

ruling, the Court made clear that right is not unlimited.

We do not, as Justice Scalia put it, have an unlimited right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever, for whatever purpose. Our individual right to bear arms is limited by our right, among others, to keep our children safe.

Any of those children could have been one of ours, and for 20 parents, it was.

We may not be able to stop every crime. We know that no single law or set of laws can prevent every act of senseless violence in our society, but we have the ability and the know-how to prevent many of them. We must simply find the courage.

We can no longer be bystanders to injustice. We cannot continue to look on and do nothing.

As Shakespeare said, “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves.”

We must act.

THIS HAS TO END

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, the Bible says that by their deeds ye shall know them, and this Congress should pay heed to that message.

This week, we're mourning 20 children buried in Newtown, Connecticut. The President is right when he says we've seen this too many times before, and it has to end.

About this time 24 years ago I was sworn into the Congress. Two weeks later, five children were killed and 29 were wounded in the Stockton, California, schoolyard at Cleveland Elementary School.

You would have thought that we would have acted. Bills were put in. It took us until 1993—4 years—to pass the assault weapon ban. Courageous legislators stood up and said enough is enough, but hearings and all went on and on and on about military-style weapons that should be banned.

□ 1020

Anybody knows you don't hunt with a banana clip with 30 bullets in it. That's not hunting. That's not what you use at a gun range. We know that we shouldn't be able to buy a gun if you have a record of serious mental illness. You would think those things that were common sense would become law.

They became law in 1993, and there was a pushback from the National Rifle Association that said, well, all right, you can pass this, but with a 10-year sunset on it. Why do you put a sunset on an assault weapon ban? But we did. The fight was led by a courageous lawmaker who was willing to stand up and take the chance of having the NRA come down on him. His name is PETE STARK. PETE STARK led the fight in the

House. DIANNE FEINSTEIN led the fight in the Senate. He pushed and pushed and pushed and put the bill in again and again and again and finally got it through. In a few days, he will cast his last vote in the House. I'm going to miss him. We need courageous legislators like that. What we didn't have 10 years later were courageous legislators.

When the ban came to an end in 2004, the House was in different hands, politics had changed, 9/11 happened, and everybody said, What's the problem, we don't need this ban anymore. It's very clear that there are some things we can do—things like the weapon ban—but the real difficult part for us is to have a discussion about violence in our society.

One of my old friends in Afghanistan told me you can tell a country by what its national game is. Ours used to be baseball. But it's hard to believe that baseball is our national game anymore when you look at Sunday Night Football and realize how we glorify violence. Go into a game store and look at the games that we buy for our kids at Christmas—games that make it possible for you to sit and kill people hour after hour after hour, sitting alone by a computer.

We don't want to talk about those issues. We've managed to get some of the violence on television down before 8 o'clock at night when kids are still up, but we struggle because in a free enterprise society you can do anything you want. Well, we run the risk of having the difficulties we have here today.

The other thing we have to think about is the whole question of how we deal with the mentally ill. In 1996, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act passed in California. It made it almost impossible to put anybody in a locked facility unless they were imminently going to kill somebody or kill themselves. “Gravely disabled” was the term. We made it very hard to deal with these kinds of cases, and privacy rules and all of this we've added on over time has made it even more difficult. But it is clear that we as a society have to face the fact that there are some people who need help. This mother was looking for it.

We must act in this House.

TRAGEDY WITH NO POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, highlights an issue. And I think so often in this Chamber, actually, we talk about things that separate us, things that we have political battles and fights over. Unfortunately, on Friday, a tragedy occurred in Connecticut, taking the lives of far too many—20 children—and is a tragedy that knows no political boundaries. These are children that had their entire lives in front of them.

On Friday, like many of us here, we were back at home in our districts. After hearing the news, many of us went to our schools to pick up our children to hug them just a little bit longer.

This is a tragedy, Madam Speaker; and, frankly, it highlights a number of issues that many of us have talked about on the floor today: it's about the mentally ill; it's about what we can do as a country to make sure that, yes, we have a Second Amendment. And many of us here even in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, are gun owners. But I do believe that we are all for responsible gun ownership. And I do believe that there are reasonable restrictions that can be put in place.

But today, Madam Speaker, it's not about that for us. Today, I rise because America is hurting. The country is looking for answers—answers that I'm not so sure will come immediately. As we look at the pictures of these first-graders, of these kindergartners, we ask, Why? Those answers won't come today. Those answers might not come next week. What we do know is that our job, our basic function, is to make sure that we try to provide an environment throughout our country where people can achieve their dreams. That ought to be something that, again, is not a Republican idea or a Democrat idea. That's an American ideal and the American Dream.

A very sick individual robbed 20 children and six adults of their American Dream. I would like to think that they're in a better place today. I take some solace in my faith that I don't understand the Grand Plan and that the good Lord does. But what I will say is that we all believe that this was a senseless killing and tragedy. I hope we can learn from it.

I hope those in Newtown, Connecticut, feel the warmth of the Nation that is sending their thoughts and prayers to them this day, especially as we look forward to the holidays in front of us. We will all say a special prayer for those that have been lost so needlessly in this act. I hope our country can come together. I hope we can focus on the American Dream and the opportunity for all children and all Americans going forward.

FISCAL CLIFF NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. As I speak on the floor today, the Republicans are in conference with Speaker BOEHNER, talking about and getting an update on the so-called “fiscal cliff” negotiations. There seems to have been some progress.

A number of us are opposed to the idea of reducing further the already inadequate COLA granted to seniors on Social Security, but in some other areas there does seem to have been some meaningful progress. I was particularly pleased to hear that the

White House is insisting that infrastructure investment needs to be part of this negotiation.

A third of our deficit is due to chronic high unemployment in the United States of America. If we could put people back to work, a third of the deficit goes away. What if we put them to work rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure? There are 150,000 bridges in America that need substantial repair or replacement. Forty percent of the pavement on the National Highway System doesn't just need resurfacing. It needs to be dug up; it needs new roadbed. And there is a \$70 billion backlog on transit systems in this country, replacing worn, outmoded equipment. Those are manufacturing jobs, energy jobs—jobs not only in construction, but in many other areas; and they spill over into small business and the general economy.

□ 1030

We also need to build an efficient 21st century infrastructure. It's about 27,000 jobs for every billion dollars we invest. Now, historically we haven't borrowed money to make these investments. We have paid for our infrastructure with fees and taxes—principally the gas tax, but others, but the Federal gas tax hasn't changed since 1993. In 1993, you paid \$1.11 for a gallon of gas and 18.4 cents went to build our national infrastructure. This last year in my district, people paid over \$4.40 for a gallon of gas and 18.4 cents went to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

We've lost more than a third of the purchasing power of the highway trust fund just due to inflation. Over the next 2 years we will borrow \$18 billion just to tread water with the highway trust fund, and if we want to tread water over the next 10 years we'll borrow another \$110 billion. Will that happen in deficit-obsessed Washington, D.C.? Not likely. Does that mean quicker deterioration of our infrastructure? Does that mean we forego the jobs? Perhaps not.

If we just simply indexed the existing Federal gas tax set in 1993 at 18.4 cents to highway cost construction inflation and improved fleet fuel economy—so that you don't lose ground because people purchase less gas—we could, over the next decade, save \$128 billion—deficit reduction—and have an additional increment on top of that to begin to catch up with the huge backlog in our crumbling infrastructure in this country and put millions of people to work. It seems a very sensible solution: deficit reduction, jobs, and sound infrastructure. I hope those on the other side of the aisle will be receptive to the proposals from the White House for this needed investment.

This isn't the stupid stimulus bill that threw everything but the kitchen sink at the economy. Many things were not well spent. Four percent of that money went to infrastructure investment; over 40 percent went to stupid tax cuts that didn't put anybody back to work.

NEWTOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, our hearts are grieving with the entire Newtown community and all the families who lost loved ones last Friday. We mourn the 26 innocent lives, including those 20 children who have been lost in this unimaginable tragedy. Let me also just acknowledge the quick action of the brave law enforcement and first responders who prevented additional losses of life.

Words cannot express my deep sorrow, but as a mother and as a grandmother I join the country and my district in extending my condolences to every family and the entire community touched by this unspeakable tragedy.

This violence must stop. As President Obama so eloquently said on Sunday, we cannot accept that this violence visited on children year after year is somehow the price of freedom. No more excuses, Madam Speaker. No more kicking the can down the road. Not one more innocent life—not one more in Chicago, not one more in Oakland, not one more in any town, in any city, in any school, in any theater, or in any place of worship, in any mall, or in any of our neighborhoods. We have an obligation to our children to ensure that Newtown marks a turning point that made us finally say, enough is enough.

My district, unfortunately, knows these weapons of war oh so well, where too many innocent children continue to be killed in these war zones. We must come together to build an America where our children do not have to live in fear and where they do have a future.

Madam Speaker, we need to take some serious action that includes gun safety by banning these high-capacity magazines, expanding the 24-hour gun background check, closing the gun show loophole, and reinstituting the assault weapons ban immediately. This of course includes ending violence in our homes, in our streets, and in our communities.

By seeking input from young people, community stakeholders, the faith community and others, we need to work together to identify the root causes of this country's more than 16,000 homicides a year—this also includes recognizing gun violence as a critical public health crisis—and continue to support comprehensive violence prevention plans.

I've heard many say this over and over again, but we also must focus on making mental health care widely accessible and affordable. As a psychiatric social worker and someone who founded a community mental health center when the psychiatric facilities were beginning to shut down, I understand firsthand why we need to look at how we have to help people struggling with mental illness and make serious progress in treatment

and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help.

All of this of course is going to take resources. Nowhere do we know this more than in my own congressional district in Alameda County and in Oakland, where we know all too well the impact of budget cuts on violence and crime. We cannot allow any cuts to Medicare and Medicaid that might prevent families from getting the psychiatric help and support that they need. How else can we look at our children and our grandchildren this holiday season if we don't move as a Nation to finally address this violence that threatens the very core of our country?

In the coming weeks, all of us must work with President Obama, Senator FEINSTEIN, Congresswoman CAROLYN MCCARTHY, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT and all of our colleagues to be brave and to be bold enough to pass measures that ensure gun safety and a comprehensive solution to ensure that our children have a future in a peaceful Nation.

Madam Speaker, we can and we must do all of these things and more so that we can prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again.

On behalf of all my constituents, let me express once again our thoughts and our prayers for all of those impacted by this tragedy in Newtown and the entire State of Connecticut.

SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Madam Speaker, it is with great sorrow that I rise today to address the senseless murders that took place in Newtown, Connecticut, this past Friday. Mass shootings are always difficult to bear. This one is exceptionally disturbing due to the loss of so many children and those who bravely tried to protect them.

The massacre that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School will forever be embedded in our memory, as will the photos of 20 children as young as 5 years of age who perished in that school, a place that should be safe, a school. These innocent children will never have the opportunity to enjoy their teenage years, to go to a prom, or have families of their own. We owe a debt of gratitude to the teachers who lost their lives trying to shield our children from this senseless crime.

I stand here today unable to make sense of what is a completely incomprehensible situation. We may never know what compelled the shooter in this tragedy to use such high-powered weapons to inflict pain on so many innocent people, but what we do know is that these kinds of crimes are on the rise in our society.

Gun violence, and the culture associated with it, has become so prevalent that now our babies can't even go to