

The legislation also strengthens the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners by banning the government from creating a federal registry and makes the misuse of records a felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

It provides reasonable exceptions for family and friend transfers and allows active military personnel to buy guns in the state they are stationed.

It lets gun owners use a state concealed carry permit issued within the last five years in lieu of a background check and permits interstate handgun sales from licensed dealers.

The bill also improves the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) by incentivizing states to improve reporting of criminals and the dangerously mentally ill and by directing future grant funds toward better record-sharing systems.

H.R. 1217 will also reduce federal funds to states that do not comply.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot be against criminals, terrorists and the dangerously mentally ill getting guns and be against background checks.

I thank Congressmen PETER KING (R-NY) and MIKE THOMPSON (D-CA) for introducing this bipartisan legislation (H.R. 1217), which is the House companion to an identical bipartisan bill introduced previously by Senators JOE MANCHIN (D-WV) and PAT TOOMEY (R-PA).

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1217 is anti-crime, pro-lawful gun owner and pro-Second Amendment.

It will save lives and strengthen the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

It deserves a vote in the House.

RECOGNIZING THE 2015 MVLE AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 2015 MVLE Annual Award Recipients.

For 44 years, MVLE has provided employment opportunities and support services to individuals with disabilities and thereby created an environment which has allowed its clients to live in dignity and as independently as possible. MVLE has achieved this success by partnering with local businesses as well as with government agencies and other not-for-profit organizations to maximize the benefits of its various programs and services. MVLE, its staff, and dedicated volunteers and supporters can be proud that they are making a positive difference in someone's life every day.

Each year, MVLE honors individual participants, as well as business and community partners, who exemplify MVLE's ideals. I am pleased to submit the names of the following 2015 award recipients:

The President's Award is presented to individuals who have shown outstanding progress toward gaining independence and self-sufficiency through participation in employment and community services. The 2015 President's Award recipients are Anis Iqbal, Steven Pennington, and Josh Renggli.

The Chairman's Award is presented to an outstanding business partner who has shown

excellence in hiring practices, creating supportive work environments, and supporting the mission of MVLE. The 2015 Chairman's Award recipients are Ah Love Oil and Embassy Suites Springfield.

MVLE also presents four Community Awards in honor of the four components of our community: Government, Employment, Social Responsibility, and Integration.

The Government Champion Award is presented to Parsons in recognition of its commitment to the creation of meaningful employment opportunities across government and business sectors.

The Employment Partner Award is presented to the Arlington County Equipment Bureau in recognition of its efforts in creating meaningful community employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and military veterans.

The Advocacy Champion Award is being presented to state Senator Barbara Favola, who represents Virginia's 31st district. MVLE presents this award to an outstanding partner who advocates for community integration by fostering partnerships across sectors to create new opportunities one person at a time.

There are two recipients of the Social Responsibility Award: Digital Office Products and Supply World. MVLE presents this award to an outstanding partner who supports MVLE and our community through contributions and volunteer work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending MVLE for its success in helping individuals with disabilities achieve independence and in congratulating the 2015 MVLE Annual Award recipients. The efforts of MVLE, its supporters, community partners, and clients are an inspiration to all and are truly worthy of our highest praise.

CONGRATULATING THE NEW HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL SHAM- ROCKS FOR THEIR SECOND PLACE FINISH IN THE 2015 MIS- SOURI CLASS 2 VOLLEYBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the New Haven High School Shamrocks for their second place finish in the 2015 Class 2 Volleyball State Championship.

This team and their coach should be commended for all of their hard work throughout this past year and for bringing home the second place win to their school and community.

I ask you to join me in recognizing the New Haven Shamrocks for a job well done.

TRIBUTE TO KENNON BALSTER

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor and congratulate Kennon Balster of Blanchard, Iowa, for his induction into the

Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame. Kennon has been the coach of the Large Group and Director of Theatre at Clarinda High School for over 30 years.

The Iowa High School Speech Association Hall of Fame was established in 1976 to recognize distinguished individuals of statewide reputation for their outstanding accomplishments. Inductees are selected for going above and beyond expectations with their contributions, service, dedication, and commitment to the Association. It is the highest honor the Association can confer on an individual.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud and congratulate Kennon for earning this award. He is a shining example of how hard work and dedication can positively affect the future of our youth. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Kennon for his contributions to the speech and education community in the state of Iowa. I wish him nothing but continued success.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: THE CHINESE GOVERN- MENT HARVESTS THE ORGANS OF THE FALUN GONG

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today is the 65th International Human Rights Day.

It is fitting that we remember how the Chinese Government has denied the human rights of so many of Falun Gong, their family members and their friends.

The most basic human right is the right to live free.

Today, there are more Falun Gong practitioners in prison in China than any other persecuted group.

The Chinese Government's top priority is not to take care of its people; it is to stay in power. It sees Falun Gong rise in popularity in the 1990s as a threat. In reality, Falun Gong just wanted to be left alone.

To silence this threat, the Chinese Government murders Falun Gong members, harvesting their organs to give to others deemed more worthy.

We know this because brave men and women have come forward and reported these crimes, refusing to be silent. Those who have spoken out include the wife of a doctor who was forced to perform surgeries to remove the organs. A security guard who was ordered to stand watch while the surgeries take place has also spoken out about these practices. The evidence is undeniable of this detestable, inhumane practice by the Chinese Government.

The practice is a billion dollar business for the Chinese Government. Organ harvesting is the number one source of revenue for Chinese medical centers. A medical center is supposed to save lives, not take lives. Apparently, in China, the lives of the Falun Gong do not matter. Reports indicate that more than 10,000 have been killed by these barbaric medical procedures; they have been murdered for their organs.

The Chinese Government makes a profit and silences any group it sees as threatening. But they can't silence the Falun Gong nor

human rights advocates. We know what they are up to. We cannot let this continue.

The Chinese Government is an enemy of human rights. It is the enemy of its own people.

As a former judge in Texas, I know a thing or two about justice. And, justice has not been served to the Falun Gong community.

Over the years, Falun Gong followers have been imprisoned, tortured, and killed. But, despite Beijing's abuse, they continue to fight back.

Today, China must end its persecution of the Falun Gong.

The world leaders have been talking about climate change in Paris.

There needs to be a "climate" change in China. The air is polluted with the cries of the innocents murdered by the government.

The land is defiled by the acts of torture and organ harvesting.

The blood of the Falun Gong is on the hands of the Chinese officials.

I hope that one day soon all Chinese people will have the basic human right that the Creator endows to all creation: life.

The Falun Gong deserves to live free of oppression and murder.

They are courageous men and women.

The Chinese Government, in its zeal to keep power, kills its own people.

Power, not people, is the quest of the Chinese Government.

If the Chinese Government was put on trial before the world of free peoples and tried for its violations of human rights, it would be found guilty of terrorism. Its government officials would be in prison. They would be locked up. They would not see the light of the morning sun. They would be in the cold damp darkness of the jailhouse—the place reserved for the evil ones who harvest the organs of the Falun Gong.

And that's just the way it is.

IN MEMORY OF MR. TONY HADDAD
OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I commemorate the life of Mr. Tony Haddad, a restaurateur and local icon of Peoria, Illinois, who passed away this past Saturday at the age of 78.

Immigrating to Peoria from Lebanon in 1977, Mr. Haddad and his family arrived in the United States with only thirty dollars in his pocket. Although far from home, Haddad brought his culture to life through the food he sold from a pushcart in downtown Peoria for almost 35 years, which he later expanded into his own local restaurant. Mr. Haddad was the personification of the American dream.

His empathy and generosity made those who visited his food cart and restaurant not only his patrons, but his friends. Tony was always charitable, giving a meal to someone even if he knew they would not be able to repay him and, and he made time to listen to his customers' problems.

Alongside his work, the cornerstone to Haddad's life was the love and friendship of

his wife of 60 years, Loreece. Together, they came to America and created their own legacy, raising six children, 18 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Although he will be greatly missed, he will be remembered fondly and remain an icon of the 18th District.

TRIBUTE TO DULA AND BETTY
THOMPSON

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Dula and Betty Thompson of Lewis, Iowa, on the very special occasion of their 70th wedding anniversary. They married on October 11, 1945 in Troy, Kansas.

Dula and Betty's lifelong commitment to each other and their children, Marvin, Bill, Lanette, and Ken, along with their grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchild, truly embodies our Iowa values. It is families like the Thompsons that make me proud to call myself an Iowan and represent the people of our great state.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this great couple on their 70th year together and I wish them many more. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating them on this momentous occasion.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I was not present for roll call vote 682. Had I been present. I would have voted no.

HONORING BETTE STOLTZ

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a friend, neighbor and activist who dedicated her life to improving South Brooklyn. On November 19, longtime neighborhood activist Bette Stoltz passed away. This Saturday, Brooklynites will come together to celebrate the life of this dedicated advocate and leader.

Bette made countless contributions to South Brooklyn, helping bring vitality, energy and entrepreneurship to the area. She worked to sure-up small businesses at a time of disinvestment. She was instrumental to revitalizing Smith Street and helping organize the Merchants Association in the 1980s, which fostered so much cultural life and vibrancy in the area. She organized the Smith Street Fes-

tivals in the fall and the Bastille Day Pétanque Tournament. She worked tirelessly to ensure Smith Street thrived, and most recently she was organizing to create a Business Improvement District on Smith and nearby Court Streets.

Her efforts extended well beyond the commercial corridors. By starting the South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation and the Red Hook Chamber of Commerce, she worked steadfastly to defend industrial businesses in Red Hook and Gowanus and expand opportunity and commerce throughout Brooklyn. Bette helped organize Friends of Greater Gowanus and served on the EPA Gowanus Canal Community Advisory Group, working on multiple fronts to push to remediate and restore the Gowanus Canal in a green, sustainable manner.

Bette created partnerships to connect low-income and public housing residents to businesses and jobs. She created internships for youth and a Culinary Arts Curriculum at the High School for International Studies on Baltic Street. Bette also helped develop adult training programs to better connect people to good-paying jobs in the trades, industry and with local merchants. For years, Bette served as a member of Community Board 6, ensuring her neighbors' voices were heard in development decisions shaping our area's physical, cultural and economic future.

Ultimately, South Brooklyn would not be as vibrant, diverse and culturally rich without Bette's hard work and many endeavors. My thoughts and prayers are with her husband, Michael, her children and her beloved grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, New York City's communities and, indeed, our local neighborhoods throughout the country are only as strong as the local residents who are willing to put in personal time and effort to organize and improve the areas in which we live. Every community would be lucky to have a community leader as vocal, engaged, dedicated and personally warm as Bette. She leaves behind a proud legacy, one that we will honor by continuing to improve our community. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring her memory.

CHALLENGER ELEMENTARY
ARTISTS TAKE TOP HONOR

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 10, 2015

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate three talented students from Challenger Elementary School in Pearland for winning top honors in the Texas Renaissance Festival's art contest.

In the drawing category, Brendon Thai took home first place and Amanda Yee took home third place. Katherine Tran took home second place in the painting category. Challenger Elementary is lucky to have such talented young artists and an incredible teacher, Lori Ellis, who does a great job of helping her students find their creativity.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Brendon, Amanda, and Katherine for their award-winning art.