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No. 147

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEWART).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC.

October 7, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRIS STEWART to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

CONGRESS SHOULD FOCUS ON FIXING OUR PROBLEMS HERE AT HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, the recent news about Afghanistan is, at best, distressing. Soon Congress will be debating an increase in the debt ceiling so we can borrow more money to pay our bills. The sad part is that some of that money will go to Afghanistan.

Three recent headlines are most discouraging:

One from the Fiscal Times, September 23, "U.S. Wasted Billions of Dollars Rebuilding Afghanistan."

The second headline from the New York Times, October 1, "Afghan Forces on the Run."

The third headline, "U.S. Soldiers Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Military Leaders."

I am so outraged about the third headline story that I am demanding answers on the Pentagon's policy of permitting Afghan men to rape young boys on U.S. military bases. I have written a letter to the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and asked him to hold hearings on this issue. We need to get to the bottom of this.

Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires. We are headed to the graveyard. We need to borrow money just to carry on the needless war. We need to borrow money just to pay our bills.

We are over \$18 trillion in debt, and President Obama signed us up for 8 more years in Afghanistan, 8 more years of wasted money. No one even listens to John Sopko, the Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, who has testified before Congress many times. He releases report after report detailing the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, and no one in Congress seems to care.

According to Sopko, we have spent more in 14 years trying to shape Afghanistan into a functional country, which is a fool's errand, at best, than we did on the entire Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II.

In the next fiscal year, we will spend \$42.5 billion in Afghanistan, and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that we will spend \$30 billion a year for the next 8 years. We are committed to staying in Afghanistan. This is the longest war in the history of America.

History has proven that we will never change this tribal nation and we should stop trying. Instead, let's focus on fixing our problems here in America.

The little girls beside me, Mr. Speaker, Eden and Stephanie Balduf, their daddy was training Afghanistan citizens to be policemen, and they were shot and killed by the man they were training. Poor little girls represent so many families whose loved ones have died in Afghanistan for nothing but a waste.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, please bless America, and, God, please wake up the Congress before it is too late on Afghanistan.

UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SHOOTING

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday another horrific episode of gun violence—the seemingly unrelenting stream of tragedy and horror—only this time it was visited on Oregon, in a modest mill town of Roseburg.

The scene of the carnage was a picturesque, some would say idyllic, community college campus just north of town, where a shooter burst into a classroom at Umpqua Community College and started methodically killing nine people, wounding seven others.

On the 274th day of 2015, this was the 294th such episode. President Obama made an impassioned, forceful, and poignant response—at once fierce and sad, as eloquent as anything I have heard him say throughout his political career.

And who could blame him? Not a single calendar week has passed during his second term without another mass shooting.

The core of his message was the question for all Americans, especially the apologists for gun violence: Why is the United States the only developed country in the world that cannot protect

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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our families from gun massacres? No other country comes remotely close to this carnage. Why should we lose 15 times as many as our family members as Germany every year?

When other countries like Canada, Britain, and Australia—that are probably more similar to our country than any others—why were they able to respond not just with outrage or moments of silence, but with action after mass shooting events, to make a difference, to make their families safer, 10 times safer in Australia than in the United States? It is past time that people who claim to be leaders in both parties answer this question.

I am pleased that the response from my party was not one of hopelessness, resignation, or “stuff happens,” but instead calls to action with simple, commonsense steps that are widely supported by the American public.

I am pleased that Hillary Clinton was first and foremost with a strong call to action. I am pleased that Senator BERNIE SANDERS appears to be changing his attitude and policies on gun safety.

It is interesting that two Democratic Senators running for re-election last year, Mark Begich and Mark Pryor, who cast what I can only describe as a craven vote against universal background checks, lost anyway. It ought to be a message about our values and our direction. I am hopeful that there will be greater accountability for both parties to supply solutions.

There is no excuse for ours to be the only developed country that cannot protect our children. The American public should demand answers from everyone who pretends we can't protect our children. Ours is the only country, for instance, where leaders prohibit the government from even investigating gun violence, its causes, and solutions.

The President exhorted us to not be numb to gun violence. One is hopeful in the midst of this unprecedented bizarre Presidential nominating process, already in full swing, with more than a year yet to go, that perhaps we have the opportunity to make sure this doesn't leave the national political stage.

With comments like Republican candidate Ben Carson condemning President Obama's decision to visit and console the families in Roseburg in a private meeting, that somehow he would wait for the next one, it is stunning.

I was in Springfield, Oregon, when President Clinton visited those families, consoling them, demonstrating compassion and the concern of the country. It was a sign of respect and was moving to all who witnessed it. I can't imagine a more callous, heartless remark than that of Dr. Carson, who would wait until the next one.

Reasonable people should ask reasonable questions about reasonable solutions and demand from politicians their answer to the question: When stuff happens, why can't we protect our families from this slaughter, and what are they prepared to do to change it?

HONORING ERCELLE S. CARTER'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Ercelle S. Carter of Institute, West Virginia, who is celebrating her 100th birthday on October 25, 2015.

Ercelle was born on October 25, 1915, in Fayetteville, West Virginia. She is one of two children of John Saunders and Harriet Agee Saunders.

Growing up, she attended Levi Elementary, Boyd Junior High School, and graduated from Garnet High School in 1933. She enrolled at West Virginia State College and graduated with degrees in home economics and elementary education in 1937.

On April 27, 1940, she married Ulysses Grant Carter. They were married for 53 years, until his death in 1993.

Ercelle was a homemaker and a stay-at-home mom until 1959, when she began her professional career as a teacher at Shawnee Elementary School and retired from Mound Elementary in 1979.

Ercelle has led an outstanding life, highlighted with her love of family and service to her community. I wish her many more years of health and happiness.

CONGRATULATING EVANS ELEMENTARY OF JACKSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Evans Elementary of Jackson County, West Virginia, for the honor of being named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2015.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program was created in 1982 under President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell. The program was designed to celebrate achievements of both public and private elementary, middle, and high schools which have excellent performance or have substantially reduced the performance gap for disadvantaged student populations.

This is a tremendous honor given to only two schools in West Virginia and only 335 schools nationwide this year. I am proud of the hardworking teachers, faculty, and students that achieved this honor. Their pursuit of academic excellence is inspiring, and I hope their success can be replicated across our State.

UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SHOOTING

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

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday Americans witnessed yet another tragedy with the fatal shooting of nine people in Roseburg, Oregon, five young kids who had so much more life left to live, three adults who had gone

back to school to better themselves and their families, and an assistant professor of English who used his writing talents to teach others, all gone too soon.

Their lives are lost in tragedy, the kind of tragedy that our Nation has suffered with increasing regularity. There have been more mass shootings this year than there have been calendar days, 294 mass shootings in less than 280 days.

In 2015 alone, there have been nearly 40,000 gun violence tragedies, with nearly 10,000 people killed and 20,000 wounded. Yet, sadly, each gun violence tragedy is met with another tragedy here in Congress, the tragedy of inaction.

People are dying. People are dying from gun violence every single day in America, and this Congress does nothing. As President Obama said last week, “We collectively are answerable to those families who lose their loved ones because of our inaction.”

I have been a Member of the House of Representatives for nearly 7 years. In that time, tens of thousands of lives have been lost, but this body has refused to hold even one hearing addressing the gun violence epidemic that is plaguing our country.

In that time, not even once have we had a vote on the floor on anything, anything related to gun violence, and it is not for lack of ideas. We know from other countries what works. Other countries, not much different from ours, have tackled this issue with remarkable results.

More than 90 gun-related bills offering various ways—large and small—for us to lessen the death toll are just sitting in committee waiting for action; yet, we refuse to even try.

And forget about new gun laws. Congress has made it harder for law enforcement to carry out current laws. It has gotten so bad that Congress refuses to allow Federal agencies to even study this issue because they are afraid of what doctors and scientists will tell them.

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In June, during the Labor-HHS-Education markup and just 1 week after the tragedy in Charleston, an amendment to end the 20-year prohibition on Federal funding on research related to gun violence was defeated by a unanimous Republican majority. Congress refuses to act and stands in the way when others try.

Why is this issue different than others? What is it about these lives that matter less than those lost to terrorism or car accidents or cancer? Unless the status quo in Congress changes, we will continue to lose American lives to gun violence.

In June, I urged my colleagues to break the silence, stop the violence, and start the conversation about gun violence in America. We were reeling from the tragedy in Charleston, and I recounted the other lives we had lost