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And on behalf of Bama fans around the world, Roll Tide!

A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 14, 2013

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and join the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus to address the pervasive culture of violence that exists in America today.

The community in Newtown, Connecticut—along with the rest of the country—is still reeling from the inconceivable tragedy that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012; our hearts still ache with sadness and disbelief for the families and loved ones of the children and women who lost their lives in this senseless act of violence.

As the Founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus and a senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, I have listened to the tragic testimony of individuals who have survived or lost loved ones as a result of gun violence.

In the words of President Obama after the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, "We're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics."

While it is certainly true that violent crime and homicide rates in this country have been declining in recent years, they are still far above those in other industrialized nations.

Moreover, in America, there exists a pernicious culture of violence; a subculture that with today's technologically advanced weaponry is far more dangerous to public safety than ever before. At no point in our nation's history has a single human been more capable of inflicting massive death and misery, and our society is producing more individuals who wish to employ such means to carry out their ill intentions.

Far too often, the tool of choice for would-be killers is a firearm. Moreover, military-style assault weapons with high-capacity magazines

are not just in the hands of our men and women in the armed services; they on our streets. Many of them are in the wrong hands, and end up being the highly efficient tools of criminals and mass murderers.

Today marks a month since the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting. In that time, at least 836 more people in America have died from gun violence and accidental shootings.

This isn't a fluke; every day, on average, 33 Americans are murdered with guns, amounting to more than 12,000 people a year. In addressing this issue, I recognize and respect other cultures that exist in America; law-abiding citizens who are responsible in their ownership of firearms. Many of these citizens are reasonable with respect to the lethal capacity of their firearms, opting not to obtain assault weapons or to equip assault weapons with 30, 50, 75, or 100-round magazines.

Our reaction to, God forbid, the next time a madman enters a crowded movie theatre with the intent to kill, cannot simply be to wish that there was an armed good Samaritan in the audience who had the courage, opportunity and ability to stop a psychopathic shooter wielding a semi-automatic weapon equipped with a high-capacity magazine.

I commend the President for convening a Gun Violence Task Force, and Vice President Biden for his outstanding leadership.

As the President develops policy recommendations, as Members of Congress, we need to act as well.

H.R. 65: "THE CHILD GUN SAFETY AND GUN ACCESS PREVENTION ACT OF 2013"

We have all been shaken by tragic events in which children are the victims of gun violence or accidents. Whether these events occurred in Newtown, CT, Aurora, CO, or on the streets of Chicago, IL, we need to effectively address the safety of our children immediately. Urban, suburban, or rural, guns have impacted children across the demographic spectrum.

While the nation's attention has often been drawn toward some of the more high-profile events, the broader statistics are disturbing, demonstrating a real need to address how we protect our nation's children from gun violence.

Every 30 minutes, a child or teenager in America dies or is injured by a gun. Every 3 hours and 15 minutes, a child or teenager loses their life to a firearm. In 2010, 82 children under 5 years of age lost their lives due to guns. To put that in perspective, 58 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty that year.

As the 113th Congress debates various proposals for gun legislation in light of recent tragedies, we can act now to pass H.R. 65, a bill with common sense standards that is focused on protecting our nation's children from gun violence and accidents.

H.R. 65 will raise the handgun eligibility age from 18 to 21, and will prohibit persons under the age of 21 from possessing semiautomatic assault weapons or large capacity magazines.

Moreover, H.R. 65 increases penalties on individuals who knowingly transfer a handgun, ammunition, semiautomatic assault weapon, or large capacity ammunition feeding device to a person under age 21.

In addition, H.R. 65 will also prohibit importers, manufacturers, and dealers from transferring firearms without providing the purchaser with a gun storage or safety device.

Finally, H.R. 65 authorizes the U.S. Attorney General to provide grants to enable local law

enforcement agencies to develop and sponsor gun safety classes for parents and children.

These provisions, and others, can go a long way toward making our homes, schools, and streets safer for children across this country. We may not be able to prevent every gun-related tragedy from occurring in the future, but we have a responsibility to implement reasonable standards that will prevent the loss of innocent lives.

As we call for legislation to address gun related violence, it is also important to address another growing epidemic . . . the epidemic of bullying. We live in a society where children are exposed to so many different influences. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of children who have to face bullies in the classroom and in cyberspace. As we discuss the culture of violence, we must always remember the impact that this culture has on our nation's children.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Today Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Those who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. It used to be that Bullying just happened primarily among over youth but as we are seeing today even the elderly and adults are being bullied. This must stop.

I introduced in the 112th Congress H.R. 83 "Juvenile Accountability Block Grants Reauthorization and Bullying Prevention and Intervention Act," which calls for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants at \$40 million for each FY 2013–2017, which amounts to \$200 million in funding.

In addition, my bill would add purpose area to provide for grant funding to States for programs that address bullying, cyberbullying prevention, and gang prevention and intervention in addition to expressing a Sense of Congress on the importance of best practices.

The JABG program authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to states and units of local government to strengthen their juvenile justice systems and foster accountability within their juvenile populations. The program focuses resources on holding juveniles accountable for their actions and building up the juvenile justice system in the states.

It also essentially signifies the high-water mark of the federal government's movement away from an emphasis on rehabilitating juveniles and toward the idea that juveniles need to be punished for their crimes; indeed, the only core mandate of the JABG program is that states must begin to implement a system of graduated sanctions in order to be eligible for funding.

Many of the deadly cases of bullying arise when children are teased and tormented simply for being different. There has been a recent upswing of suicides amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) teens as a result of bullying.

Almost 85 percent of LGBT teenagers are harassed in high school because of their sexual orientation, with 61 percent of gay youth reporting that they felt unsafe in school and 30% staying home to avoid bullying.

By law, we require our children to go to school. Therefore, we have a duty to maintain a safe and healthy environment for children, one in which they should not be afraid. It is important that our children know that bullying will not be taken lightly, and that there will be consequences for such actions.

Thirty percent (30%) of U.S. students in grades six through ten are involved in moderate or frequent bullying—as bullies, as victims, or as both—according to the results of the first national survey on this subject. I held a Local-Federal Hearing on Bullying in Houston, Texas and hearings on Bullying in Washington, DC. I heard testimony from law enforcement officials about some of the difficulties they faced when combating bullying. Over 40 advocates and victims from across the country also testified.

Last year, I invited the Director of the movie *Bully*, Lee Hirsch and other experts to screen the movie *Bully* and for a Briefing on the issue of Bullying. When the MPAA threaten to rate the movie with an R rating, I requested that they reconsider, the movie literally follows to

lives of several children who are bullied in schools and needed to be seen by children. I was pleased with the MPAA relented and gave the movie a PG-13 rating.

I have read the accounts of bullying victims and indeed the language from those accounts is often graphic and deeply moving. This is the type of language that our children hear and the behavior that they have witness in their classrooms and on their playgrounds.

Bullying has become a crucial issue of epidemic proportions affecting millions of children and countless schools across our country. Studies show that 1 out of 4 children have been physically bullied, and the percentages grow exponentially when one considers the number of children affected emotionally and psychologically, and those who have bullied

other children. Lately, instances of bullying have taken a deadly turn all over the country. We must utilize all the resources we have available to us to address this dangerous trend. My bill is intended to address this epidemic.

This Congress we must focus on finding ways to address this culture of violence. I implore each of you to address gun safety, to limit access to certain types of guns, to support legislation that addresses bullying amongst our nation's children.

This Congress we have the opportunity to take steps to address mental health, reasonable limitations on certain fire arms, and the growing epidemic of bullying. We must act and we must act now.