progress. In this way, coming generations will be able to live in a world where truth, freedom and justice can flourish—a world where the God-given dignity and the rights of every man, woman and child are cherished, protected and effectively advanced."

Madam Speaker, what follows are both the President and Pope's remarks in their entirety.

PRESIDENT BUSH WELCOMES HIS HOLINESS

POPE BENEDICT XVI TO WHITE HOUSE

President Bush: Holy Father, Laura and I are privileged to have you here at the White House. We welcome you with the ancient words commended by Saint Augustine: "Pax Tecum." Peace be with you.

You've chosen to visit America on your birthday. Well, birthdays are traditionally spent with close friends, so our entire nation is moved and honored that you've decided to share this special day with us. We wish you much health and happiness—today and for many years to come.

This is your first trip to the United States since you ascended to the Chair of Saint Peter. You will visit two of our greatest cities and meet countless Americans, including many who have traveled from across the country to see you and to share in the joy of this visit. Here in America you'll find a nation of prayer. Each day millions of our citizens approach our Maker on bended knee, seeking His grace and giving thanks for the many blessings He bestows upon us. Millions of Americans have been praying for your visit, and millions look forward to praying with you this week.

Here in America you'll find a nation of compassion. Americans believe that the measure of a free society is how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable among us. So each day citizens across America answer the universal call to feed the hungry and comfort the sick and care for the infirm. Each day across the world the United States is working to eradicate disease, alleviate poverty, promote peace and bring the light of hope to places still mired in the darkness of tyranny and despair.

Here in America you'll find a nation that welcomes the role of faith in the public square. When our Founders declared our nation's independence, they rested their case on an appeal to the "laws of nature, and of nature's God." We believe in religious liberty. We also believe that a love for freedom and a common moral law are written into every human heart, and that these constitute the firm foundation on which any successful free society must be built.

Here in America, you'll find a nation that is fully modern, yet guided by ancient and eternal truths. The United States is the most innovative, creative and dynamic country on earth—it is also among the most religious. In our nation, faith and reason coexist in harmony. This is one of our country's greatest strengths, and one of the reasons that

our land remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for millions across the world.

Most of all, Holy Father, you will find in America people whose hearts are open to your message of hope. And America and the world need this message. In a world where some invoke the name of God to justify acts of terror and murder and hate, we need your message that "God is love." And embracing this love is the surest way to save men from "falling prey to the teaching of fanaticism and terrorism."

In a world where some treat life as something to be debased and discarded, we need your message that all human life is sacred, and that "each of us is willed, each of us is loved" and your message that "each of us is willed, each of us is loved, and each of us is necessary."

In a world where some no longer believe that we can distinguish between simple right and wrong, we need your message to reject this "dictatorship of relativism," and embrace a culture of justice and truth.

In a world where some see freedom as simply the right to do as they wish, we need your message that true liberty requires us to live our freedom not just for ourselves, but "in a spirit of mutual support."

Holy Father, thank you for making this journey to America. Our nation welcomes you. We appreciate the example you set for the world, and we ask that you always keep us in your prayers.

Pope Benedict XVI: Mr. President, thank you for your gracious words of welcome on behalf of the people of the United States of America. I deeply appreciate your invitation to visit this great country. My visit coincides with an important moment in the life of the Catholic community in America: the celebration of the 200th anniversary of elevation of the country's first Diocese—Baltimore—to a metropolitan Archdiocese and the establishment of the Sees of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Louisville.

Yet I am happy to be here as a guest of all Americans. I come as a friend, a preacher of the Gospel, and one with great respect for this vast pluralistic society. America's Catholics have made, and continue to make, an excellent contribution to the life of their country. As I begin my visit, I trust that my presence will be a source of renewal and hope for the Church in the United States, and strengthen the resolve of Catholics to contribute ever more responsibly to the life of this nation, of which they are proud to be citizens.

From the dawn of the Republic, America's quest for freedom has been guided by the conviction that the principles governing political and social life are intimately linked to a moral order based on the dominion of God the Creator. The framers of this nation's founding documents drew upon this conviction when they proclaimed the self-evident truth that all men are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights grounded in the laws of nature and of nature's God.

The course of American history demonstrates the difficulties, the struggles, and the great intellectual and moral resolve which were demanded to shape a society which faithfully embodied these noble principles. In that process, which forged the soul of the nation, religious beliefs were a constant inspiration and driving force, as for example in the struggle against slavery and in the civil rights movement. In our time, too, particularly in moments of crisis, Americans continue to find their strength in a commitment to this patrimony of shared ideas and aspirations.

In the next few days, I look forward to meeting not only with America's Catholic community, but with other Christian communities and representatives of the many religious traditions present in this country.