

Business Committee and has done yeoman's work on behalf of the unborn since he has been here, which is for a very long time.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT).

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank my friend, Mr. SMITH, for all his work on this issue.

When I was a young boy unable to read and my mother would read stories from the Bible, it was so enlightening. As I began to read in elementary school and read the Bible for myself, I was always so perplexed to read that there were generations thousands of years ago that devolved and degenerated to the point that they would sacrifice their own children on the altar to avail other idols.

It appeared clear that there is not much that is more despicable to God, and it makes sense for anyone who believes there could be a God that there could be nothing more despicable than the taking of innocent life.

That is what you find in the Bible. It may have been allowed to go on for generations for years. But when the wrath came, it was judgment that was truly ungodly.

Since 1973, the realization that here in America we have been sacrificing the most innocent—before they could even be capable of saying a lie, stealing, any wrong whatsoever, their lives are taken away from them.

And then to further realize that you have some legislators that have fought to prevent children that were attempted to be aborted, that were born alive—they fought to let them die even after they are born alive. Then you realize one such legislator now has been voted into the White House. It is a bit scary, where we are in America.

I know there are some that say: You are a man. You can't complain about the sacrifice of unborn children on the altar of inconvenience.

I am not a slave, never have been, but I would hope that, if I were alive 200 years ago, I would have stood with John Quincy Adams, I would have stood with the abolitionists, to say: How can we expect God to keep blessing America when we are treating our brothers and sisters with chains and bondage?

Well, I am alive today. We need to stop the sacrifice of the most innocent and the most helpless among us. Our judgment will be coming one way or another.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my friend for his eloquent remarks.

I just want to conclude, Mr. Speaker. Some day future generations will look back on America and wonder how and why such a seemingly enlightened society so blessed and endowed with education, advanced science, information, wealth, and opportunity could have failed to protect the most innocent and the most inconvenient.

History will not look favorably on today's abortion culture. I do believe we must replace it and work tirelessly to replace it with a culture of life.

Modern medicine and scientific breakthroughs, especially the widespread use of ultrasound, has shattered the pernicious myth that unborn children are mere blobs of tissue and that abortion is anything but an act of violence.

A few years ago I met with Linda Shrewsbury, an academic and African American with a degree from Harvard, who spoke and said:

"The lies that brought me to that day and its sorrowful aftermath are crystal clear in my mind—falsehoods and deceptions that concealed the truth about abortion. Lies planted in my thinking by clever marketing, media campaigns and endless repetition led to a tragic irreversible decision—the death of my first child."

"At age 20, I had no inkling of the mental and emotional darkness I was about to enter."

"After spending many years in denial, I did eventually find healing. When I understood and rejected distortions about fetal development, doublespeak about choice, rights, planned and wanted children, I understood the reality and victimhood of my aborted child. I understood the absence of moral bases for choosing to 'dis-entitle' an innocent human being of life. When I embraced truth, truth set me free and I finally gained inner peace."

We believe that there are two victims in every abortion: the unborn baby and the mother. Linda Shrewsbury found peace. We need to protect women from the violence of abortion, as well as babies.

I yield back the balance of my time.

CHILD CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, a couple of decades ago support for child care fell under conservative attack. At the time, the argument went that offering low cost or free child care to working families would create an incentive for women to leave their homes and their traditional roles as caretakers.

That argument attempted to capitalize on panic about the collapse of the so-called traditional families. But to be honest, I don't think it ever had teeth in the first place.

The reason most women left home to enter the workforce, the real reason

that countless women work today, is to make ends meet. In an economy that is built to work for corporations and their CEOs, working families have found themselves trying to stretch every dollar.

The leadership of this House seems content to keep that struggle going. It is time to take a second look at policies that will help our middle class. It is time to stand up for high-quality child care, accessible and affordable for every family, and a childcare workforce that earns the pay they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make something very clear. This is neither an isolated problem, nor is it one with limited impact. This is the new normal. In addition to outrageous costs, limited access to quality child care and pre-K means stunted development for children and further division between those with means and those without.

If you have got the resources, child care that costs more than the median rent isn't a big deal. If you have got the resources, child care that costs more than tuition at a public college across more than half of the country isn't a big deal.

If you have got the resources, you can give your child a leg up with pre-K and child care that sets them up for academic success, higher wages, and better jobs and careers.

If you don't have these resources because you are working minimum-wage jobs or your wages have been flat for years or you are one of the hundreds of thousands of Americans still unemployed, leaders in Congress say: Well, too bad about that. That is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the average cost of child care for a family with an infant and a 4-year-old is \$17,755. In my State of New Jersey, the average cost for the same family would be \$21,000.

That price tag is outrageous, and it probably has quite a bit to do with why only 35 percent of pre-school-age children are currently enrolled in pre-K programs despite the benefits that pre-K offers.

Ninety percent of brain development happens before the age of 5. Every dollar invested in early childhood education returns in public benefits. There are few better ways we can spend our money.

Mr. Speaker, there is one more reason we are making this a priority. The teachers responsible for our youngest minds earn salaries that cannot cover the expenses of their own families. While first grade teachers earn roughly \$45,000 annually, pre-K teachers earn only \$27,000.

These men and women hold one of the most important roles in our society and make some of the greatest impacts on our kids. They deserve pay that matches the value they offer.

This issue has waited long enough for attention from this Nation's leaders. It is time for Congress to make sure that every family has access to child care and early childhood education.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS).

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling for our fellow Members of Congress to come together to assist hardworking families and children.

We need to act together to provide parents and caregivers with the resources necessary to ensure that every family has access to safe and affordable child care.

Specifically today, I am speaking out for the over 157,000 children in the foster care system who are 5 years old or younger.

Congress must face two important facts. The cost of child care is having a detrimental impact on working families, and it is our children who suffer as a result.

In my home city of Los Angeles, it is estimated that an annual income of nearly \$74,000 is necessary to secure a modest, yet adequate, standard of living for a two-parent, two-child family.

In reality, some of the neighborhoods I represent have a median household income of less than \$28,000 a year, which translates to more than \$45,000 below what is needed for a modest standard of living.

To make up this difference, far too many working families, especially single-parent families, are forced to put their children into inadequate child care, which is often what they can afford.

After a baby is born, too many mothers and fathers must immediately return to work in order to pay bills, and one of those bills becomes skyrocketing childcare costs.

In fact, there are many children who wind up in the foster care system because their parents have left them unsupervised because they had to make a choice: stay home because they didn't have child care or go to work and leave those children unattended. When parents make that decision, they can wind up then losing custody of their children to the foster care system.

Last January President Obama took a bold step to support children and working families by proposing to expand access to high-quality child care for low-income families.

In partnership with States, this investment will help over 1 million additional young children over the next decade by supporting States' efforts to build up the supply of quality child care available to low-income families.

One way to solve the childcare needs of working families is to arrange for someone other than parents to care for children. My home State of California has taken a different approach.

For over a decade, California has offered paid family leave to help working families stay at home to take care of a new child. This law is not only helping mothers bond with their newborn children, but it is also enabling more and more men to take time off work when a child is born, ensuring that more fathers stay involved with their children's lives.

□ 1900

We can say we support families, but to truly put families first, Congress needs to come together to provide effective paid family leave to mothers and fathers when a baby is born.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentlewoman from California for all of the advocacy she represents for those young people, those children, who are most vulnerable to us.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI), who is the sponsor of the Progressive Caucus' universal childcare resolution.

Ms. BONAMICI. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I also thank the gentlewoman from California for her wise remarks and for her leadership, especially on issues facing foster children in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss a very important issue that affects many families across the country, and that is the need for affordable, quality child care and to encourage all of my colleagues to cosponsor House Resolution 386. This resolution, which I introduced in July, with the support of 27 original cosponsors, affirms the commitment of Congress to put high-quality child care within the reach of every hardworking family, regardless of how much one earns.

Mr. Speaker, access to high-quality child care is essential to the well-being of children and families. Really, when we think about our economic future and about the quality of life in our communities, these are such important issues. I will share with you a real story.

Deondre is a 9-year-old boy in Oregon who understands this issue well. He shared this experience with his childcare provider, Ms. Renee, who takes care of him and his brother while his mother goes to school and works.

Deondre said: "My mom works and goes to school. Sometimes she is done by 6:30, but, other days, she is not done until midnight... Ms. Renee," he says, "picks both of us up from school, makes us dinner, helps us with homework, and puts us to bed."

Mr. Speaker, Deondre's story is just one example, but it illustrates the critical role that childcare providers play in children's lives, and it emphasizes the value of high-quality child care for working parents.

It is pretty clear, though, that our policies have not kept pace with our changing family structure and with our evolving workforce. In more than 60 percent of the married couples with children in the United States, both parents are working. In more than 40 percent of households, mothers are the sole or primary breadwinners for the families, and 34 percent of children are living with an unmarried parent. Access to affordable, quality child care is critical to the stability of families and to the communities across the country.

Childcare costs also affect children's well-being and the local economy. In

Washington, D.C., for example, families pay more than \$20,000 each year, on average, for a child's care; and in many States, including in my home State of Oregon, the cost of child care exceeds in-State tuition at public universities. We hear a lot about how rising tuition costs create barriers to accessing postsecondary education, and this, too, is a critical issue. I know many of my colleagues in both the House and the Senate—frankly, on both sides of the aisle—are eager to curb the cost of college to enable more students to get a higher education. Yet, in many places, the cost of caring for our infants often outpaces the cost of earning a university diploma.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be addressing the soaring costs of child care with the same urgency with which we seek to rein in college costs. Just as shutting students out of college has tremendous economic consequences, the fact that families must spend a growing share of their incomes on child care also comes with consequences. This is going to require some long-term thinking, and we have to really look into our future as to what this investment means for our families.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, low-income families tend to be the hardest hit by the rising costs of child care. Some families with limited means spend about 40 percent of their household incomes on child care, and some estimates suggest that the inability of employees to find reliable child care costs companies billions of dollars in lost output. We see some companies now having on-site child care—and that is great—but they are few and far between.

The high cost of child care is truly an issue of equity. When families are forced to make sacrifices to care for young children, these sacrifices disproportionately fall upon women and people of color. A recent Pew Research study found that, over the last 15 years, the cost of child care has likely contributed to an increasing number of mothers who have to put their careers on hold. Of course, there is nothing wrong with parents who choose to stay home with their children—absolutely not, when that is their choice—but for many parents in low-income households, leaving jobs to care for children is not a choice. These parents cannot afford to work and pay for child care.

What do they do?

Before childcare costs became unaffordable, more mothers were joining the workforce, were pursuing careers, and were contributing to the financial stability of families. Additionally, the childcare field primarily employs women, many of whom are underpaid—probably most of whom are underpaid. In fact, a new Economic Policy Institute study found that childcare workers are approximately twice as likely as other workers to live below the poverty line.

When I went to college years ago, I had a friend who ran the childcare center at the university. He made a comment to me once that really stuck with me. He said that people pay more per hour to park their cars in the parking garage than they do to have them look after their children. Now, that is unacceptable. It is important to pay childcare workers well so we can recruit and retain great people to take care of our children, who are the next generation. Very few workers receive healthcare coverage or pension plans or any kind of retirement security. For many childcare workers who have children themselves, the cost of child care for their own children is truly out of reach.

For many of our country's minority households, affordable child care is not only expensive, it is hard to find. The gap in wealth between White and Black households is the largest it has been in several decades. To exacerbate these challenges, low-wage jobs frequently have nontraditional schedules, which makes accessing high-quality child care especially difficult.

Mr. Speaker, many families are caught in this financial trap of working parents who are struggling and who are doing their best. They are trying to make ends meet in the face of rising costs and stagnant wages, but they are forced to choose between leaving the workforce to care for their children, which can push their families closer to poverty, and handing over their paychecks to cover the cost of child care, which has a similar result on their household finances.

In reality, there is no easy solution for these distressed families—distressed and stressed, I might add. More than 60 percent of young children attend child care so that their working parents can earn a living. At the same time, child care costs more than \$10,000 a year in many places—here in D.C., it is even more—and it too often rises faster than household incomes; but the problems caused by unaffordable child care extend beyond family finances.

High-quality early childhood education produces many benefits for children that continue well into the future, and this is that long-term investment that I am talking about. Children who access these programs see long-term benefits, including success in school, improved employment outcomes, and good health. When families can't access those high-quality childcare programs, their children may lose access to some of the benefits of early learning, like developing literacy and teamwork skills.

Congress does have a role to play in addressing these problems, and this is one of the most important investments we can make in our future. We must advance these existing programs that are effective at supporting working families and that are preparing children for success down the road.

Head Start is an example of one such program. It serves, roughly, a million

low-income people—more than 12,000 in my home State of Oregon. For each of these children and families, Head Start provides a quality early childhood education and increases access to health insurance, housing assistance, and job training. If you have never visited one of your Head Start facilities in your district, I encourage you to do so. They are really working hard to engage the families and to really get that early learning.

The benefits of Head Start for families and children are well-documented. Last year, more than 200,000 families in Head Start received job training and adult education services, and studies show that children in Head Start are better prepared for kindergarten and that they make gains in learning and in social-emotional development. Preschool Development Grants, including a new program that just passed recently as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act, will help States to improve access to early childhood education programs.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, Congress needs to do its part to promote universal prekindergarten programs. On a related note, my State of Oregon is instituting full-day kindergarten next year, and Congress should consider how it can support similar efforts in other States.

Also, Federal child nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program, increase children's access to nutritious meals. We expect children to learn and to do well and to thrive, but if they are hungry, they can't do that, Mr. Speaker. The Child and Adult Care Food Program can help to deflect some of the childcare costs that are passed down to parents while also encouraging healthy eating habits and supporting children's development.

I have introduced the Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act. This is a bipartisan bill that makes commonsense, positive changes to the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This bill will encourage more childcare providers to participate in the program, which, in turn, means that more American children will receive nutritious meals and that more childcare providers will receive support to provide those meals—again, getting a good, healthy start for those kids in our communities.

The Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act also authorizes childcare providers to offer additional healthy meals or snacks. Many working families rely on full-day care, but the Child and Adult Care Food Program only supports two meals a day. A child who is in care all day—sometimes until 8 p.m. or even later—needs to get a nutritious meal in the evening. That is good for kids, it is good for families, and it is good for our future.

Prekindergarten and child nutrition programs are examples of how the Federal Government and we in Congress are playing an important and effective role in supporting working families and

in investing in better outcomes for those families in the future; but, Mr. Speaker, we certainly could be doing more. Congress should promote fair work schedules, paid time off for parents and caregivers, which my State just did at the State level, and higher wages for working families, including for people who work in the childcare field.

I want to add, Mr. Speaker—and my colleague from California mentioned this—that many moms now go back to work within 2 weeks of giving birth. For those women here who are listening and who have given birth, you know how challenging that is for families. Twenty-five percent of women in this country go back to work 2 weeks after giving birth. We are the only industrialized country in the world that does not offer paid leave for women who have children. We need to change that and get a better start for our kids, for our moms, and we need to respect those working families.

As we continue to pursue efforts to make child care affordable for all families, I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor H. Res. 386. Let's show our support for our country's childcare workforce, its children, its hardworking families, and the future of our families and our country.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Oregon very much for her work, for her resolution, and for her advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH).

Mr. FATTAH. Let me thank the gentlewoman who has organized this Special Order.

There is no greater cause that could be the focus of our attention in this august body than that of future generations of Americans. Too much time is focused on the next election, so I want to thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey for focusing the House today on the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, with certainty, we know that early childhood, quality daycare, and early education are the fundamental building blocks. We as a nation are competing with countries like China and India, which have very populated nations. We need to make sure that every single American child has the ability to rise up to his potential so that our Nation can remain number one in the world.

I serve on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. In the last couple of weeks, we have done our work and have passed the appropriations bill, and, this year, we have made some progress. I first want to talk about the good news.

□ 1915

We did appropriate \$2.7 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and we increased it over last year, FY15, by \$326 million. Now, that is the good news. The problem, of

course, is that we still are a far cry away from providing for every family that will be eligible opportunities at affordable child care.

Let me give you a “for instance” closer to home. I represent the birthplace of our democracy, Philadelphia. I think it is one of the greatest cities in the world. We spent about \$300 million this year on Head Start and childcare activities, almost all of it Federal money; \$190 million are coming out of the Child Care Block Grant I referenced earlier, some \$300 million. We are only providing for 33 percent of the families in Philadelphia who would be eligible for child care through this effort. So we need to do more.

Hopefully, the city and the State will be partners in this effort, but our Nation has to see this, as President Nixon once said, as a national imperative, that is, that we have a national interest in every one of these children living up to their potential.

Now, 2 years ago, in a series done by WHY and NewsWorks, they focused on child care. They told this story on one occasion about a young lady by the name of Queen Muse who was getting her degree from La Salle University, taking graduate courses. She was working very, very hard. She was rising at a very early hour to drop off her young daughter at a family member's home because she couldn't afford appropriate child care and affordable child care.

Now, here is someone doing what we want them to do, getting a college education, getting a graduate degree. We need to be doing more to provide those early rungs on the ladder of opportunity for those who are in the early stages of family formulation and, in some cases, who are raising children as single parents. So there is much more that we can do.

In Philadelphia, we have a system that, even though not perfect, is working very well. I know through CCIS out on Greene Street in northwest Philadelphia, there is an opportunity where families and parents can get access to quality child care, federally funded as a contractor with the Urban League. Again, we need to do more, and that is why I came here to the floor this evening.

Now, I know that the Nation is preparing for the President's town meeting on guns tonight, and that is another issue related to families and family safety. We totally support the President's efforts in that regard, and I am going to work with the administration as a member of the Appropriations Committee to help fund those gun safety activities.

In terms of child care, this is about families also, and making sure that the youngest among us have every opportunity to learn and to grow. In fact, we know through the work we have done on brain science now that, as the Congresswoman from New Jersey says, this is the period of time in which the brain is like a sponge. It can learn almost

anything. We should be doing so much more in our early childhood efforts, in our childcare efforts to develop the language skills and the reading skills for these young people as the basic building blocks for their lifelong education.

So I thank the gentlewoman for yielding, and much more importantly, I thank her for her extraordinary leadership on the most important issue in our Nation, and that is the preparation of future generations of American leaders.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his wise words and the wisdom that has come with this experience.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey for her continued leadership as she brings those of us in the Congressional Progressive Caucus to the floor to speak on issues of concern for the American people.

Let me also thank the gentlewoman from Oregon for her leadership. I am delighted to be an original cosponsor of her very important legislation that is championed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus that is really demanding and calling for high quality, guaranteed, affordable, and accessible child care for every American family and a strong childcare workforce that is paid a living wage, at least \$15 an hour, and has a voice on their job.

I have alongside of me just a picture of children that may be any child here in America, happy and smiling. Mr. Speaker, that is why we are standing on the floor of the House today, because as Americans and as Members of the United States Congress it is our responsibility to be able to provide for the happiness and smiling of our children.

So I tell a story, as I begin my remarks, on the importance of this Special Order and the importance of child care. Just a few years ago in my area in Houston, parents got a call that no parent wants to receive. These were parents of little children, and they got a call to come rushing to their daycare center. They were rushing because their daycare center was on fire.

The tragedy is a young woman who had this business, whose family gave her this business so that she could have something to do and an income, had stepped away and went to a store and left little children under the age of 5 alone by themselves while a boiling pot of some form of food was on the stove. What happened was obviously that the pot caught fire and babies lost their lives, babies who could not move or help each other. She came rushing back with great remorse and emotion, but those babies were gone.

That is the story of child care, Mr. Speaker. It is so very important that every child has the potential for greatness, and that is why child care is so

important. In today's economy, the need for child care is a reality for the vast majority of families, but most working parents can't afford it, even while childcare teachers are not even paid enough. Childcare teachers are struggling themselves and can't provide for their own children. Low wages and a lack of benefits lead in the high turnover.

In the instance of childcare centers across America, many of them are unregulated. Additionally, parents are struggling. On average, center-based child care for two children can cost more than rent or mortgage in every State. No one who works hard should have the downside as they care for other's children to not be able to care for theirs.

In 2011, 49 percent of children ages zero to 4 with employed mothers were primarily cared for by a relative, their father, grandparents, sibling, other relative, or mother, primarily because they could not afford other sources. Center-based care was 26 percent. Grandparents was 21 percent. Other relatives was 6 percent.

Over 8 million children live in a single-parent household. Seventy-six percent of these single-parent households were employed. Sixty-seven percent of women in the workforce had a child under the age of 6. Thirty percent of women work at night and have a child under the age of 5. Twenty-nine percent of children in need of child care have multiple arrangements for child care that can include relatives or skilled childcare services. Sixteen percent of children in need of childcare services live in poverty.

The high cost of child care, the cost of full-time infant care across the United States in 2012 ranged from \$4,600 to \$20,000. Mr. Speaker, that is more sometimes than a part-time worker makes or even a full-time worker makes. That is saying to the American people, to women, to fathers, and to grandparents that we do not care about your children. The cost of full-time care for a 4-year-old ranged from \$3,900 to \$15,000, and the cost of before- and afterschool programs ranged from \$1,950 to \$10,000.

It is important, as we stand on the floor today, to make this statement: that guaranteed child care is really a necessity. It is a right. Why? Because I remember the Declaration of Independence, though not the Constitution, that talks about the pursuit of happiness. What more pursuit of happiness is there than to ensure that the children who are pictured here on this poster board have the right and opportunity to quality child care and for parents to not have that very devastating call, the call a parent who is doing everything they can to provide for the family to rush away from their job because their babies had died in a raging fire because an unregulated childcare provider left to go shopping while a food pot was burning on the stove?

Recently, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services began

a “Don’t Be in the Dark Campaign” to educate the parents about the dangers of placing children in unregulated child care in Texas. The importance of regulated child care becomes unavoidably clear when one considers the fact that 13 children died in unregulated care. In 2006, 18 children died in unregulated care in the State of Texas.

In order to stop deaths like this, we need universal care, we need quality care, we need teachers and workers who love what they are doing as they do, but are paid a livable wage, \$15, so they too can provide for their families.

Unfortunately, safe and affordable child care is not available as much as it should be in the State of Texas. Many working parents rely on State-subsidized care to meet their needs. In 2007, the Statewide waiting list for subsidized care was 17,000 in January, and it moved to 46,000 in October.

So it is important to note, for example, in Austin, it costs about \$43 a day to provide for full daycare for a toddler. However, the State will only pay a small amount.

So this is a very important Special Order. It is to reinforce the fact that our obligation is to safely secure our children and to include our children in the constitutional rights, if you will, of providing for them the sense of a quality of life that is worthy of them as the future of our Nation.

I join with my colleagues in speaking about and supporting this resolution, but I also join with them to support the full funding of Head Start. Many times we will see that those who were a part of Head Start, in fact, Head Start was very important to their growth and their progress.

I also want to include these agencies in my community, AVANCE and Neighborhood Centers, and say that if we had the universal access to child care, many faith institutions and others could be part of regulated, certified, clean child care that could be made more reasonable for those working parents who work very odd hours and work into the night and early morning and need the kind of around-the-clock child care that is so necessary.

So I want to thank Congresswoman WATSON COLEMAN for her leadership, and I leave this podium again by saying every child in America is precious. Even as we hear those discussing issues of choice and issues that sometimes women have to make, we know that we love our children. Why don’t we, as the children are here, as they are toddlers and infants and growing up, make sure that no child goes longing for love, for food, for resources, and no child goes longing for quality child care.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her leadership and her commitment to every child in this country.

I yield to my colleague from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), who is ever vigilant and diligent as it relates to preparing, edu-

cating, and ensuring our better generations to come.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN for her leadership on all of these issues, particularly education.

There is a growing bipartisan understanding that in order for our Nation’s children, especially those in low-income communities, to fulfill their potential and succeed in college and career, that we must expand access to affordable, high-quality, early learning opportunities.

Decades of research shows that properly nurturing children in early years of life supports enhanced brain development, cognitive functioning, and emotional and physical health. Research has also shown that one investment that leads to better educational outcomes, stronger job earnings, and lower crime rates is quality early learning programs. These programs help prevent and reduce achievement gaps for low-income students and create long-term benefits for our Nation, such as lower crime rates, lower teen pregnancy rates, and higher high school graduation rates.

□ 1930

Yesterday I attended a screening of the documentary “The Raising of America,” which explained the challenges working families have in raising children and helping them succeed. Even though there is nearly universal understanding of the importance of high-quality, early-learning opportunities, many families are not able to afford or access these opportunities. As the documentary clearly explained, working families are more productive than ever, but our Nation lacks the Federal policies that these families need in order to better balance their work and family responsibilities.

For example, unpredictable, unstable schedules place an undue burden on working families, impacting their ability to maintain child care. We are among the richest nations in the world. The United States is the only such nation that does not provide paid leave to families to invest time in early development of their children. The United States doesn’t even provide universal access to quality, affordable child care. This is simply unacceptable.

The Democrats on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce have been working with our colleagues in the Democratic Caucus on a working families agenda. This agenda supports families by giving them the tools that they need to better balance work and family.

The working families agenda calls for commonsense policies, such as paid sick leave, paid family leave, and access to universal, high-quality child care to help balance work and family responsibilities. In addition, it supports increased wages by calling for an increased minimum wage and legislation to reduce discrimination in the workforce.

But access to high-quality child care is an integral part of the working family’s agenda. In the recently passed spending bill, we increased funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grants by \$326 million. This increase is a strong, positive step in the right direction, but we must build on this effort.

That is because over 20 States cannot serve all of the eligible families, and some States aren’t even accepting eligible participants to sign up on their wait list. Now, we are not talking about whether the child is eligible or not or whether they receive it, but whether a child can even be placed on a wait list to hope for funding.

If we want parents to work and we want children to be able to determine their futures, if we want strong and stable families, we must provide these families with access to high-quality child care and other early-learning opportunities. These efforts are a national priority, and all children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Again, I want to thank you for your leadership for bringing this issue to a Special Order.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Congressman, thank you for taking your time and sharing with us.

We are all familiar with the phrase, “putting your money where your mouth is.” Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago we voted for a bill to fund government programs and extend tax cuts. While that bill was an important step forward compromise, it was far from perfect. It put our environment at risk by selling petroleum overseas and made countless tax breaks for multinational corporations and special interests permanent. Although it did extend programs like the child tax credit, it didn’t do nearly enough to protect working families or ensure a bright future for our Nation. We are in a new year, and we have got a chance for a fresh start, so let’s make affordable child care part of that new start.

Mr. Speaker, I want to switch gears now and discuss an equally important topic that those in control of this House have tried to ignore, a topic that the President took action on this week.

Gun violence is one of the greatest challenges this Nation faces. Over the past 10 years, we have lost more than 100,000 people to guns. Millions more have been victims of assaults, of robberies, and of other crimes where a gun was involved, and many of the individuals in possession of these weapons shouldn’t have had them in the first place.

Three years since Newtown, just over a month since San Bernardino and Colorado Springs, and with the dark memories of shootings of every scale in every city hovering over us constantly, it is time for change. Gun violence in the United States runs the gamut of motivations—from mental illness, to religious extremism, to political extremism, to disastrous accidents—but they all involve a firearm.

Many of these incidents are suicide, but they are all linked by the simple fact that they involve a firearm because in the United States of America a group of ideologues have hidden behind misguided readings of the Constitution and make guns available to everyone imaginable, even folks on the terrorist watch list.

The reality is that gun violence is an epidemic, and the NRA, along with those who blindly follow it, are deeply out of touch. When another tragedy strikes, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle reliably call for moments of silence right here on the floor. While I support remembering victims, I cannot support silence where action is needed. Silence, Mr. Speaker, is what keeps weapons on our streets. Silence is the reason we have lost friends, sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. Silence is why we are the only developed nation in the world with this problem.

The President has put forward a set of executive actions that make sense at the most basic level, from strengthening background checks and bolstering enforcement to improving mental health services and research on gun safety. The simple, commonsense measures President Obama announced this week will save countless lives.

It is now up to us here in Congress to take the baton. Mr. Speaker, it is common sense that someone who is not allowed to fly because they are a suspected terrorist shouldn't be able to get a gun. It is common sense to ensure a standard uniform background check before someone can purchase a weapon. It is common sense that you should have to present identification to buy bullets, and it is time for our colleagues to stand up for common sense.

As the President said, we need to do it with the fierce urgency of now.

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

GUN VIOLENCE AND GUN CONTROL IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New Jersey, and I thank her for guiding us over the past couple of minutes dealing with an important issue.

Let me quickly move us forward because, in just a few minutes, the President of the United States will join with a number of Americans on a very important townhall meeting dealing with the question of this very important issue of gun violence.

Today I rise as the ranking member of the Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, but I rise also, as my col-

league, as a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus that has been at the leadership. I thank both Chairman GRIJALVA and Chairman ELLISON for their leadership and the opportunity for this time.

Again, much was made of the fact that the President, in his last term, or his last year, sought to take on this very complicated issue. Much was made of the fact that the President chose gun violence as something that he took a personal and emotional interest in.

Let me be very clear. There is never a time that is too short a time to confront the horrors of gun violence in this country. Let me give you simply an example of what we face not with adults who have confronted each other with a gun, but toddlers who are getting shot on a weekly basis. For example, a 2-year-old in South Carolina found a gun in the backseat of the car he was riding in and accidentally shot his grandmother, who was sitting in the passenger's seat.

I found at least 43 instances this year of somebody being shot by a toddler 3 or younger. In 31 of these 43 cases, a toddler found a gun and shot himself or herself. These stories are emotional and they are real. In one instance, a 3-year-old managed to wound both of his parents with a single gunshot at an Albuquerque motel. Shootings by toddlers have happened in 24 States so far this year.

There is a story that comes to mind dealing with a little boy, a loving little boy in Kentucky who accidentally shot his 2-year-old sister to death. Why? Because someone gave him a gun made by a manufacturer who made guns for children.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not here to make moral judgments. That is something that I would not do, give a child that is 5 years old a gun. But what I am here to speak to is how we can come together, those who advocate and use guns, those who believe in open carry, those who believe in concealed weapons, those who believe in rifle shooting and deer hunting. All of that is part of the American way. There is no angst with that.

What I am saying and what the President is saying with a tearful, emotional plea that he made just a few days ago is that we in America can do better. The Constitution says we can do better. The Declaration of Independence says we can do better. The First Amendment clearly provides us the access and the rights of free speech and movement, and the Second Amendment is clear that we do have a right to bear arms.

Many of us historically believe that that was, of course, an amendment put in place to protect the beginning Founding Fathers and Mothers, if you will, in these early Colonies and to make sure that they were not overrun by the British. But it is still a standing amendment, and it takes a procedure for it to be undermined, which is the

argument that I make for those who continuously raise the fact that the President and those of us who believe in gun safety or gun regulation—which is not controlled—are, in fact, trying to diminish the Second Amendment. We are not.

But what we are trying to do is to do as the President has suggested: keep guns out of the wrong hands through background checks. For example, unfortunately, the tragedy in South Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina, where a crazed individual wanted to provoke a race war, worshipped with nine parishioners at Mother Emanuel Church, sat and prayed with the pastor, a distinguished senator, and those other loving saints, then sprayed bullets and killed nine of them, that individual had items in his background that should have warranted him not getting a gun.

But what happened under law? The storekeeper, the gunshop owner, after 3 days when that particular affirmation or approval had not come, he gave the gun anyway. Foolish. It is so very foolish. There should be an extensive requirement that there is a background check when you are buying a gun on the Internet or other places we are exchanging guns.

The President recognizes those kind of loopholes and wishes to avoid those kind of loopholes. The ATF is making clear that it doesn't matter where you conduct business—from a store, at a gun show, or over the Internet—if you are in the business of selling firearms, you must get a license and conduct background checks. It baffles me why some people have said that won't make any difference. Yes, it will, because a lot of times in gun shows people who are here to do wrong are, in fact, going to be taking any easy way to get guns.

Let me cite you an example. I always hear that those cities who have rigid gun laws, it doesn't matter. This is the argument I get from my friends in the NRA, and I call them my friends because I hope one day we will sit down at the table of engagement and collaboration because that is the American way.

Let me give you the statistics that make sense. New York has strong gun laws, and Governor Cuomo implemented some stronger gun laws after certain tragedies occurred in his State. But here are the statistics that argue and refute and extinguish the argument of the NRA: 70 percent of the guns recovered by police in New York State in 2013 originated out of the State. The gun laws in New York are working, but because of their neighbors, they are suffering. That is why we need to have a regulated system that doesn't take people's guns away, but provides the safety and security that the American people determine.

I didn't say, Mr. Speaker, that 70 percent of the guns found in the hands of law-abiding citizens were from out of State. I said 70 percent of the guns that the New York City, NYPD, that has a