

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the American taxpayers, what might be the world's most expensive gas station was built in Afghanistan. A mysterious Department of Defense special task force spent \$43 million on a gas station in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, that must be a hum-dinger of a truck stop. What should have only cost \$500,000 cost 140 times that amount, charged to the taxpayers' credit card. Yet, there are no answers or explanations.

Mr. Speaker, it has now since been reported that Afghans don't even use the gas station because of the cost of the gas.

No one has been held accountable for such wasteful government spending, not surprisingly. This is getting to be normal for government "spendocrats."

Time for no more Washington spending-sprees on the taxpayers' dime. People need to be held personally responsible for such wasteful spending.

The American people deserve an explanation. After all, it is their money that is funding \$43 million gas stations in other countries.

Mr. Speaker, why are we building a five-star gas station in Afghanistan anyway?

And that is just the way it is.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.R. 22, HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015; PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6, 2015, THROUGH NOVEMBER 13, 2015; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. WOODALL from the Committee on Rules submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-325) on the resolution (H. Res. 507) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 22) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; providing for proceedings during the period from November 6, 2015, through November 13, 2015; and providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in

which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor and privilege to lead tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour, where we will have the opportunity to speak directly to the American people.

But before we get to business, I do want to take a second, even though it feels like an eternity, to congratulate my dear friend and colleague, our CBC chairman for the 112th Congress, the Honorable EMANUEL CLEAVER of Kansas City, for his hometown Kansas City Royals victory in last night's World Series game.

I am an Illinoisan by way of New York. So I had a little stake in this one. But, again, my congratulations to the city of Kansas City and to Congressman CLEAVER.

Mr. Speaker, I truly do believe that it is an honor and a privilege to host the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. So I speak to you this evening very much concerned and severely disappointed that we are even having tonight's topic under such circumstances.

Tonight we are here to address saving our communities, where our focus for this hour will be on key legislative priorities that this Congress, this year's Congressional Black Caucus, and our Nation must confront in order to help make this union more perfect for our next generation.

Mr. Speaker, this year there have been a lot of tragic episodes that may make one shake their head and ask what is going on.

We have covered a number of these topics in the course of this year, whether it be the issue of criminal justice reform, gun violence, economic investment as an antidote to violence, community policing, or the value of Black lives in America.

Mr. Speaker, the issues that I will cover this evening aren't Black Caucus issues. I know that most in this Congress and most across this great country would acknowledge that they are American issues.

Falling short as a Nation on these fronts only divides us and only serves as a barrier to our boundless possibilities as an American people.

Over the past few weeks, we heard a lot about the need to clean out the barn before the baton was passed from Speaker to Speaker. I think we made some progress in clearing out the barn last week as we passed a bipartisan budget agreement, which President Obama signed into law earlier today.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the baton has been passed from Speaker BOEHNER to Speaker RYAN, we must keep in mind that there is still much that needs to be cleaned out of the barn when it

comes to criminal justice reform, creating opportunity in vulnerable communities, addressing inequities in the justice system, valuing all lives, regardless of race, religion or sexual orientation, making sure that good cops can do their job in keeping communities safe, and making sure that bad cops don't get to be the Nation's norm.

We must have a culture where bad cops don't have a safe haven, where they can't get away with violations of the public trust in communities they were sworn to protect, and where they aren't in a position to spoil the whole bunch of good cops we have protecting American communities.

Mr. Speaker, tonight we will have a long and overdue conversation about saving our communities.

At this time, I yield to the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, my colleague from North Carolina, Representative G.K. BUTTERFIELD.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Let me first thank you, Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY, for yielding time to me tonight. Thank you for your willingness to stay on the floor tonight, even though this suspension bill was placed in front of us tonight. We certainly understand that has that happen from time to time. But thank you so very much for staying on the floor to manage the time this evening.

I also want to thank you, Ms. KELLY, for your extraordinary leadership. Thank you for what you do for the Congressional Black Caucus. Thank you for what you do for your constituents in Illinois. Most importantly, thank you for what you do for our country. It is certainly appreciated.

I will certainly join you, Ms. KELLY, in congratulating the Kansas City Royals on their well-deserved victory. I did not watch the entire World Series, but I watched enough of it to know that this team was much deserving of this victory. And so congratulations not only to Mr. CLEAVER, who is so proud of Kansas City and talks about his hometown all of the time, but congratulations to all of those fans of that great team.

Tonight we are talking about the urgent need to save our communities. What an appropriate topic, Ms. KELLY, because communities all across the country are in crisis.

I travel quite a bit across the country and visit many different communities not only in my State, but in many other States. I can tell you firsthand that communities all across our country are facing crises. They are facing crises in so many different respects.

They are facing the whole issue of pervasive poverty. Poverty in America is real. We have more than 400 counties in the United States of America that have poverty rates that exceed 20 percent, and all of these have had poverty rates for more than 30 years greater than 20 percent. So poverty is a critical issue in our country, and communities are feeling the effect of it in a significant way.

Joblessness. Joblessness. I continue to say that the unemployment rate is

unacceptably high. Even though we have made a great improvement in the unemployment rate since the recession, it is still too high. For African American workers, it is hovering somewhere around 10 percent. That is unacceptable.

We all talk from time to time and we see it all over the news today about police misconduct. Police misconduct is continuing to be a pervasive problem in so many communities.

I'm sure tonight Mr. BOBBY SCOTT from Virginia, who is very passionate about the whole issue of criminal justice reform, is going to talk about mass incarceration in the United States of America.

Certainly that is a real problem, and there are many Members in this body who are working every day to try to craft together legislation to try to address the whole question of mass incarceration.

Also, we have crumbling schools and infrastructure and highways and tunnels and ports. Our whole infrastructure in this country needs to be addressed. Hopefully, we will be able to pass a transportation bill before the end of the year.

Hopefully, my friends on the other side of the aisle will not try to load up the transportation bill with any Ex-Im Bank riders that will be a poison pill that would slow down or even defeat the transportation bill.

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So the point is, Ms. KELLY, that we do have an urgent need to save our communities. We need all hands on deck as we take on this challenge.

We consistently see, Ms. KELLY, an over-criminalization of African Americans, specifically our youth. We see, for example, minor infractions that occur in the context of a classroom—yes, we have seen that on television over the last few days—a minor infraction in a classroom that escalates into an arrestable offense.

Students, particularly those who are African American and Hispanic, are too frequently funneled into the justice system as a result of overly punitive school discipline policies and poorly defined roles for law enforcement in educational settings.

Unfortunately, the school-to-prison pipeline is still a reality. When I first came to Congress 11 years ago, we were talking about the school-to-prison pipeline, and we continue to talk about it today. It is a reality. So we must work together to remedy this problem.

We, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, do not at all endorse what some people over the last few days have started to call the "Ferguson Effect." Let me just elaborate on that for a moment.

We have heard some high-ranking officials in our country refer to the "Ferguson Effect." They are suggesting in some way that an uptick in crime can be attributable to police inaction because of their fears of the "Ferguson Effect."

That is so erroneous. That is so disingenuous. I wish we would concentrate on the problem and not try to get sidetracked on the so-called "Ferguson Effect."

The deaths of so many unarmed Black men like Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray are all a result of a number of issues, including the overcriminalization of minorities and a lack of effective community policing practices.

Let us seize this opportunity that we have before us to gain significant ground on several legislative areas which are not only CBC priorities, but are also in the strategic interests of our Nation. Criminal justice reform is one such area.

Mr. Speaker and Ms. KELLY, any criminal justice reform, any legislation that we consider, must guarantee a substantial reduction in the prison population for Federal prisoners. We are, as a country, 5 percent of the world's population; yet, we incarcerate 25 percent of those who are incarcerated in the world. There is something is wrong with that, Mr. Speaker.

We must make sure that our laws and our criminal laws in this country are fair and that they are not disproportionate and overburdensome in some areas.

We have Members of this body on both sides of the aisle who acknowledge the inadequacies in our criminal justice system and see reform as a key priority. The political will—the political will—for criminal justice reform is here today.

The President was in Newark, New Jersey, today talking about criminal justice reform. Some of my Republican colleagues are talking about it, and my Democratic colleagues are talking about it.

The leadership on both sides of the aisle have had meaningful conversations on this issue. We believe that a bipartisan legislative accomplishment can be achieved in this session.

I know that there are several bills that are pending, and I hope Mr. SCOTT will talk extensively about it when he makes his remarks in just a moment.

But criminal justice reform can take place in the 114th Congress, and I believe we can reach a bipartisan compromise that can get this bill to the President's desk by the end of this term.

Thank you, Ms. KELLY, for yielding time.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, my colleague from North Carolina, for your outstanding remarks on this topic of saving our community. I really, really appreciate it, and so do the American people.

At this time, I would like to introduce my other colleague, Representative BOBBY SCOTT from the great State of Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentlewoman for organizing this Special Order so that we can talk about many aspects of the criminal justice system.

You have asked us to talk about the militarization of communities, also what we can do to improve policing and the problem of mass incarceration. On the term of militarizing the communities, there was an amendment offered a few months ago that would have prevented the Department of Defense from giving local police departments certain military equipment.

I think it is important to read what was actually in the legislation because some thought that handguns and ammunition was what we were talking about. Actually, the amendment goes into great length specifically about what would be prohibited if that amendment passed to help reduce the militarization of our communities.

The Department of Defense has a program where they will give surplus equipment to local communities, and the limitation was that none of these transfers could include aircraft, including drones; armored vehicles; grenade launchers; silencers; toxicological agents, including chemical agents and biological agents; launch vehicles; guided missiles; ballistic missiles; rockets; torpedoes; bombs; mines; or nuclear weapons.

Those are the only things that would be barred if this amendment had passed, not handguns and ammunition or other things that local police departments could actually use. But what local police department needs nuclear weapons or torpedoes?

We are not talking about the large, sophisticated police forces. This is the kind of stuff that was being given to police departments that you might think of when you think of Andy Griffith and Barney Fife. What do they need with a tank?

In one of the local incidents when they had a tank come out, it was pointed out that the people trying to drive the tank hadn't been trained on the tank. Can you just imagine hearing from inside, "Where are the brakes? Where are the brakes?"

If you need a military response, the appropriate thing to do would be to call in the National Guard. Then you have the military performing the military functions. I think there is a lot that we can do to restrict this kind of equipment going to our local police departments.

A lot has been said about policing. We can discuss the problem of policing. We all know that the vast, overwhelming majority of police officers risk their lives on our behalf and do an excellent job.

But whenever you get to describe what the problem is, we know what the solution is going to be, and that is to make sure that there is a consensus growing that we need body cameras so we can know exactly what happened and police training so that police can be properly trained on things like how to avoid profiling, how to avoid discrimination, and treating one group different from the other. Implicit bias is what it is called. There is a lot you

can do in training, and we need to make sure we have funding for that training.

But in terms of mass incarceration, that is where we really need a lot of work. As the chairman mentioned, we have 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's prisoners. In most countries, for every 100,000 population, they lock up 50 to 200 people per 100,000. The United States locks up over 700 per 100,000. We are well into the first place. There is nobody close.

That number is particularly egregious because there have been recent studies that have suggested that anything over 500 per 100,000 is actually counterproductive.

You have got so many people in jail. You have so many families being raised with their parents in prison. Young people are being raised without their parents. You have so many people with felony records having trouble finding jobs.

You are wasting so much money that anything over about 500 per 100,000 is counterproductive. We are at 700 and some per 100,000. The African American incarceration rate is in the thousands. That is just wasted money.

That is what Texas found when they were looking a few years ago at an appropriations request of \$2 billion needed to keep up with all the slogans and sound bites that they had codified in terms of keeping up with the mass incarceration in Texas, \$2 billion in construction.

And somebody said, "Well, if you actually make a better choice, if you invested some of that money in prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation, you might not have to spend all \$2 billion."

That is what they did. They intelligently invested in evidence-based programs, programs studied and known to reduce crime, not just sound like they reduce crime, but actually known to reduce crime, evidence-based policies of prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation, and they found that they didn't need to build any new prisons.

In fact, they were able to close some of the prisons that they had. Over 30 States have figured out that they can reduce crime and save money by reducing mass incarceration. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there are people that think slogans and sound bites are good, and that is how we got in the mess we are in now.

The chairman mentioned the school-to-prison pipeline. I like to refer to it as the Children's Defense Fund does, as the cradle-to-prison pipeline, because that suggests that there are things all the way along the line that we are not doing that help construct this pipeline that ends up with—at present estimates, one out of three African American boys born today will end up in prison.

We can do better than that if we make the appropriate investments all

the way through from early childhood education to after-school programs, a continuum of services, to make sure that they create the cradle-to-college-and-career pipeline and not the cradle-to-prison pipeline. That includes investments that have been studied, evidence based, and we know they work.

There is a lot you can do in terms of criminal justice reform, but if you do it right, it has to be comprehensive. That means you start with prevention and early intervention, make sure you are making those investments so fewer young people are getting in trouble. Then you have to do police training. We know that good police training can improve policing and, also, reduce crime. Body cameras can eliminate a lot of problems.

Last year we passed the Death in Custody Reporting Act, which requires reporting from local police of anybody that dies in their custody in prison, in jail, or in the process of arrest, so we know what is going on around the country. As you have the debate, you can debate from a point of view of facts, not just in allegations when people don't know exactly what the facts are.

We can make sure that the police training is there. You can have diversion to make sure that people who are arrested might not have to spend—the only people you need pretrial in jail are those that need to be in jail. You don't want to have unnecessary people serving time and losing their jobs in the process.

You need a continuum of services, drug courts which can address the underlying problem rather than just convict them, lock them up, they come back, same thing, come back, back and forth.

If you deal with the underlying problem in a drug court, you can have a situation where they are diverted from prison and, also, much less likely to commit a crime in the future.

One of the major factors in over-incarceration are the mandatory minimums. We need to have significant reductions in mandatory minimum sentencing to make sure they only apply to a small portion of real, legitimate kingpins, not to girlfriends and people on the periphery that may have gotten caught up in a conspiracy.

Once you get into prison, make sure that it is for rehabilitation, not for just warehousing, so you are much less likely to commit a crime when you come out. You have to fund the second chance programs.

All of this is part of the SAFE Justice Act, which has the added benefit that, because of the significant reductions in mandatory minimums, there will be savings. The Department of Justice is able to redirect the savings into the prevention, early intervention programs, the drug courts, the body cameras and everything else. So everything in the program is paid for by reducing incarceration.

This legislation has the support of a lot of different organizations, liberal

and conservative, because everybody knows that, if it is enacted, we will reduce crime and save money.

So we know what to do. It is just a matter of making sure we have the political will to do the right thing, to deal with mass incarceration by making the right choice, not the slogans and sound bites, but the evidence-based approach that will actually reduce crime and save money.

We can do it. There is legislation pending. There are a lot of different bills, but we need to make sure that the comprehensive approach is reflected in whatever comes to the floor.

So I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for bringing us together so we can discuss the militarization of our communities, the solutions for policing, which would include training and body cameras and how we can effectively reduce mass incarceration. We know what to do, and the solutions save more money than they cost.

So thank you very much for the opportunity to present that.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you so much for your important remarks. I know this topic is one that you have been researching and studying, trying to come up with solutions for a long time.

One thing that is a little disconcerting is you say that the SAFE Justice Act is widely supported, but it still doesn't move.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Well, it doesn't matter which bill moves. The question is whatever moves ought to have the elements of prevention and early intervention, ought to have diversion, and if you only deal with sentencing in the Federal system, you are not dealing with mass incarceration in the United States.

The Federal system only has 10 percent of the prisoners. So if you just eliminated the Federal system, you are only talking about 10 percent reduction in incarceration. You have to do something about mass incarceration at the State level.

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So when you just talk about sentencing reform, if you reduce a mandatory minimum for 25 to 15 years, the first 15 years, that has no effect, because they will serve the first 15 years, then gradually you will have an effect. If you want an effect, you need to have prevention programs so fewer people are coming into prison, diversion programs so those who are arrested can be diverted from prison, dealt with effectively in drug court so they are much less likely to commit a crime again so that you can reduce crime and save money.

You have to make sure you have meaningful mandatory minimum reforms because that is one of the major drivers of the overincarceration. When people are in prison, you have to make sure you have the funding for the programs to make sure they don't come back. And once in the community, the

second chance programs that have been very effective need to be funded.

We know what to do; it is just a matter of getting it done. It doesn't matter whose bill passes; it is just whatever passes ought to have those elements.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Is there any particular State that you think does a better job that we can hold up as a role model?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. There are 30 States that have reduced crime and saved money. Texas was one of the first because they were looking at a \$2 billion appropriation request to keep up with the slogans and sound bites that they had enacted in mass incarceration. At the rate they were going, they needed \$2 billion in prison construction.

They decided instead to invest it in prevention programs so fewer kids were getting in trouble; early intervention programs so that once people got in a little trouble, they wouldn't get in worse trouble; and rehabilitation in prisons so that as people got out, they were less likely to come back. They found that they not only didn't have to spend any of the \$2 billion building prisons, they were able to close some of the prisons they had.

Texas is a red State, and they called their initiative "Right on Crime." Using the word "right" in both words is correct, and from the political right. So you had conservatives investing their money appropriately, reducing crime, and saving money.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. That is fantastic.

I know in my district, we have held some roundtables, and some of my employers, manufacturers, they shared that they did hire people who were in prison and were some of their best employees because they are so grateful that someone gave them a chance. We really need to promote that and highlight those things.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. The second chance idea is that people who get out of prison ought to be supported. The little money you spend on support pales in consideration to what usually happens. They get out, they can't find a job, they can't do anything, and they are right back into prison at \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 a year. If you spend a little bit of money supporting them, they might not come back.

One of the elements the President talked about today is the "ban the box." When you fill out an application, there is a little box, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" If you check the box, that is the end of the interview.

What the ban the box is suggesting is don't talk about the criminal record at first. Go through the process so you can present your credentials. Then, at the end of the process, they can discuss criminal record, but not at the beginning.

You will find that many people, the conviction is so far past. Studies have shown that after a few years, if you

have got a clean record, the chance of you committing a crime isn't any higher than the general population. So if it is a 15-year-old nonviolent offense, well, maybe it is not relevant; and maybe your credentials are so much better than everybody else's that you are the right person for the job, but you never would have had the opportunity to present your credentials if you had to check the box.

So all around the country, cities, States, and businesses are eliminating that box to check, talking to people and seeing if they are actually qualified for the job, and those that are qualified can get the job. Obviously, some violations, if you have got an embezzlement charge and you are trying to get a job in a bank, or child molestation at a daycare center, you know, but a lot of them, if it is a 20-year-old marijuana possession charge or something like that, compared to your credentials, compared to everybody else head and shoulders, well, people can overlook a 20-year-old conviction. You never would have gotten to that point if you had to check the box. That is why the ban the box campaign is so important.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. That is a good idea we have now in Illinois.

Thank you, Representative. I really appreciate you taking the time and sharing your vast knowledge about this topic.

Mr. Speaker, many of the families that we represent believe that the only and right way to save our communities and secure our better future is to enact laws that actually understand the needs of American families, regardless of circumstance, and invest in their future.

This Congress must have a frank conversation about what those investments are and vote for policies that will truly save our communities. And this conversation has to be a bipartisan conversation, not just a Congressional Black Caucus or Democratic conversation.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded that today our colleague, the Honorable DONALD PAYNE, Jr., of New Jersey could not be here because he was asked to be with the President. President Obama visited Congressman PAYNE's district to discuss criminal justice reform, as you heard a little bit about already.

As many of you know, earlier today, President Obama spoke of his intent to make significant reforms in the criminal justice space; and in keeping with the message of "saving our communities," the reforms the President is championing are necessary. I thank the President for his efforts.

I want to take just a moment to say that I appreciate the fact that over on the other side of the Hill, a bipartisan coalition of Senators, led by my Congressional Black Caucus colleague, Senator CORY BOOKER, as well as my home State Senator, the Honorable DICK DURBIN, and men willing to cross

the aisle, like Senator MIKE LEE of Utah, were able to come together to introduce comprehensive legislation aimed at recalibrating prison sentences for certain drug offenders, targeting violent criminals, and granting judges greater discretion at sentencing for low-level drug crimes. Their sentencing reform legislation helps to curve recidivism by helping prisoners successfully reenter society.

These are just small components of an overall strategy to help save communities, but they are critical ones nonetheless.

Here are the facts. More than half a million people leave U.S. prisons each year with jobs, housing, and mental health services scarce. Many are soon to be back behind bars.

Like the President said, many of us in the Congressional Black Caucus are calling on community stakeholders to break the cycle of incarceration by helping former inmates successfully reenter society.

So tonight's Special Order hour is an opportunity that comes on the heels of the President's New Jersey visit, a visit where he toured a drug treatment center called the Integrity House, and recognized its work in helping former inmates secure housing, jobs, and skills needed to transition to life outside of prison. I have a place like that in Illinois called the Safer Foundation that does much of the same work.

As the President noted, everyone has a role to play in criminal justice reform and reintegrating those who have served time in prison back into society. From businesses that are hiring ex-offenders to philanthropies that are supporting education and training programs, we have to get to work getting ex-offenders back on their feet so they can help build up their communities.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress has to have the astuteness and manpower in its ranks to recognize that we must do more, that it will take a village, and it takes real leadership to improve the plight of America's communities. This means we need jobs legislation that offers opportunity. This means we need safe streets free of violence. This means we need community policing that brings us peace of mind and comfort.

I feel compelled in this conversation about communities to say that, as a representative of the Chicagoland area and as a co-chair of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, Congress must get over its fear of talking about violence in America. We have to do more than hold moments of silence when tragedies occur. We have to stop being silent and start acting. We don't have to be enemies on this subject.

The issues of gun violence and police violence in our communities are real. It is how we respond to the problems that exist in these areas that will show our strength as a country. Right now, the tragic occurrences that exist with respect to these issues only serve as barriers to our growth as a nation.

When I talk about gun violence, I always start out by reminding folks of a few things.

First, it is important to realize that gun violence isn't just an urban problem; it is an American problem. In the last 50 years, more than 1 million people have been killed by guns in America.

Since 1968, more Americans have died from gunfire than died in all the wars of this country's history.

A young Black man is nearly 5 times more likely to be killed by a gun than a young White man, and 13 times more than an Asian American man.

If a Black person is killed by a gun, it is judged a homicide 82 percent of the time.

And keep in mind, from metal detectors in buildings to shooting safety drills at schools and movie theaters, gun violence has affected all of our communities, not only in terms of how we live, but whether we live at all.

And the irony is that, even with all this death and tragedy, this Congress can't even put a background check bill on the House floor, even with an NRA membership that is in 80 percent agreement that we need expanded background checks. Last Congress, even with about 190 cosponsors, the bill never came to the floor.

When I talk about saving our communities and discussing the actions of the police, I often remind people of this: the police are not our enemy. I won't ever say that because that simply is not the case.

To make our communities safer, we need the support of families, leaders, and our local law enforcement. I come from a family of law enforcement officers and know that our police ranks are filled with brave, well-intentioned, civic-minded heroes. Sadly, too many in the Black community don't have the same family experience that I have had with law enforcement and fear the police. I have a 31-year-old son, and even though the same police are in his family, he hasn't had the same experiences.

And, unfortunately, there are still too many police officers who harbor a level of fear when it comes to dealing with the Black community.

Mr. Speaker, we have discussed the aftermath of a few high-profile police events. I will repeat what I often say: we must hold our law enforcement officials to the highest professional standards and provide them with the training they need to effectively police diverse communities. This training must address the biases and stereotypes that influence decisions in the field and that create obstacles to mutual understanding. In working to achieve that understanding, we can strive toward a justice system that treats all Americans fairly and values all American lives equally.

Before I end, I just want to give my colleague the opportunity to share a few more words.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman

from Illinois for all of her strong work in criminal justice. She has been fighting since she first got here. That is certainly appreciated and has made quite a difference.

As you have indicated, this is a moment when adversarial groups and Members of Congress, liberal and conservative, have come to a consensus that we need to reform the criminal justice system. The Safe Justice Act that I mentioned is led by JIM SENSENBRENNER from Wisconsin, a Republican, and has Republican and Democratic support. There are bills in the House and the Senate with bipartisan support. If we are going to have this moment where everyone is in agreement, we need to make sure that we do everything we possibly can.

I thank you for organizing this Special Order so that we can make criminal justice reform a reality.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you.

I thank my colleagues for lending their voices for this important conversation about saving our communities, and I will be submitting some other work from other colleagues not here tonight.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus because last week our nation was reminded, yet again, Black lives have no value. But this time, the reminder was different.

It did not come from law enforcement in response to a shooting, traffic stop, or 911 call. Nor did it come from inside a jail cell or a court room. This time, the reminder came from the use of excessive force in a place where most of us would expect it never to happen: our schools.

Schools should be safe havens for our nation's children. Unfortunately, actions of Spring Valley school resource officer, Ben Fields, caught on video have proven that they are not. Instead of preparing young minds across the country to tackle our nation's most complex issues, some of our schools are fostering fear and mistrust.

And, this is what my young constituents have told me. On October 16, I held a listening session with more than 400 high school students from Northeast Ohio.

I was surprised to hear that nearly all of them felt there was no one they could talk to—in their schools or communities—if they felt unsafe. Today, I am not so shocked. With incidents like the one captured in the Spring Valley video, who could blame them?

What messages are acts like these sending our youth? Are they to think this behavior is acceptable and that they matter less, if at all?

The over criminalization of African-American youth and young adults is already a growing issue in our communities. The number of African-American men in jail continues to rise. African-American and Latino boys and men tend to receive harsher sentences than their peers of other races.

Further, the school-to-prison pipeline is as strong as ever, with our African-American students suspended at three times the rate of their White peers. In this case, criminal charges were even filed against the young Spring Valley female student after she was subjected to egregious force by a "resource officer."

As a nation, we must stop this vicious cycle. It is time to change the narrative and save our communities for generations to come.

I call on my colleagues in Congress to work together to pass policies that tell our children their lives have value. We must pass criminal justice reform and support policies that create a safe, nurturing environment in our schools. The future of our communities depends on it.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, as many of you know, the promotion of best practices and oversight of state and local law enforcement have been legislative priorities during my tenure as a Judiciary Committee member. My Pattern And Practice statute, passed as part of the 1994 crime bill, has served as the dominant tool used by the Department of Justice to address the myriad of policing controversies dating back the LAPD, New Orleans and most recently Seattle, Cleveland and Ferguson, Missouri police departments.

Over the past two decades, tensions between police and communities of color have grown as allegations of bias-based policing by law enforcement agents, sometimes supported by data collection efforts and video evidence, have increased in number and frequency.

Recent events in the wake of Ferguson, Missouri demonstrate that racial profiling and bias-based policing remain divisive issues in communities across the nation that strikes at the very foundation of our democracy.

The deaths of Walter L. Scott—arising from a traffic stop—Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Antonio Zambrano-Montes—all at the hands of police officers—highlight the links between the issues of race and reasonable suspicion of criminal conduct. Ultimately, these men are tragic examples of the risk of being victimized by a perception of criminality simply because of their race, ethnicity, religion or national origin.

Despite the fact that the majority of law enforcement officers perform their duties professionally and without bias, the relationship between the police and some of minority communities has deteriorated to such a degree that federal action is required to begin addressing the issue. With recent Washington Post reports of almost 400 police-involved shooting fatalities in the first five months of 2015, all should agree that the time for bipartisan action is long overdue.

In 2001, I welcomed President Bush's invitation to draft legislation that would end the practice of unlawful police profiling, with bipartisan Congressional support. In April, I reintroduced the End Racial Profiling Act in the hope that Congress and the Obama Administration can come together to pass legislation that sends the signal that the Federal government is committed to ensuring that its law enforcement agencies conduct their activities free from bias.

In May, the Judiciary Committee, where I am former Chairman and current Ranking Member, held a hearing on Police accountability, where we heard from expert witnesses on police practices and discussed policy options to restoring the relationship between the police and communities of color.

In June, I followed up on this effort to address fair policing practices by reintroducing the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act. That bill is designed to provide incentives for local police organizations to voluntarily adopt performance-based standards to ensure that incidents of deadly force or misconduct will be

minimized through appropriate management and training protocols and properly investigated, should they occur.

The bill authorizes the Department of Justice to work cooperatively with independent accreditation, law enforcement and community-based organizations to further develop and refine accreditation standards, and further authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to law enforcement agencies for the purpose of obtaining accreditation from certified law enforcement accreditation organizations.

Currently, there are no federally recognized minimum standards for operating a law enforcement agency. The ad hoc nature of police management has accordingly left many officers and agencies in the dark about how to cope with changes in their communities. That is the real reason police officers and department feel so adrift in the current post-Ferguson environment—not the Black Lives Matter Movement. There is a vacuum of leadership in policing that can only be filled by leadership at the federal level.

Beyond the human toll created by law enforcement accountability issues, there remains the fiscal impact created by the high cost of litigation settlements for police abuse claims. While most cities fail to systematically track the cost of litigation, the cost reports for major cities have proven staggering. In New York City alone, during Mayor Michael Bloomberg's three term tenure, NYPD payouts were in excess of \$1 billion dollars for policing claims. For small departments, the cost of a single high profile incident could prove crippling in its impact on public safety.

While the Department of Justice has a range of criminal and civil authority to address policing issues, the Civil Rights Division will never have the resources necessary to investigate more than a small fraction of those departments engaged in unconstitutional conduct, even with the enhanced funding and task force authority granted by this legislation.

Through the support of a robust accreditation regime, like that existing in healthcare, Congress can ensure that all communities have the best trained and managed police departments. Only by establishing acceptable police operations standards can we begin to preemptively address issues like use of force and heal the rifts within our communities.

Media reports from Baltimore and other cities depicting confrontations between protestors and their police departments illustrate the current divide between law enforcement and the communities they police. In the past years, cities from New York to Cincinnati and Miami to Los Angeles have experienced unrest following controversial use of force incidents by their police. Absent a climate of trust and accountability, community needs are not served and the jobs of the police officers become more difficult and dangerous.

The energies of Congress should be focused on the adoption of legislative priorities that address the substance of law enforcement management and strengthen the current battery of tools available to sanction misconduct. As a Congress we have been enthusiastic about supporting programs designed to get officers on the street.

We must be just as willing to support programs designed to train and manage them after they get there. The current national climate requires decisive action to implement solutions. Out of respect for all who have lost their lives over the last nine months—both law enforcement and civilian—I hope you will join me in supporting legislation that initiates the reforms necessary to restore public trust and accountability to law enforcement.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues in speaking on the critically important issue of criminal-justice reform.

Just last week, an African-American girl at Spring Valley High School in Columbia, South Carolina was violently arrested by the school's resource officer. This is a disturbing example of a law enforcement officer using excessive force when interacting with a person of color and a perfect illustration of an alarming trend in our schools. We need to have a substantive dialogue around how to empower administrators, teachers, and staff to deal with school disciplinary issues so that students aren't being criminalized for behavioral issues.

According to the Department of Education, black females enrolled in New York City and Boston schools are disciplined 10.5 times more on average than their white counterparts.

African Americans seem to face undue scrutiny by police officers throughout our communities. Black Americans are more than twice as likely to be unarmed when killed during encounters with police when compared to Caucasians. States and Congress must set higher standards for the use of deadly force and must hold police officers accountable if they violate these standards. This is the first of many steps to begin the process of mending the delicate relationship between law enforcement and people of color.

This disparity is increasingly evident when looking at the composition of the U.S. prison population. The Coalition for Public Safety argues that more than 60 percent of our prison population is composed of racial and ethnic minorities. That is why I have supported H.R. 3713, a comprehensive sentencing reform effort with bipartisan support that aims to overhaul the current system which disproportionately affects minorities.

I strongly believe that addressing the disparate treatment of people of color at the hands of police is a fundamental step toward creating an equitable society. As one of the first black women to be publically elected from Dallas, I spent my entire career championing equity for communities of color and fighting on behalf of African Americans for social justice. It is clear that there are fundamental problems in police and justice systems across the nation that needs to be addressed. As a former Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, these issues are of the utmost importance to me and I am personally committed to finding long term solutions.

We must act now to remedy the culture and system of violence against people of color. Our nation has endured this disparity for far too long and I encourage my colleagues to not only speak out on this issue, but also take swift and immediate action.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. PAYNE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Ms. JACKSON LEE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and November 3 on account of official business in district.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1731. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to waive the minimum period of continuous active duty in the Armed Forces for receipt of certain benefits for homeless veterans, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish such benefits to homeless veterans with discharges or releases from service in the Armed Forces with other than dishonorable conditions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker pro tempore, Mr. MESSER, on Monday, November 2, 2015:

H.R. 623. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to authorize the Department of Homeland Security to establish a social media working group, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1314. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on October 29, 2015, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 3819. To provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 29 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, November 3, 2015, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.