

It is important that in each instance here the truth is uncovered and that swift and appropriate actions are taken to help restore confidence in the impartiality, fairness, and competence of the Federal Government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE INNOCENT AND THE INCONVENIENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 55 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank the Speaker.

With the recent murder conviction of abortion doctor Kermit Gosnell, we've got to encourage Americans to ask: How different, really, is Gosnell's house of horrors from abortions that occur in clinics throughout the United States? The tragic answer: not much. Not much at all.

Mr. Speaker, there are Kermit Gosnells all over America—predators, child abusers, exploiters of women. Some abortionists may have cleaner sheets than Gosnell did and better sterilized equipment and better trained accomplices, but what they do and what Gosnell did for four decades—kill babies and hurt women—is the same.

Will Americans ever be told the horrifying details as to how and how often abortionists dismember, decapitate, and chemically poison innocent babies?

Where is the outrage, Mr. Speaker, over the 55 million child victims who have been brutally killed by abortion over the last 40 years and over the millions of women who have been hurt physically, emotionally, and psychologically?

Why the appalling lack of compassion? Why the empathy deficit for the victims—women and children—by so many, including and especially by President Obama and Vice President BIDEN? Women and children deserve better.

Of course, Gosnell's trial isn't the first to rip the benign facade of legitimacy from the abortion industry. As far back as 1975, Dr. Kenneth Edelin was convicted by a jury in Boston of murdering an African American baby boy who was found dead and abandoned in the Boston City Hospital morgue.

□ 1850

An investigation that led to trial revealed that the child was yet another Kenneth Edelin victim. When the jury saw the picture of the dead baby, they were appalled and persuaded that indeed a homicide had occurred. Astonishingly, that conviction was subsequently overturned by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which simply dismissed the murder as yet another legal abortion.

Mr. Speaker, how did Planned Parenthood react to the reversal of ver-

dict? With euphoric celebration. Dr. Edelin, after all, was their guy. Years later, Dr. Edelin became the chairman of the board of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and was even given the Margaret Sanger Award in 2008. And I would note parenthetically that in 2009, Planned Parenthood gave the Sanger Award to Hillary Clinton. And like Gosnell, not a single tear was shed by Dr. Kenneth Edelin or Planned Parenthood for the murdered child victim.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, an undercover investigative organization, Live Action, released more undercover videos that exposed the abortion industry's absolutely appalling and callous disregard for human life, human rights, and Federal law. Previously, Live Action aired several videos showing Planned Parenthood abortion clinic personnel advising women at several clinics throughout the country, including in my own home State of New Jersey, as to how to procure sex-selection abortions simply because the unborn child happened to be a little girl and other equally disturbing videos showing Planned Parenthood staffers who counsel and offer to arrange secret abortions for teenager sex trafficking victims.

One of those was in a Planned Parenthood where I went to high school in Perth Amboy. A very young Latina, 14, 15, posing as a woman who had been trafficked with a man that was posing as a pimp, talks—and I advise and ask people to watch those videos. Just go to Live Action. Google it, and you can find it. Watch how they say, We cannot only abort this young girl who has been trafficked—and I wrote, Mr. Speaker, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to combat this hideous modern-day exploitation mostly of women and children. And there's Planned Parenthood personnel saying how this young girl could get a secret abortion, be back out on the streets and, of course, further exploited by this person who purported to be a pimp.

The first call should have been to the police to have them arrested; instead, they talked about how to get the secret abortion.

Live Action has released undercover videos showing a Bronx, New York, abortion counselor describing how, in violation of U.S. Federal law, a born-alive baby would be placed in a jar of toxic solution to ensure his or her death.

A D.C. abortionist is also captured on film who talks about leaving a baby born alive after a botched abortion simply to die due to the elements.

An Arizonan worker said that they would not resuscitate should a baby survive an abortion attempt.

This is not just violence against children; this is a violation of Federal law.

Live Action President Lila Rose has released yet another must-see video of a Maryland abortionist by the name of Dr. LeRoy Carhart, who compares a baby in the womb—you've got to watch

this—to meat in a slow cooker and jokes about his abortion toolkit, complete with pickax and drill bit. I watched that, and I was sick. This man does so-called “legal abortions” right within range of this Nation's capital.

Mr. Speaker, some day—and I believe the day is fast approaching—Americans will look back and wonder how and why such a seemingly enlightened society, so blessed and endowed with education, advanced science, information, and wealth, opportunity could have so utterly failed to protect the innocent and the inconvenient. They will wonder how and why a Nobel Peace Prize winning President could also have simultaneously been the abortion President and Planned Parenthood's best friend, despite the tragic fact that Planned Parenthood is directly responsible for aborting over 6 million babies in their clinics.

History will not look favorably on today's abortion culture. We must instead work tirelessly to replace it with a culture of life. Women and children deserve no less.

I yield back the balance of my time.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I'm proud to rise in strong support of comprehensive immigration reform. There are many of my colleagues that have fought these battles long before I arrived in Congress, but today I join my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, in strong support of comprehensive immigration reform.

Comprehensive immigration reform is the single most important thing we can do to grow our economy. It will also help make sure that our laws reflect our values as Americans. We are, after all, a Nation of laws and a Nation of immigrants, and the two can and must be made consistent through comprehensive immigration reform.

I want to acknowledge the work of many of my colleagues both in the Senate and House in working towards this worthy goal. I've said in my district and here on the floor of Congress that never in my limited time here have I ever been more optimistic about getting immigration reform done than I am now.

Immigration reform is long overdue, and should this Congress fail to rise to the challenge, Mr. Speaker, the issue will not go away. There may be 10 million or 11 million people here without papers to be able to work, and that doesn't solve itself, so let's take this on. Let's take this on on behalf of the American people, on behalf of Americans of all ideologies, arm in arm with faith-based groups, with civil rights groups, with law enforcement, with the business community, all of whom have

come to Washington and met with Members back home imploring on us the urgent need for action.

There is a strong economic argument about how immigration reform spurs innovation, helps create jobs. We need to also make sure employers play by the same set of rules and some employers don't benefit by dealing under the table in an illegal way. This happens today.

I've spoken out about some of the steps that States and Congress have taken in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform because those measures simply don't work. Let's take, for example, programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities. These draconian laws have actually made our communities less safe by making our immigrant communities less likely to report crimes. Failure to access health care makes our communities less safe by deteriorating public health.

A recent poll showed that almost 30 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, Americans, are scared to report a crime, even if they're a victim, out of fear that they'll be asked about their immigration status or the status of their family and friends. In order to begin to address this important public safety issue, we have to pass comprehensive immigration reform and restore trust to community policing across the country.

There is a political imperative facing the United States Congress because a vast majority of Americans want to see us pass comprehensive immigration reform. Over 70 percent—a majority of self-described conservatives, of liberals, of moderates, majorities of Democrats, of Republicans, Independents—83 percent of Americans support a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who pass a background test and want to learn English and play by the rules.

I've heard some of my colleagues say, Oh, why don't they get in line? Well, the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, there is no line. Immigration reform is about creating a line. Of course, those who are here illegally will be in line behind those who are in the process legally. There's never been a question about that. But we need to create a line to have an orderly way of doing what is under the table and done extralegally today.

□ 1900

The American public wants us to act now and continues to demand that of this Congress, because the American people are wise. They know that nothing will help us grow our economy more, will shore up the budget deficit and the entitlement programs that we worry about, will reestablish the rule of law, will help us secure our borders and facilitate trade. Nothing will do that better than bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform.

I'm proud to say that the Senate markup of immigration reform is now underway. As we move forward, we'll

be talking out for and against various amendments that support or undermine our principles. I think what's critical is to protect a pathway to citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans living in the shadows, and we need to make sure that there's a realistic way for that to happen.

Let me be clear: no version of comprehensive immigration reform confers citizenship on anybody. Citizenship is earned over time. This is about creating a line and a process by which people have provisional status, maybe some day a green card, and then maybe some day if they want to learn English and take the citizenship test and forgo their foreign allegiances, we'd be happy to have them as our American brothers and sisters. If other immigrants choose not to and choose to work here for a period of time legally and return to another country, that is fine, too. This country has been built by immigrants from across the world. My own great-grandparents came to these shores, and today, I have the deep honor of serving in the United States Congress.

We need to make sure that immigration reform keeps families together, strengthens our family-based visa program for future immigrants, has realistic wait times that are consistent with people's lives so that parents can be with their kids as they grow up. Nothing can be more inhumane than the way immigration laws play out today in our country where an American child, an American citizen, returning home from school might find that their mother or father is in an indefinite detention process, and not because of anything their kid did. Why? Maybe they had a taillight out. Maybe they were going 10 miles over the speed limit. Is that really a moral justification for tearing up a strong family unit, Mr. Speaker?

I've met with many of these kids and I've met with their parents. We need to be a Congress that supports families. We need to be a Congress that helps parents have time to spend with their kids, make sure no kid has to worry about their parent, who has no criminal violation—we're only talking about civil violations, no criminal violation—and suddenly being missing for months or being sent to a country that the child might never even have been to.

There's a number of reasons in addition to the moral ones for immigration reform. Many of our fast-growing companies cry out for a skilled workforce. For America to be competitive, for innovative companies in the technology industry to be successful, for innovative companies in advanced manufacturing to be successful, we need to compete in the global talent pool. We are precluded. American companies are precluded from doing that today. And we wonder why jobs are being outsourced. Why are companies growing in India? Why are companies growing in England? Why are they growing overseas in Chile? Well, you know what? Many of those companies would

rather grow here and hire people here, and our current laws prohibit them from doing so because they can't get the people they want.

I represent a district with two fine universities, great institutions: Colorado State University in Fort Collins, the University of Colorado at Boulder. Right down the road is the School of Mines in Colorado, DU. All these schools are educating the next generation of engineers, of mathematicians, of computer programmers, of scientists, some of whom are foreign nationals legally here on student visas. But once they're trained, once that young man from India, that young woman from France gets that advanced degree in computer science and a master's degree and is ready to go into a good job, guess what our government says? Our government says, Guess what, you've got to leave. You've got to take that job to France. You've got to take that job to India. You've got to take that job to Canada. Our government is saying we don't want that job in our country.

Well, Mr. Speaker, through comprehensive immigration reform, this Congress can make a statement that we do want that job here in America. We want to grow our economy stronger. We want to make sure that the people who have had the great benefit of learning at one of our premier institutions of higher education can employ their talents here to make our country stronger and grow our economy. That's what comprehensive immigration reform is all about.

I'm also optimistic that comprehensive immigration reform will provide a new mechanism for entrepreneurs from across the world to start their companies here. Currently, there is no visa classification for somebody who has an idea, has some backing, venture capital investment, and wants to hire 10 or 20 people. And guess what. It's not just about the 10 or 20 people that they hire. It's about the potential for that company to employ thousands of people years down the road. And again, what does our government say? No, go start that company in Chile; go start that company in China or India.

Well, I'm sure all those countries need companies, too, Mr. Speaker; but I, as a Congressman, represent America, and I want that company here. I want it in my congressional district and in my State, but I'll be happy as long as it is in America. So let's provide a way, through a start-up visa, that an entrepreneur from anywhere in the world who has a great idea and that idea is validated by receiving a real investment can come start their company here in our country. Hire Americans; grow that company; bring value to consumers; create jobs; live the American Dream. That's what this country is all about. That's what this country is all about.

And let's talk about the dreamers, Mr. Speaker. These are young de facto Americans. Why de facto Americans?

They know no other country. Maybe they were brought here when they were 2 or 5 or 1. They didn't violate any law in coming here. What does a 1-year-old know from the law. They grew up here. They played sports with your kids in school. They were cheerleaders with your kids in school. They got good grades. They're going to college. Guess what. They don't have any type of identification that allows them to work in this country. And technically, under the law, they would have to return to another country where they may not even speak the language or know anybody.

So while President Obama's deferred action program is a strong step in the right direction, and at least many of these dreamers no longer live in fear of indefinite detention and can go to work, that's only a 2-year timeout. Only Congress can provide a permanent status for these millions of de facto Americans who know no other country, are as American as you or me. American in fact; let's make them American in law. And that, too, should and must be a part of the comprehensive immigration reform package.

Our country is about family values and letting parents raise their kids without fear of government intervention, being able to live the American Dream. These are values that transcend our ideologies. These are values that conservative Americans and liberal Americans and moderate Americans can all agree on.

When I have town hall meetings in my district—and we always, as you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, attract a broad ideological diversity, as many of us do across this country, everybody from the far right to far left to people in the middle—I always like to ask, Is anybody happy with immigration today? Does anybody here think we're doing a great job; everything's right? Not a single constituent anywhere along the ideological spectrum has raised their hand and said, Yes, we just need to keep doing what we're doing.

It ain't working. There are 11 million people here illegally. Countries are violating the law every day. Families are being torn apart. Taxpayers are on the hook. Let's change it. It ain't going to change unless we change it. It doesn't change itself.

States have tried to move forward with what they can. They can't solve it. Some States have looked into issuing State work permits or in-State tuition or how they can make sure that people have driver's insurance who don't have Federal paperwork. But look, they're just cleaning up after our mess. That's all the States can do. We need to fix this mess here in Washington. Only the United States Congress has the authority to restore credibility and integrity to our immigration law.

□ 1910

Americans of all stripes are joining the call for comprehensive immigra-

tion reform now, strengthening our border security, and facilitating legitimate trade and commerce across the border, employer enforcement, making sure that employers aren't let off the hook for hiring people who don't have the right to be here, making sure we have the workers we need to fuel our economy, all kinds of jobs that we need.

We talked about technology and programmers. Well, guess what? We also need people in the fields picking tomatoes, in the fields harvesting oranges. We need people who clean buildings at night. We're happy, we're always happy to have Americans do that.

I was meeting with a farmer in Larimer County a couple of months ago. He said he'd love to hire Americans. He's never been able to have an American who agreed to keep that job and do that backbreaking labor for more than a couple of weeks. He relies on immigrant labor. He wants us to pass comprehensive immigration reform that includes a way that they can have seasonal workers to meet the needs that they have in the field.

I'm joined by one of my colleagues from the great State of California. Congressman TAKANO, despite being a freshman, has quickly become a vocal advocate for immigrant families. He's shown a strong commitment and true leadership in seeing that comprehensive immigration reform passes in the 113th Congress.

I'm proud to welcome and yield time to my colleague from the State of California.

Mr. TAKANO. I thank the gentleman from Colorado for yielding time.

Even though the economy is improving and job creation levels are the highest they've been in 4 years, the top priority for all Members of Congress must be putting people back to work and strengthening the economy.

Despite what opponents of immigration reform say, the bill proposed in the Senate does just that; and, moreover, it strengthens Social Security.

One of the Republican architects of the Senate bill, Senator MARCO RUBIO, sent a letter to the Social Security Administration's chief actuary, asking for the net effect of comprehensive immigration reform on the Social Security trust fund.

In his reply, Chief Actuary Goss stated that they are developing 75-year estimates, but, quote, and this is Actuary Goss speaking, "overall, we anticipate that the net effect of this bill," meaning comprehensive immigration reform, "on the long-range Social Security actuarial balance, will be positive."

The actuary's office also states that over the next 10 years, comprehensive immigration reform will prevent 2 million illegal border crossings, create 3.2 million jobs, and increase the rate of growth on our gross domestic product by a third.

Opponents of immigration reform don't seem to understand that many of

the undocumented immigrants in this Nation are already working. Yet because of their illegal status, they are forced into the underground economy, with no labor protections and no way to pay into the system.

Put plainly, undocumented immigrants are often paid cash under the table, and often drastically less than the minimum wage. Allowing these individuals to come out of the shadows and putting them on the pathway to citizenship brings them into the system, where they will pay taxes and receive basic protections against abuse.

For example, an undocumented worker in my district may only be making \$4 or \$5 an hour, instead of the California minimum wage of \$8 an hour. If comprehensive immigration reform is passed, he or she will be eligible for the minimum wage, which will, in turn, increase his buying power, raise revenues for businesses, and drive up wages for everyone else, thus increasing our annual GDP growth rate, as shown here on this chart.

Now, just to be clear, without comprehensive immigration reform, our annual growth rate will only be 4.5 percent. But with comprehensive immigration reform, our annual growth rate shoots up to 6.1 percent.

If the priority of this body is putting Americans back to work and strengthening our economy, then it must pass comprehensive immigration reform that creates a pathway to citizenship and allows undocumented workers the ability to work under the same labor protections and pay into the same system as everyone else.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from California for sharing that information.

What better way can we grow our economy, create jobs for Americans, reduce our national debt, reduce the deficit than if we simply accomplish comprehensive immigration reform.

Many colleagues on both sides of the aisle have expressed concerns about how we can make sure that Social Security is viable and there for young people when they retire. Well, guess what? Making sure that we have our younger new immigrants paying in will help make sure that occurs and that today's seniors and tomorrow's seniors will be taken care of in their old age.

I think that comprehensive immigration reform is absolutely critical towards job growth and creation. And the gentleman from California talked about the difference between a 6.1 and 4.5 percent growth. That represents millions of jobs, millions of jobs for Americans. That's what's at stake with this discussion.

I want to ask the gentleman from California to talk about how important jobs are in his district and how you'd benefit from that additional 2 percent growth. What would that mean to folks in Riverside and folks in California?

Mr. TAKANO. Well, a 2 percent growth rate could translate into a reduction of our current 11 percent unemployment rate in my district, which

is located in Riverside County. We often, in the Inland Empire, as we call the region of California where I represent, we often lag behind the rest of the State when we are coming out of economic downturns.

What I find most interesting about Chief Actuary Goss's statement, his reply to Senator RUBIO's question was how comprehensive immigration reform will have a positive net effect on Social Security.

And if you think about that carefully, and you compare our Nation to, say, a nation such as Japan, where there is no inflow of immigration, and where the population is aging, or other advanced nations where there is no significant amount of immigration, and their populations are aging, they are facing tremendous stresses on the ways in which they are going to provide for their senior citizens.

It only makes sense that, to keep Social Security solvent, we want young, vibrant inflows of capable workers to pay the taxes that will support Social Security into the future.

Mr. POLIS. The gentleman from California has also been a leader in opposing the chained CPI adjustment to Social Security. Don't you think that this immigration reform concept is a better way to shore up Social Security than trying to change the formula to a chained CPI?

Mr. TAKANO. I agree. That's a very good question. Chained CPI, as you know, was—many Americans may not know what chained CPI means. CPI is the consumer price index, and that's the way in which the increase in Social Security benefits are calculated.

There are some economists who've proposed something called chained CPI, which assumes that seniors could withstand a slight reduction in their benefits because they could substitute other goods and services that are cheaper.

But the main goods and services that senior citizens consume are health care and medicines and prescription drugs. Those goods and services they can count on increasing faster than the rate of inflation.

Let's look at how this immigration bill is going to work.

□ 1920

For the first 10 years, registered provisional status for the immigrants who have been previously undocumented would mean that people would be legal in this country, on legal status. They would be paying taxes, but they could not be drawing any Social Security benefits out. I personally have some problems with this. But under this current law, for 10 years, we would see millions of workers who are under the Social Security cap who would be paying into the Social Security Trust Fund, but none of them would be able to draw anything out for at least 10 years. You just do the simple back-of-the-envelope math, and you have to understand what an inflow of revenue that would be to the system.

Mr. POLIS. This comprehensive immigration reform helps two ways. One, there's more people paying in, young people. The second way is more economic growth, which means Social Security is funded through a payroll tax. So when you have more people working, lower unemployment, we talked about getting that rate in Riverside down from 11 percent to 9 percent to 8 percent to 6 percent. Everybody working is then paying in, and that also makes Social Security stronger.

So this argument about the critical economic growth engine that we need not only creates jobs today but helps ensure that tomorrow's seniors are taken care of in their old age.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes, it's a double benefit that many people may not have been aware of, a double positive effect on our economy. For many people it's counterintuitive to think that by reforming immigration and by giving legal status to undocumented immigrants to allow them to come out of the shadows and to be protected by our labor laws that that would have a net positive effect on all wages, but it would. These people are already working, and they're working currently, many of them, at sub-minimum wage levels. If we bring them up to minimum wage, it will mean an even playing field for all workers. There's a kind of rising tide effect that lifts all boats.

Mr. POLIS. That's a good point because I, like yourself, I'm sure many of us sometimes hear from American workers. American workers say, hey, I'm frustrated because there are people that are here illegally working for less than minimum wage or working for cash. What I say to those American workers is, I say, that's exactly why we need comprehensive immigration reform. We need to make sure that people aren't allowed to compete under the table for cash. We're actually creating, by the failure of our own laws, an entire underground labor economy. And by the way, those workers aren't protected from abuse by their employers. Sometimes they do the work and they're not paid, and they can't sue.

I have some very exciting news to announce, to break some news. This just broke on CNN that the bipartisan House group has reached an agreement on immigration reform, announced by Republican Representative MARIO DIAZ-BALART. So I know that the group has been working for some time. Many of us have encouraged them and supported their work. We certainly hope to be able to see the bill soon.

So as the Senate continues the markup, hopefully there is a great additional dose of enthusiasm for us that it looks like here in the House our efforts will hopefully be moving forward as well on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. TAKANO. I associate myself with the gentleman's comments. I am very heartened by this announcement. I will, of course, temper my enthusiasm until I actually see the elements of this compromise. But what many folks here

are saying on the Hill—which I'll reveal here on the floor of the House—is I think there is great hope on both sides of the aisle that if we can pass comprehensive immigration reform it will be evidence, the first evidence in a long time, that this body is functional and can work and that our government can do great things. So I am cautiously optimistic, and thank you for sharing that information.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from California for his leadership on this issue. I agree that for Congress to ever be a trusted institution, it needs to solve problems. It needs to come up with practical, commonsense solutions. It's clear what that route is for immigration. It's not too different from what President Bush talked about that President Obama supports. It has long had bipartisan support. It's a comprehensive approach, not this piecemeal approach some talk about, oh, let's build a wall and then talk about something else, or let's do something in high tech and then talk about something else. Look, those are band-aids and the patient is bleeding. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. TAKANO. I agree. We need a holistic approach. I was very impressed that the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce were able to come together and sign off on what Senators, the Group of Eight in the Senate, had devised.

My goodness, if the Chamber of Commerce and AFL-CIO can come together, certainly Republicans and Democrats in this institution can come together, as well.

Mr. POLIS. Like yourself, obviously, I refrain from any particular comments about the House package until I see it, but I'm confident that with bipartisan support, like the Senate bill has, hopefully this House package will address a lot of these issues that you and I have discussed today, making families stronger, restoring the rule of law, reducing crime, creating economic growth and improving Social Security. Hopefully those benefits are included in this package, which I am very excited to examine and look at in the days and weeks ahead. Hopefully, we can join our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol in dealing with this critical issue.

Again, over 84 percent of the American people support a pathway to citizenship. You can't get 84 percent of the American people to agree on anything. And yet on this pathway for citizenship and immigration reform, you have 84 percent support.

I hope that Congress heeds that call. I know the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) is a leader in getting our colleagues to hear that call. He is joined by many of our friends, and it will take all of us working hard to ensure that Congress lives up to the expectations that the American people are setting and takes the right course on this for our country and for economic growth. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you for this time to share our vision for moving forward with the American people. I wake up each day excited to come to work, to work on their behalf. Despite our divisions, despite the rancor we see sometimes on the various cable shows, it's an enormous honor to serve in this institution, and it's a great honor to serve in this institution with the gentleman. I must bid adieu. I have to get going, but thank you so much.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from California for highlighting the argument of economic growth and the critical nature of economic reform. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inquire as to how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 27 minutes remaining.

Mr. POLIS. We have the unique opportunity here in the United States Congress to reflect the will of the American people. The will of the American people is clear in this regard. In my time here, seldom, if ever, have I seen an issue where 80 percent, 75 percent, 84 percent of the American people agree. And here we are, the faith community, the civil liberties community, the human rights community, the education community, the business community and the labor community all coming together to say, Congress, do something. And by the way, Congress, not do something like create some new program or do some new policy. It's, Congress, fix this. Only you can do it, Congress. The States can't do it. The States don't have control over this. Some nonprofit or private organization can't do it. Only the Federal Government and only the United States Congress can replace our broken immigration system with one that works for our country, one that reflects our country's need for human capital, for talent, for ideas and for innovation, one that helps make sure that we attract the best and brightest and hardest-working people from across the world to deploy their talents here to make our country stronger in a legal way, one that restores the trust with law enforcement, improves public safety in our communities, allows community policing and police officers to win the trust that's so critical for them to fight crime that affects all of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to talk about a commonsense issue that's received a lot of discussion in the press and continues to be on many of our minds, and that's how we can reduce violent crime in this country, gun violence and senseless murder and deaths that occur.

Now, this is no easy question. My focus here has always been improving education. I truly believe that improving our schools and making sure that our kids have access to the great opportunity that this country offers is the best way that we can reduce crime.

□ 1930

But we can do more, Mr. Speaker. We can do more in a commonsense way to

make it harder for criminals to acquire weapons.

Now, how can we do this? Many States have already led the way. My home State of Colorado has long had a rule that has closed the gun show loophole and made sure that people that buy guns at gun shows have the same type of background check they would at a gun dealer. I think that's a commonsense rule that we should do nationally.

I also think we need a national way to make sure that when somebody buys a gun, that there's a background check. In doing so, we need to make sure that there's no national registry of gun owners. We need to protect gun owners' privacy. We want to make sure it doesn't inconvenience law-abiding Americans who want to be able to buy guns at dealers—and have done so and will continue to do so. But this is easy to accomplish. The Senate discussed such a bill. I understand there are several proposals, as well, in this body. And I have seen data. This has broad support from the American people, and it should be a commonsense idea for many of us.

There are people in this country who have lost the right to bear arms because they've committed a crime—armed robbery or rape—and as part of a judicial sentence they have lost that right. They may have lost the right to vote as well. Now, you're not going to stop them from getting a knife or a gun—no law will stop them from doing that—but we should make it harder. We should make it so they can't just go to a gun show and buy a gun for cash. There should be a background check to make sure that the person buying the gun is a law-abiding American and has the right to do that. I think law-abiding Americans want to protect their Second Amendment rights and want to make sure that it's not abused by criminals. I think that's a common step measure that I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take up and pass to help reduce violence in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the urgent need to improve our schools. Across our country we have schools that many parents would be proud to send their kids to. We also have schools that continue to fail year after year, that anybody who has the means to have choice—meaning, they're able to afford to be able to drive their kids somewhere else or pay a private school tuition—would never send their kids to that school. Thus, families that are essentially forced to have their kids go to that school have no choice, have no alternative. It's incumbent upon our school districts, our States, and, yes, our Federal Government because we, too, fund part of public education through IDEA, special education, to ensure that those schools don't continue to operate the way that they have been.

That's why I introduced last session and will introduce again a school turn-

around bill. This bill will help address the lowest 5 percent of schools, the bottom performing 5 percent. We're talking about high schools that are dropout factories, where half the kids that go in the front door in 9th grade don't graduate in 12th grade. We're losing half of them. And what options do you have in life to support yourself and your family if you don't have a high school degree? It's hard, and it's getting harder in the 21st century information economy, Mr. Speaker.

We need to turn around these schools, make the tough choices, empower the superintendents of those school districts to use the creativity that they have to turn those schools around. And we need to make sure that they take action. As I told one of our local superintendents in Colorado, our goal, through public policy at the Federal level, should be to give you, the superintendent, the flexibility for you to be able to do what works but not the flexibility to do nothing, because we know that in doing nothing we will fail to change models that fail.

And whether the model that works is turning it into a charter school or extending the learning day or closing it down and opening three new schools in the same building, there's a lot of options, and many more, that a superintendent can choose from and apply, depending on the community needs and the buy-in from parents and families, which are important to make any education reform work. But it's critical that they take action, because without taking action, they're guaranteed more of the same.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support comprehensive immigration reform today. In my time on the floor in the last hour—and I could continue for even longer to articulate all of the reasons why comprehensive immigration reform benefits our country. Whether one cares about the safety of our communities from crime, whether one cares about the public health and infectious disease, restoring the rule of law, securing our borders, preventing terrorism, growing our economy, high-skills jobs, making sure that our farmers can thrive and grow, making sure that families stay together so that their American kids can grow up in wholesome family homes, for all these reasons and more, I call upon my colleagues to support comprehensive immigration reform.

I thank the Speaker for the time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

CORE AMERICAN BELIEFS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MULLIN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROKITA) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROKITA. I want to start out this evening by saying it's been a busy day here in the Capitol and it's been a busy week—some of it good, a lot of it not so