

could become the Atatürk for the world to bring about that bridge between the Muslim world and the Christian world and the West.

If we fail in that effort to do that outreach and tie these bonds together, these bonds that go back through history, a long ways back, Mr. Speaker, if we fail, then I am afraid there will be a tremendous amount of bloodshed.

If we succeed, I believe we can eliminate and forestall a significant amount of bloodshed and bridge over this division that is coming at us. And he deserves and needs our help to defend himself from terrorists that are attacking from all directions, from Sinai and everywhere else.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence here tonight.

I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and add any extraneous material relevant to the subject matter of this discussion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege for me to rise today and to co-anchor, along with my distinguished colleague from the great State of Ohio, Representative JOYCE BEATTY, this CBC Special Order hour, this hour of power.

Once again, we are privileged to take to the floor of the people's House to discuss an issue that should be relevant to every Member of this institution on behalf of the 320 million-plus Americans that we represent in this great country, and that is the gun violence epidemic.

America has 5 percent of the world's population, but 50 percent of the world's guns. It is estimated that there are more than 300 million guns in circulation throughout this country. So it seems to me reasonable that we would do everything possible to ensure that not a single one of those guns finds themselves in the hands of individuals who would do us harm. And that in many ways is what President Obama has done as it relates to his most recent executive action.

So today members of the Congressional Black Caucus will come to the House floor to discuss those executive actions, discuss the issue of gun violence, discuss the steps that we should be taking, here in this Chamber, in order to keep the people of America that we all collectively represent safe.

It is now my honor and my privilege to yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio

(Mrs. BEATTY), my classmate and my co-anchor for this CBC Special Order hour. I look forward to anchoring with her throughout the entire year. She has been a tremendous champion for working families, for the middle class, for small-business owners and, of course, for the young people who are ravaged in our communities all across this country by gun violence.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening proud to stand with my Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour co-anchor, Congressman JEFFRIES, from the Eighth Congressional District of New York.

Mr. JEFFRIES, it is my honor to stand here today as we undertake an urgent dialogue on how we, as elected Representatives of the people, can work together to end gun violence.

I look forward to engaging with Congressman JEFFRIES and our Congressional Black Caucus colleagues in scholarly debate on the issues plaguing African Americans, African American communities, and to develop solutions to the problems our constituents face.

As the conscience of the Congress, the Congressional Black Caucus will remain on the forefront of issues that affect Black Americans in particular, and the Nation, in general. For tonight, our anchor, Congressman JEFFRIES, has pointed out the CBC will continue to shed light on the epidemic of gun violence, standing our ground, ending gun violence in America.

Mr. Speaker, last week we opened the Second Session of the 114th Congress. Four hundred thirty-five of us traveled back to Washington ready to serve our constituents and work for the betterment of our Nation.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, whatever spirit of bipartisanship may have been present at the end of 2015 as Republicans and Democrats worked together on key pieces of legislation has disappeared at the precise time our Nation is calling on Congress to pass commonsense legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

We find ourselves confronted with startling statistics that no Nation should endure. Let me just take a moment to share just a few.

We know that the impact of gun violence affects every community and every congressional district. However, African American children and teens are 17 times more likely to die from gun homicide than White youth, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While African Americans make up 15 percent of youth in America, African Americans accounted for 45 percent of children and teen gun deaths in 2010.

According to Everytown for Gun Safety, 88 Americans die every day from gun violence, Mr. Speaker. Roughly 50 percent of those killed are African American men, who comprise just 6 percent of the population. Homicide is the primary cause of death among African Americans ages 15-24.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers should be unthinkable, unimaginable, but

they are the unfortunate reality in which African American communities live. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, whose legacy we honor next Monday, he said: We find ourselves "confronted with the fierce urgency of now." And Mr. Speaker, it is now that our Nation is in an urgent crisis, yet we are trapped in congressional inaction. Shameful.

So our President decided he would not stand by idly while Congress did nothing to prevent another Newtown, another Charleston, other Tucson. With tears in his eyes, he reflected on the senseless killings caused by gun violence over the course of his administration. President Obama announced new executive actions to confront the epidemic of gun violence in America.

While mocked by some Republicans for showing emotion at the loss of so many lives, I am here to say I proudly stand with my President on the actions he has taken to prevent gun violence in America.

These executive actions will save lives and make the country safer without infringing on law-abiding individuals' rights to firearms.

You will hear from our colleagues tonight talking about the President's actions. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues and to address gun violence.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Representative BEATTY, for laying out the case in such an eloquent and compelling fashion, and pointing out that, with respect to gun safety and gun violence prevention in America, it is long past time when we act with the fierce urgency of now.

Tens of thousands of Americans have died as a result of gun violence since the moment you and I first set foot in this institution, and not a single thing has been done by the House of Representatives to prevent those deaths. That is shameful, as you have pointed out, and we need a change of course.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), the ranking member, lead Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, once, of course, chaired by the legendary Adam Clayton Powell, and Representative SCOTT has continued in that tremendous visionary tradition.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York and the gentlewoman from Ohio for organizing tonight's Special Order to focus on the toll that gun violence has taken on communities across America and, especially, the disproportionate impact it has had within communities of color.

Tonight's conversation comes at an important time. On average, every day more than 30 people are killed by firearms, many in mass murders.

Now, rather than do what they say is celebrate the problem, I want to talk about solutions. Last Tuesday, the President announced the executive actions that his administration will take

to prevent gun violence. I commend the President for taking this action, in light of the current congressional leadership's refusal to responsibly address this epidemic.

These executive actions will ensure stronger enforcement of current laws and will reduce the number of lives lost to gun violence. To begin with, the President's executive actions will narrow the "gun show" and Internet loopholes by actually enforcing licensing requirements for gun dealers and overhauling the background check system to make it more effective and efficient.

Under current law, only licensed gun dealers are required to perform criminal background checks for all gun sales, and only those individuals deemed to be "engaged in the business" of dealing in guns are required to obtain a license from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the ATF.

The executive actions make it clear that the commonsense proposition that anyone making a profit from the sale of guns, or who regularly makes gun sales or earns a livelihood from gun sales, is, in fact, engaged in the business and therefore must obtain a license and conduct required criminal background checks, even if those sales occur at gun shows or over the Internet.

□ 2030

The question of whether someone is engaged in business will be determined by normal legal standards as opposed to people just declaring themselves to be exempt, which is going on now. Some of these people are even making a living selling firearms. They need to get a license. This is the present law, and the President has said that he will enforce it.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, as part of executive actions, will overhaul its National Instant Criminal Background Check System, the NICS system, to make it more effective and efficient by hiring more than 230 additional examiners and other staff so that the Bureau can process background checks 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and improve its notification of local authorities when prohibited persons unlawfully attempt to purchase a gun.

These people are currently breaking the law when they illegally try to buy a firearm, and local law enforcement officials need to be informed. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, this system has already caught more than 2 million people trying to buy guns illegally, and they need to be held accountable for breaking the law.

Furthermore, dealers will also be required to notify law enforcement if their guns are lost or stolen in transit. This transparency and accountability will ensure that law enforcement will be notified and can begin investigations when these losses occur.

Executive actions will also leverage the buying power of the Department of

Defense, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security to conduct or sponsor research into gun technology. When the Federal Government begins buying guns using that kind of technology, it will make it more likely that this technology will be used. There is technology that makes it impossible for anyone other than the true owner to use weapons, and the more purchases the Federal Government makes, the more likely it is that technology will actually be installed in future weapons.

The President has also directed the departments to review the availability of smart gun technology on a regular basis and to explore potential ways to further its use and to encourage research to more broadly improve gun safety.

The President's plan also proposes a new \$500 million investment to increase access to mental health treatment to ensure that people who need help do not fall through the cracks of the mental health system. This is in addition to the huge increases in mental health funding under the Affordable Care Act. Mental health services are considered essential services, and so now virtually all health insurance policies include mental health coverage.

While modest and within the President's executive authority, these executive actions will go a long way in keeping guns out of the hands of people who never should be able to purchase them in the first place. But that is executive action. Congress needs to act so that more can be done to actually protect citizens from gun violence.

The House Democratic Gun Violence Prevention Task Force has consistently reiterated that Washington has a moral obligation to do something to address our Nation's gun violence epidemic. The most effective way to address this epidemic is through comprehensive, evidence-based policy proposals.

Our task force has put forth several proposals that will go a long way in achieving these goals. These proposals include reinstating and strengthening the assault weapon ban, reducing the size of magazines, implementing universal background checks, cracking down on illegal gun trafficking and straw purchases, improving our mental health system, and implementing comprehensive, locally tailored, evidence-based violence prevention and intervention programs.

The gentleman from California, Representative MIKE THOMPSON, is the chair of the House Democratic Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, and he has introduced a resolution to establish a select committee of the House to study gun violence. That resolution is cosponsored by Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI and 11 coauthors of the task force. The proposed select committee would be comprised of six Republicans and six Democrats who would study the research and issue a final report and recommendations, in-

cluding legislative proposals, within 60 days of its establishment.

It would study and make recommendations to address many issues, including the causes of mass shootings, methods to improve the Federal firearms purchaser background check system, connections between access to firearms and dangerously mentally ill individuals, Federal penalties for trafficking and straw purchasing of firearms, loopholes that allow some domestic abusers continued access to firearms, linkages between firearms and suicide, gun violence's effect on public health, the correlation between State gun violence prevention laws and the incidence of gun violence, the importance of having reliable, accurate information on gun violence and its toll on our Nation, the implementation of effective gun violence prevention laws in accordance with the Second Amendment to our Constitution, and the rates of gun violence in large metropolitan areas.

Mr. Speaker, by taking a deliberate, research-based approach to gun violence, treating it as we would a public health challenge, we can significantly reduce the ravages of gun violence.

The President is limited by his executive authority on what alone he can do to address this epidemic. Long-term reforms can only be achieved through congressional action. I hope that the leadership of the Congress will follow the President's lead and act in a bipartisan basis to address this critical issue using public health strategies and evidence-based proposals.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York and the gentlelady from Ohio for coordinating this Special Order.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Representative SCOTT, for laying out the steps that are being taken by the President in such a compelling way in explaining why they are items that we should all support as well as some of the steps that need to be taken legislatively by this Congress in order to deal with the fact that more than 10,000 Americans a year die as a result of gun violence-related homicides.

I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE). She is an incredibly eloquent and passionate voice for the voiceless. We appreciate her service here in the Congress not just on behalf of the district that she represents in northern California, but certainly on behalf of the people of the United States of America. I yield now to Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. First, let me thank the gentleman from New York for those very kind remarks. But also I want to thank you and Congresswoman BEATTY for organizing this very important Special Order and for your tremendous leadership, Congressman JEFFRIES and Congresswoman BEATTY, on ensuring public safety.

Your leadership, both Congresswoman BEATTY and Congressman

JEFFRIES, has been bold, it has been visionary, not just as the result of the very recent tragedies but for many, many years even before both of you came to Congress. So it is an honor serving with both of you in this body. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak this evening.

Also, I want to just thank Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY, who is the vice chair on the Gun Violence Task Force. She also chairs the CBC's Health Braintrust.

I thank you for your tireless work to ensure that gun violence is treated as a public health problem, which it is.

Madam Speaker, I rise this evening with my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus to call on Congress to do something—to do something—about the epidemic of gun violence that is harming our communities.

Since the start of the year—just 11 days ago—nine of my constituents have already become victims of gun violence, including an elementary school teacher and an innocent mother pushing her child in a stroller. Just this weekend alone my community suffered three gun homicides. My thoughts are with the victims' family at this very terribly difficult time. We have to do something. Enough is enough.

Congress can and must do more to stop this senseless violence. Whether it is Charleston, Oak Creek, Sandy Hook, the streets of Oakland or wherever, too many people have already lost their lives, too many families have buried loved ones, and too many lives have been changed forever because of catastrophic injuries as a result of gun violence.

Madam Speaker, now is the time for action. Our constituents are demanding action. The country is demanding action. I have received hundreds of calls and emails from my constituents, and I know other Members are also hearing from their constituents. They are calling for action as well.

Earlier today in my own District, Oakland City Council President Lynette Gibson McElehany buried her grandson, 17-year-old Torian Hughes, who was shot and killed during a robbery just days before Christmas. This has been a very difficult period for Council Member McElehany and her family. So in addition to our prayers not only for my council member's family, but for all of those in our country who have been victims of gun violence, we must do something. We must do something in all of their memory.

Let me be clear. Congress can no longer ignore the massive toll that this epidemic is having on our constituents, their families, and communities. Last week we joined with our colleagues and millions of Americans in applauding President Obama's actions to reduce gun violence in our Nation. Thanks to the President's leadership, there will be more background checks, better enforcement of existing gun laws, improved mental health services, and new

research on how to end this epidemic of gun violence.

But more action is needed to stop the more than 30,000 gun deaths that occur in our Nation each and every year. Congress must pass commonsense gun reform, like closing the gun show loophole, bipartisan measures that are supported by the vast majority of Americans and gun owners. Congress must also fund the expansion of mental health services.

But this should not be an excuse, of course, to do nothing on gun safety. We have got to provide the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives the resources it needs to enforce our Nation's gun laws.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I have fought along with my colleagues to get these vital public safety resources in the appropriations bills which keep our communities safe. We must also end the extreme data restrictions that restrict law enforcement's ability to protect public safety and prevent policymakers from addressing gun violence as a public health issue.

That is why I introduced last year H.R. 1449, the Tiahrt Restrictions Repeal Act, which would repeal the data restrictions on gun sales and background checks. These data restrictions are commonly called the Tiahrt restrictions. They prevent data on gun background checks from being released to the public.

These provisions currently impede public safety by requiring the National Criminal Background Check System records to be destroyed—mind you, destroyed—within 24 hours, prohibiting the ATF from requiring licensed dealers to conduct annual inventory checks to detect lost or stolen firearms and restricting local and State law enforcement from using trace data to fully investigate corrupt dealers and traffickers.

This is outrageous. We have got to restrict and repeal these Tiahrt amendments right away. It will help tackle the bad apple gun dealers who provide dangerous weapons to criminals. It is estimated that just 5 percent of sellers supply the weapons used in nearly 90 percent of gun crimes. The Tiahrt restrictions block access to vital data that lawmakers, law enforcement, and Federal agencies need to tackle gun violence in our community.

Of course, many of us are proud to support Congresswoman KELLY's bill, which would allow the Surgeon General to study gun violence as a public health issue and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to regulate firearms.

Madam Speaker, the time for action is now. Let's start listening to the American people and insist that Congress do something. It is really disingenuous to criticize the President for issuing commonsense gun safety measures when we have been trying for years in this body—for years—to get these sensible bills passed. The Speak-

er should allow these and many other bills to come to the floor so that Congress can act. No more excuses.

We should support Congressman THOMPSON's proposal to establish the select committee on gun violence. The Speaker should do this now. So we can't continue to really allow the misinformation to get out about Congress. We need to do our job. We have been trying, many of us, the Congressional Black Caucus and others, especially Democrats, for many years to try to get the Speaker to bring these bills to the floor.

So what did the President do? He had to do something. But no more excuses. Congress needs to act. So I thank Congresswoman BEATTY and Congressman JEFFRIES for this very important Special Order hour and for your tremendous leadership.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Again, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from California for her wonderful remarks, observations, and, of course, her support for the President's executive actions on gun safety, making it clear that the President was left with no choice but to act.

Tens of thousands of Americans die each and every year either as it relates to homicide or suicide through a firearm, and nothing was happening here in the United States Congress. The classic definition of legislative insanity is to do the same exact thing, which in this instance is nothing, and expect that things were going to change for the safety and the well-being of the American people. That is why we are here on the floor today expressing strong support for the President's executive actions and pushing this institution to do more and finish the job that the President of the United States of America started.

□ 2045

It is now my honor and privilege to yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Houston (Ms. JACKSON LEE), a forceful advocate and the lead Democrat on the relevant committee on the House Judiciary side of the equation as it relates to criminal justice, reform, and gun safety. She, of course, has been a tremendous champion for the people that she serves down in H-Town, as well as across the country.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the gentleman from New York for yielding.

As has been stated by my colleagues, I want to add my applause as well for the thoughtfulness of the gentleman's leadership on a number of issues, but certainly on his pronounced leadership on criminal justice reform and on the Judiciary Committee; and then to be joined by former leader of the Ohio State Legislature—and she has not forgotten her talents of leadership—and that is Congresswoman JOYCE BEATTY who joins us, if I might put words in both your mouths, with a sense of outrage about where we are today. I say that because I would like to stand here

with an enormous amount of outrage for where we are and why we are here.

I want to add my appreciation to the Congressional Black Caucus, the chairman, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, and, of course, Congresswoman Dr. KELLY, who has been a great leader on the issues dealing with health care. I just want to cite to her, a lady that came to this Congress more than a decade ago, Deborah Prothrow-Stith. You may have read her writings. She pronounced during that time that gun violence was a health crisis. That was so many years ago. Unfortunately, with all of her expert writings, we still couldn't get movement.

I am going to take a slightly different perspective. If I could just take these few moments to give you an anecdotal story, which many of you might find absolutely with a great deal of shock, if you will. That is the limit to which gun rights advocates mislead the American people on any ideas for gun safety or gun regulation as taking guns away.

I was in a meeting where someone was trying to understand why President Obama in his excellent presentation about securing America and protecting our children from gun violence was being associated with the idea of taking over 345 million guns. This is what is represented to be President Obama's message. He will confiscate, through his process of gun testing or making sure that there are background checks for everyone, that he wants to confiscate 345 million guns, which has been determined to be located in 65 million places here in the United States.

Can I, in a public forum on this august floor of the House, say that we, as Members of Congress—and I think Republicans will admit this—have no evidence, no documentation, that the White House intends to confiscate guns—no manner of level of increased ATF officers could ever do that—why this mischaracterization is here.

But listen to this. Gun rights advocates have made a lot of claims over the years that the Second Amendment they interpret means that they can buy any gun they want and take it pretty much anywhere. Well, basically, that does exist, except for the basic constraint of background checks, which now the President has expanded to ensure that if you are in a gun show—this is a gun show loophole—and you are sitting next to the stall of a licensed gun person and you are in the business of selling guns, why shouldn't you be either licensed or require, basically, background checks?

But listen to this. In an ongoing legal battle in Florida, they lay claim to a newfangled Second Amendment right: the right not to have anyone talk to gun owners about their guns. Specifically, gun advocates don't want doctors discussing guns or the potential harms that guns may cause with their patients.

While mere talk about guns might seem to have nothing to do with the

right to keep or bear arms, the advocates contend that the Constitution is on their side. Last month, for the third time in the same suit, a Federal court of appeals agreed. This is very bizarre. The case is filed under the name of *Wollschlaeger v. Governor of the State of Florida*, although First and Second Amendment buffs may recognize it under the cutesy nickname *Docs v. Glocks*.

It started when some gun owners and the National Rifle Association told Florida legislators that their doctors were harassing them by asking about gun safety—by asking about gun safety. The legislators responded by passing a law that bars healthcare workers from discussing or recording anything about their patients' gun ownership or safety practices that could be deemed in bad faith, irrelevant, or harassing.

Twelve other States are thinking about it, and now we have the Privacy of Firearm Owners Act. This is in the face of a number of homicides in this country. Let me cite to my colleagues that America is the number one country out of Western nations that has the highest number of cases of homicide by firearm per 100,000. The closest that comes to them is 0.7 by Italy. Then Taiwan, Canada, and Spain, 0.2; Germany, 0.2.

All the news stories that we see on violent disruptions in various places and protests, their numbers of gun violence, of homicides, is miniscule: Australia, 0.1; UK, 0.1; France, 0.1; South Korea, 0.03; and finally Japan, 0.01. If that doesn't get our attention, I don't know what does.

Then look at this map; 353 mass shootings in America in 2015. My colleague can see, is this anything to be proud of? Mass shootings not by knives, not by throwing stones, but by guns. This is what America is to the world: a sea of red of mass shootings, so much so that you can't even see background in some of the parts of this Nation. Yet there are laws that are being passed to stop health professionals from asking whether you have guns that might, in fact, endanger your children or yourselves.

On average, more than 100,000 people in the United States are shot in murders, assaults, and other crimes. More than 32,000 people die from gun violence, including 2,677 children under the age of 18. Gun deaths, justified versus criminal: studies also found that for every 1 justified homicide in the United States involving a gun, guns were used in 44 criminal homicides. In all of our communities, we see young Black men being felled by gun violence, young people in our communities being felled by gun violence, or innocent storekeepers being felled by gun violence, or in the instance of the Philadelphia police officer.

All of us respect the dangers of law enforcement, recognizing that we can work together by building prepared and trained law enforcement officers to avoid the violence with guns. But in

the instance of this individual, who point-blank shot at an officer with a gun, who has now been determined possibly to have heard voices, though he said he was inspired by ISIS, again, someone wanted to suggest that it wasn't anything that Obama could have done. It was a stolen police gun and it is out on the streets. Obviously, we don't have enough people enforcing against the trafficking of stolen guns.

Mass shootings. The U.S. has a far higher number of mass shootings than any others I have indicated.

Mental health. Approximately one in four American adults have a mental illness. Every time we hear of these mass shootings, the defense comes, which they have a right, to talk about this person's severe criminal mental illness condition.

Guns in suicide is the leading cause of related deaths in America. More than 60 percent of deaths by guns in the country are the result of individuals using these weapons intending to commit suicide—not knives, not stones, not even poison or an overdose on drugs—guns. Guns and domestic violence provide a deadly outcome.

Law enforcement killed by guns: each year hundreds of law enforcement officers lose their lives in gun violence having been shot to death while protecting their communities. Of course, we know that we have experienced tragic incidences under the authority of law where people have been killed, and the community is over the top in frustration.

Background checks save lives. The tragedy at Mother Emanuel is the individual went to buy guns and the store owner said it is taking too long.

I support President Obama's very astute and thoughtful approach. Out of that, I am very glad to have introduced two initiatives. One, H.R. 4315, Mental Health Access and Gun Violence Prevention Act, which is a capture of President Obama's, along with KAREN BASS. I urge my colleagues to sign on to H.R. 4315, which authorizes \$500 million for health treatment access and to assist in the reporting of relevant disqualifying mental health information to the FBI background check system, NICS—not to violate the privacy, but to give more information to the database, because that certainly would be part of saving lives.

As I conclude, H.R. 4316, that I am pleased to have Congresswoman KELLY join me in this, the Gun Violence Reduction Resources Act, authorizes the hiring of 200 additional ATF agents, the very point of which my Republican friends are saying, but yet they are condemning what the President has offered.

I would say to my colleagues in closing, if we don't do this for any other reason, to take and codify the President's initiatives on NICS or data collection, on research regarding safer guns, on background checks or closing the gun show loophole, if we don't do it, we should do it for the children.

From December 2012 to December 2013, at least 100 children were killed in unintentional shootings, almost two every week, 61 percent higher than Federal data reflect. About two-thirds of these unintended deaths, at 65 percent, took place in the home or vehicle that belonged to the victim's family, most often with the guns that were legally owned but not secured.

I remind you of that Supreme Court challenge or that law in Florida where doctors can't secure information to protect the patients or the children of these families. More than two-thirds of these tragedies could be avoided if gun owners stored their guns responsibly and prevented children from accessing them.

I have introduced legislation on gun storage—I call it safety and responsibility—but yet, unfortunately, it is perceived as attacking the Second Amendment.

My good friend from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES), let me thank you for yielding. Allow me to just leave us with the point that, as the Congressional Black Caucus stands on the floor, we need partners in doing the right thing. I hope before the President leaves office, he will have the opportunity to reasonably and rationally sign bills that will save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES (D-NY) and Congresswoman JOYCE BEATTY (D-OH) who are anchoring this Special Order on Ending Gun Violence in America.

Gun violence in America can no longer be swept under the rug, ignored or irrationally justified.

We are in a state of national crisis and it is time to act.

Upon taking office, every Member of Congress makes a solemn pledge: to protect and defend the American people.

This is the most important oath we take as elected officials—and, to honor this promise, we must do everything in our power to stem gun violence in our nation.

Yet, after another mass shooting and countless acts of gun violence in communities across our country every day, House Republicans are still unwilling to act to stop gun violence and save lives in American communities.

The Democrats have been calling for an immediate vote on the bipartisan King-Thompson Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act to strengthen the life-saving background checks that keep guns out of the wrong hands.

This Congress has a moral obligation to do our part to end the gun violence epidemic.

Now is the time for Republicans to join Democrats in protecting the lives of Americans by taking common sense steps to save lives.

The Administration has announced two new executive actions that will help strengthen the federal background check system and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

I have introduced two bills that will hopefully enhance these executive actions and support the President's recently announced action on gun violence.

H.R. 4315—Mental Health Access and Gun Violence Prevention Act—authorizes \$500 mil-

lion for mental health treatment access and to assist in the reporting of relevant disqualifying mental health information to the FBI's background check system NICS.

H.R. 4316—Gun Violence Reduction Resources Act—authorizes the hiring of 200 additional ATF agents and investigators for enforcement of existing gun laws. The President included these specific requests in yesterday's announcements and these bills respond to those requests.

Additionally, the Department of Justice (DOJ) is proposing a regulation to clarify who is prohibited from possessing a firearm under federal law for reasons related to mental health.

And the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is issuing a proposed regulation to address barriers preventing states from submitting limited information on those persons to the federal background check system.

Ending gun violence in America requires a comprehensive approach—we must come together and work towards this common goal.

Too many Americans have been severely injured or lost their lives as a result of gun violence.

While the vast majority of Americans who experience a mental illness are not violent.

However, in some cases when persons with a mental illness does not receive the treatment they need, the result can be tragedies such as homicide or suicide.

We must continue to address mental health issues by:

Supporting expanded coverage of mental health services and enhanced training and hiring of mental health professionals; and

Continuing the national conversation on mental health to reduce stigma associated with having a mental illness and getting help; and

We must also continue to do everything we can to making sure that anyone who may pose a danger to themselves or others does not have access to a gun.

The federal background check system is one of the most effective ways of assuring that such individuals are not able to purchase a firearm from a licensed gun dealer.

To date, background checks have prevented over two million guns from falling into the wrong hands.

The Administration's two new executive actions will help ensure that better and more reliable information makes its way into the background check system.

The Administration, however, has acknowledged the need for collective action and continues to call upon Members of Congress to pass common-sense gun safety legislation and to expand funding to increase access to mental health services.

I too call upon my colleagues to come together and pass legislation that will help stop the loss of innocent lives.

While we have made some progress in strengthening the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which is used to run background checks on those who buy guns from federally licensed gun dealers to make sure they are not prohibited by law from owning a firearm, we must do more.

I am a strong supporter of a right of privacy and I am particularly sensitive and protective of patient privacy rights.

I support the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that was passed by Congress in 1996, and includes privacy pro-

tection for medical records, which includes mental healthcare information.

However, there are specific areas under federal law that allow the disclosure of medical information to authorities, and in these instances there should be an agreement that when a person poses a threat to themselves or others (as determined by a court or adjudicative authority with the medical and legal knowledge and authority to make a determination that a person poses a threat to themselves or to others) should not be allowed to purchase a fire arm.

Technology that could be deployed to access court records and arrest records as they relate to mental health and violent behavior should not rely upon a list that may become out dated or could be used in ways that are not consistent with the intent of enhancing gun safety.

The ability to access information that is accurate and available for the limited purpose of affirming or rejecting a request to purchase a firearm without indicating the source of the decision or the reason for the rejection would still protect privacy rights while also protecting the public.

The president's proposal on mental health and gun violence is to enforce the laws already in place.

Under a federal law enacted in 1968, an individual is prohibited from buying or possessing firearms for life if he/she has been "adjudicated as a mental defective" or "committed to a mental institution."

A person is "adjudicated as a mental defective" if a court—or other entity having legal authority to make adjudications—has made a determination that an individual, as a result of mental illness: 1) Is a danger to himself or to others; 2) Lacks the mental capacity to contract or manage his own affairs; 3) Is found insane by a court in a criminal case, or incompetent to stand trial, or not guilty by reason of lack of mental responsibility pursuant to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

A person is "committed to a mental institution" if that person has been involuntarily committed to a mental institution by a court or other lawful authority. This expressly excludes voluntary commitment.

It should be noted, however, that federal law currently allows states to establish procedures for mentally ill individuals to restore their right to possess and purchase firearms (many states have done so at the behest of the National Rifle Association, with questionable results).

It is undoubtedly true that people who are a danger to self and/or others because of mental illness should be prohibited from owning firearms.

It is less clear, however, how to tailor new policies to better protect the American public while at the same time avoiding the stigmatization of Americans with mental illness.

Any strategy to address the lethal intersection between guns and mental illness should focus on the key facts:

On average, more than 100,000 people in America are shot in murders, assaults, and other crimes.

More than 32,000 people die from gun violence annually, including 2,677 children under the age of eighteen years old.

Suicide is the leading cause of gun related deaths in America.

60 percent of deaths by guns in America are the result of individuals using these weapons as a means to commit suicide.

Some of these deaths might have been prevented if there were adequate background checks.

Each year hundreds of law enforcement officers lose their lives to gun violence been shot to death protecting their communities.

Millions of guns are sold every year in “no questions asked” transactions and experts estimate that 40 percent of guns now sold in America are done so without a background check.

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was created in 1998 to require potential gun buyers to pass an instant screening at the point of purchase.

Ensures that purchasers are not felons, domestic abusers, mentally ill, etc.

NICS has blocked sales to more than 2 million prohibited people.

NICS stops 170 felons and 53 domestic abusers from purchasing guns every day.

The most serious issue facing NICS is the “private sale loophole”.

This allows anyone who is not a federally-licensed dealer to sell guns without a background check.

An estimated 40% of gun transfers—6.6 million transfers—are conducted without a background check.

Armslist.com is the largest online seller of firearms.

66,000 gun ads are posted by private sellers on a given day, 750,000 per year.

Nearly 1/3rd of gun ads on Armslist.com are posted by high-volume unlicensed sellers (approx. 4,218 people).

High-volume sellers posted 29% of the gun ads.

High-volume sellers posted 36,069 gun ads over 2 months.

This would equate to around 243,800 guns each year by unlicensed sellers.

50% were familiar with federal laws but decided they didn't apply to them.

1/3rd of “want-to-buy” ads are posted by people with a criminal record.

More than 4 times the rate at which prohibited gun buyers try to buy guns in stores.

Approximately 25,000 guns are in illegal hands.

[From Slate, Jan. 8, 2016]

THE ABSURD LOGIC BEHIND FLORIDA'S DOCS
VS. GLOCKS LAW

THE SECOND AMENDMENT TRUMPS ALL OTHER
AMENDMENTS

(By Dahlia Lithwick and Sonja West)

Gun-rights advocates have made a lot of claims over the years about the broad scope of their constitutional rights. They say, in effect, that the Second Amendment means they can buy virtually any gun they want and take it pretty much anywhere. But in an ongoing legal battle in Florida, they lay claim to a newfangled Second Amendment right—the right not to have anyone talk to gun owners about their guns. Specifically, gun advocates don't want doctors discussing guns, or the potential harms those guns may cause, with their patients.

And while mere talk about guns might seem to have nothing to do with the right to keep or bear arms, the advocates contend that the Constitution is on their side. Last month, for the third time in the same suit, a federal court of appeals agreed.

This very bizarre case is filed under the name of *Wollschlaeger v. Governor of the State of Florida*, although First and Second amendment buffs may recognize it under the cutesy nickname *Docs vs. Glock*s. It started

when some gun owners (and the National Rifle Association) told Florida legislators that their doctors were harassing them by asking about gun safety.

The legislators responded by passing a law that bars health care workers from discussing or recording anything about their patients' gun ownership or safety practices that could be deemed in bad faith, irrelevant, or harassing. (Twelve other states have considered enacting similar legislation, but only Florida has actually passed such a law.)

The result was the Firearms Owners' Privacy Act. The law provides that licensed health care practitioners and facilities: “may not intentionally enter” information concerning a patient's ownership of firearms into the patient's medical record that the practitioner knows is “not relevant to the patient's medical care or safety, or the safety of others,” and “shall respect a patient's right to privacy and should refrain” from inquiring as to whether a patient or their family owns firearms, unless the practitioner or facility believes in good faith that the “information is relevant to the patient's medical care or safety, or the safety of others.” Violations of the act could lead to disciplinary action including fines and suspension, or revocation of a medical license. Proponents of such laws say these doctor-patient dialogues violate the patients' Second Amendment rights.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for the tremendous work you continue to do on the Judiciary Committee. I look forward to partnering with you.

As you point out, the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms. It should not protect the ability of others to utilize weapons, often of mass destruction, in doing harm to Americans without a license or any legal bases for doing so. All we want is rational gun safety and gun violence prevention. I look forward to continuing to work with you in that regard.

It is now my honor and privilege to yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY), one of my classmates. She has been a tremendous and forceful advocate for gun violence prevention measures, not only as the chair of the CBC Health Braintrust, for which she has been tireless on so many different issues, but also in her capacity within the House Democratic Caucus, as well as a chair of the CBC Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, someone who stood up countless times for the children in Chicago and the many others who have been dealing with unacceptable levels of gun violence.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I thank my good friends, the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) for this important Special Order hour tonight.

Congressman JEFFRIES, you have chaired these Special Order hours for the Congressional Black Caucus in my first term, so it is good to see you back in the driver's seat with our classmate, Representative BEATTY.

Last year, I had the privilege of leading the Special Order hour with our colleague, the Honorable DONALD PAYNE of New Jersey. In the course of that year, we came to this floor to re-

flect on gun violence on one too many occasions because it is an epidemic in communities across the country.

In fact, we are 11 days into 2016, and there have already been 80 shootings in my hometown of Chicago. Four people were shot and killed in less than 24 hours.

I applaud President Obama's bold executive action that has been talked about tonight. I believe these policies will keep guns out of the hands of criminals and dangerous individuals.

If you listen to some, they will say they are trying to take our guns. There is nothing in the executive action that says that. The opposition is pushing fear, not fact.

With over 30 Americans killed by guns every single day inaction is not an option.

□ 2100

In my nearly 3 years in Congress, the majority party has refused to do anything on gun violence—not one hearing, not a single vote. To right what Congress has, unfortunately, made wrong, President Obama did what was necessary to address the threat to our long-term national security and economic stability. While we can't stop every criminal from committing every crime, we can take actions that will save lives.

While President Obama's executive actions are crucial steps in reducing the senseless gun violence that is plaguing our Nation, they do not absolve Congress of its moral responsibility to act. There are gaps in existing gun laws that leave us all vulnerable to gun violence. These holes are ones that only Congress can plug.

I have two commonsense bills that will complement President Obama's executive actions and that will help bring a reduction in firearm mortality.

The first bill, H.R. 224, the Recognizing Gun Violence as a Public Health Emergency Act, would require the Surgeon General to submit an annual report to Congress on the public health impact of gun violence. The bill currently has 135 cosponsors, and I hope that this commonsense proposal can get an up-or-down vote this year.

Also, I recently introduced H.R. 225, the Firearm Safety Act, which would close the loophole which prevents the Consumer Product Safety Commission from creating rules regarding the safety of firearms.

Quite simply, if the Consumer Product Safety Commission can regulate teddy bears, bicycle helmets, and car seats, it should be able to regulate firearms. Simply improving safety lock quality and improving storage safety will reduce accidents, misfires, and will prevent theft, saving thousands of lives.

Senseless gun violence has been plaguing our Nation for far too long. It is simply unacceptable in the United States of America that gun violence is the leading cause of death for people under 24. It is time for us to come together to end the gun violence that is

taking a generation of young Americans.

I often ask: Just how many and just who has to die before we take action?

I urge my colleagues to attend a funeral to see and to feel the hurt and loss. Your standing for moments of silence and then your sitting in silence does nothing to deal with this issue. Let's stop the hypocrisy and take action and save lives.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman, my good friend from Illinois, for the very powerful presentation and for her steadfast leadership.

Madam Speaker, one of the reasons we believe that Members of Congress need to act is that State laws are so inconsistent from one jurisdiction to the other.

In New York, we experience gun violence in certain communities at unprecedented levels notwithstanding the fact that we have tremendously significant and robust gun violence prevention measures in place.

But the overwhelming majority of guns used to commit crimes in the Brooklyn communities, represented by me and YVETTE CLARKE, actually come from the neighboring States of Pennsylvania as well as up the I-95 corridor from States in the Deep South.

Chicago, as ROBIN KELLY has indicated, has been experiencing unprecedented levels of gun violence. Illinois actually has pretty robust gun safety-gun violence prevention laws on the books, but the overwhelming majority of guns used to commit crimes in Chicago come from the neighboring States of Indiana and Wisconsin, which have lax laws.

Out in south central Los Angeles, the situation has gotten better over the last decade or so. California has pretty strong gun safety-gun violence prevention laws. The overwhelming majority of guns used to commit crimes in south central Los Angeles and in east LA actually come from the neighboring State of Arizona. That is why we need Congress to act in order to deal with what is a national problem.

Madam Speaker, it is now my great honor and privilege to yield to my good friend and colleague, my sister from the neighboring congressional district of mine and who has been such a forceful advocate on behalf of the communities that she represents in Brooklyn, the distinguished gentlewoman from the Ninth Congressional District of New York, Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Let me first start by thanking my brother from the neighboring district in Brooklyn, New York (Mr. JEFFRIES), alongside my sister from Ohio, Mrs. JOYCE BEATTY, for their leadership in our Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour, discussing gun violence and gun safety measures.

Let me also commend the Honorable ROBIN KELLY of Illinois for her leadership in doing the work that she is

doing not only with our Health Braintrust, but by being an outspoken and forceful advocate for the end to gun violence not only for her district in Chicago, Illinois, but for all communities across this Nation.

Madam Speaker, gun violence in the United States has reached epic proportions in the 21st century. The death, the trauma, the devastation that we are witnessing can no longer be tolerated. Congress must act now.

Over the past decade in America, more than 100,000 people have been killed as a result of gun violence and millions more have been maimed by the reckless and unlawful discharging of firearms.

I applaud President Barack Obama for taking this historic executive action to address gun violence in our Nation. These actions will save lives and will make America a safer place. The President's actions will strengthen life-saving background checks, improve mental health services, and expand smart gun technology.

We have all that we need in the United States to observe the Second Amendment rights of Americans and, at the same time, to take our Nation into the 21st century with responsible gun ownership that leaves little room for the illegal gun activity that we see taking place in terms of gun trafficking, in terms of the use of deadly arms in the hands of those who are unlicensed to hold them.

As it relates to background checks, the proposals focus on new background check requirements that will enhance the effectiveness of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, the NICS, and the greater education and enforcement efforts of existing laws at the State level.

Specifically, it directs the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to require any business that engages in the sale of guns to obtain a Federal license to do so and to conduct background checks.

It calls for the increased funding for the ATF in the hiring of 200 new ATF agents and investigators to help enforce existing gun laws, and it requires the ATF to issue a rule requiring background checks for the purchasers who purchase certain dangerous firearms and other items through a trust, a corporation, or other legal entity. It encourages greater communication between Federal and State authorities on criminal history information.

What could be wrong with that? That is within the boundary of our laws, within our constitutional rights, and it makes our Nation safer.

I come to this floor today as one who considers herself to be a victim of gun violence. We need to confront this right away because, for many in our communities, it is not only those who have been physically harmed by gun violence, but those who have been traumatized by being a witness to gun violence.

I had the unfortunate privilege, if you will, of being in the Council Cham-

bers of the New York City's City Council when my colleague, the Honorable James E. Davis, was gunned down before all of his colleagues—workplace domestic terrorism.

That incident has been with me from that day forward. To this day, at a moment's notice, I can recall the trauma of that day, what it meant to see my colleague's life taken from him and to hear the gunplay that took place in the New York City Council's chambers.

I am not alone. There are millions of Americans who are witnesses to gun violence or who may have been maimed by gun violence and who did not necessarily die as a result of it, but whose lives have been changed dramatically.

We should not have another generation of Americans who can speak to the unspeakable horror of what it is to either be impacted directly in the loss of a loved one or to be the families who have to recount the times when they have had to be at the hospital with someone who is trying to recover from being gunned down.

It is our obligation, our responsibility, as lawmakers for this Nation to get this right for future generations.

So I applaud President Obama for doing what he could do within the parameters of his authority. It is now time for the United States House to do its job.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank my good friend and colleague for a very powerful presentation and for pointing out the sensibility of supporting all of the President's efforts, but particularly as they relate to the ATF, which is the Federal agency charged with enforcing our Nation's gun laws.

Two hundred additional agents is the bare minimum that we can hire to make sure that the ATF has the manpower and resources necessary to prevent the illegal trafficking of guns into places like the Brownsville and East Flatbush neighborhoods that Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE so passionately represents.

If you block funding for the ATF, what you essentially are doing is supporting the efforts of the merchants of death who rely on underenforcement by the ATF, because of an absence of resources, in order to flood communities like Chicago; south central Los Angeles; parts of Brooklyn; Newark, New Jersey; and many other neighborhoods with illegal weapons.

Madam Speaker, I yield to my good friend and colleague, Congressman DONALD PAYNE. I thank him as well as R. KELLY. D. PAYNE and R. KELLY made a fantastic combination. We thank them for their distinguished service last year in leading the CBC Special Order hour.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Let me thank the gentleman from New York, who passed the baton to R. KELLY and me in 2015. We have rounded the corner and have put it back in his capable hands, along with our classmate's, the honorable

gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio, JOYCE BEATTY, who is demonstrating day in and day out why she was such a great leader in the Ohio legislature. She has brought those talents to bear on the entire Nation.

Madam Speaker, these are very serious times. I want to start out by commending the President of the United States, President Obama, in the face of insurmountable odds, for not being hampered in wanting to do something with this terrible, terrible scourge that we suffer from in this Nation.

Gun violence impacts many different communities in this Nation, some more than others, but it impacts us all. I was proud to see the President step forward and not be hampered in doing something. If the obstructionists on the other side of the aisle want to continue in that manner, then let them be, but he was going to do something.

I also commend my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus for uniting with the President in this great effort.

We understand in our communities what this means. We are trying to articulate it to the American people, but we understand it. We live it. We feel it. We see it.

□ 2115

The President's executive actions on gun control are a step in the right direction, but it is the responsibility of Congress to pass gun reform that makes our communities safer.

I have joined, along with ROBIN KELLY, who mentioned two pieces of her legislation in terms of gun control—after Sandy Hook several years ago, I proposed a piece of legislation that did not really see the light of day. Since the President has not given up on this effort, I will not either.

I have a piece of legislation, which is called the Safer Neighborhoods Gun Buyback Act. It would keep guns out of the hands of the wrong people by creating a voluntary Federal gun buyback program. Under my bill, State and local governments, as well as gun dealers, would distribute smart, prepaid debit cards to gun owners in exchange for their firearms.

My bill incentivizes gun owners to voluntarily get guns off the streets. This will make our communities safer for our children, family, and our businesses. Commonsense proposals like my bill are critical to ending our Nation's epidemic of gun violence. This epidemic impacts every community in America, including in my district.

Last year in the city of Newark shootings increased 19 percent from 2014 and homicides rose by 8 percent. In 2015, there were at least 76 gun deaths in my district. One-third of all of the gun deaths in New Jersey last year happened in my district.

Gun violence has had a disproportionate impact within the African American community and other urban areas. That is clear when you look at what is happening in my district and throughout other African American communities in New Jersey.

We need a Federal approach to gun violence because it is a problem across State lines. Case in point, New Jersey is a net importer of crime guns. In other words, more illegal weapons confiscated by law enforcement came from out of the State than there were purchased from in the State.

Reducing gun violence is vital to the safety and security of American communities. My colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle should drop the politics and pandering. They should instead join with Democrats in supporting the President and his commonsense reforms and, like my gun buyback program, to address gun tragedies in all communities.

Let me just say, Madam Speaker, no one wants to take guns away from anyone. We understand the laws and liberties that have made this Nation great. If we don't do something in reference to gun control, then it is shame on us.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT), a dynamic new Member of the House.

Ms. PLASKETT. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of our President's actions toward making our communities safer by ensuring guns are less likely to end up in the hands of people that shouldn't have them.

I want to thank my colleagues, Congressman JEFFRIES and Congresswoman BEATTY, for bringing this hour here in Congress. I am thankful for the Congressional Black Caucus' Special Order hour for taking time to educate the American people of the importance of our President's action.

While this Congress and, in particular, our Republican colleagues have hemmed and dithered and engaged in political inertia and, at the end, failed to act in this matter, suspected terrorists are free to legally purchase combat-style weapons. American cities and other areas of this country are besieged by gun crime and thousands of lives are cut short.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, guns cause twice as many deaths in young people as cancer, 5 times as many as heart disease, and 15 times as many as infections. Yet, we afford no funding for research and empirical data collection, while at the same time we spend hundreds of millions researching and mitigating the effects of those other maladies.

Every day this Congress fails to act more American families mourn, more American lives are cut short, many in their prime, and more American cities continue to mount homicide and shooting statistics.

Even in America's paradise, my home district of the United States Virgin Islands, this is so. In 2015, there were 40 homicides in the U.S. Virgin Islands. On a per capita basis, that homicide rate is more than double that of the city of Chicago.

Gun violence in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and in other places, along

with the United States Virgin Islands, sadly are a near daily occurrence. While we pause for moments of silence after mass shootings like the ones in Newtown or San Bernardino, the thousands of victims of mass shootings that play out daily in cities like New York City and the U.S. Virgin Islands go largely unnoticed and unrecognized.

While the President's actions will undoubtedly save lives, we know that communities like our own and the many other minority communities across this country, there needs to be more comprehensive action to address the underlying issues that are at the root of gun violence.

I want to ask that this Congress act on these things. This Congress has in its power the ability to save thousands of lives. Let us not allow the nearly daily occurrence of mass shootings to become the new norm. We must act to pass comprehensive gun legislation in this Congress this year.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the President's action toward making our communities safer by ensuring guns are less likely to end up in the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

While this Congress fails to act on this matter, suspected terrorists are free to legally purchase combat-style weapons, American cities are besieged by gun crime and thousands of lives are cut short.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, guns cause twice as many deaths in young people as cancer, five times as many as heart disease and 15 times as many as infections.

Yet we afford no funding for research and empirical data collection, while at the same time we spend hundreds-of-millions researching and mitigating the affects of those maladies.

Every day this Congress fails to act, more American families mourn: more American lives are cut short—many in their prime—and more American cities continue to mount homicide and shooting statistics.

Even in America's paradise: my home district of the U.S. Virgin Islands. In 2015, there were 40 homicides in the U.S. Virgin Islands. That's a per capita homicide rate more than double that of the city of Chicago.

Gun violence in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles and the U.S. Virgin Islands, sadly, are a near daily occurrence. And while we pause for moments of silence after mass shootings like the one in New Town or San Bernadino, the thousands of victims of mass shootings that play out daily in cities like New York City and the U.S. Virgin Islands go largely unnoticed and unrecognized.

There were 353 mass shootings in this country in 2015—three of which occurred in my home district of the U.S. Virgin Islands. One occurred on a crowded boardwalk on a beautiful day in May.

The second mass shooting took place in a housing community, where children played just after 5 p.m. one afternoon this past September.

The third took place on a busy highway two days after Thanksgiving.

A mass shooting occurs just about everyday in this country, yet there are no moments of silence or thoughts and prayers extended to many of the victims.

While the President's actions will undoubtedly save lives, we know that in communities like the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the many other minority communities across this country, there needs to be more comprehensive action to address the underlying issues that are at the root of gun violence.

The citizens living in these communities experience inexcusable levels of poverty. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, more than 30 percent of children are living below the poverty level and in Chicago, most of the South and West sides have 40 to 60 percent of residents living below the poverty level.

If we are serious about making our communities safer and reducing gun crime, we must take comprehensive action to not only reduce the likelihood of mass shootings like San Bernadino or New Town, but also address the systemic divestment of resources, education, support in communities of color across this country that lead the scourge of gun violence that play out on our inner-city streets every day.

In addition to The President's action, this congress needs to make it a priority to make adequate investments in early childhood education and other programs aimed at lifting children out of poverty.

Additionally, making meaningful reforms to our criminal justice system and increasing resources to reduce the flow of drugs and illegal guns through our ports will help fight back the firearm black market.

This is not about the second amendment: an overwhelming number of Americans—most gun owners themselves—agree, that we must do something to stop guns from getting into the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

This Congress has in its power, the ability to save thousands of lives. Let us not allow the near daily occurrence of mass shootings to become the new norm. We must act to pass comprehensive gun legislation.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, last week, President Obama announced a series of executive actions aimed at reducing gun violence across the United States. President Obama laid out these much-needed steps in the face of Congressional inaction, which will help to reduce the senseless gun violence that affects countless communities across our nation.

In 2014, firearms claimed the lives of more than 33,000 Americans. Over 2,800 of those fatalities took place in my home state of Texas. Perhaps there will be a time when we no longer will have to read headlines about mass murders in our schools or movie theaters. But until then, our nation must take concerted steps to strengthen background checks, improve mental health services, and keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. This is what President Obama has sought to achieve and I truly believe that this can be done without infringing on law-abiding citizens' right to bear arms.

There have been numerous critics of President Obama's executive actions to reduce gun violence. However, we can no longer stand by as gun violence claims the lives of more innocent Americans. The President is limited in what he can achieve through executive actions alone. That is why Congress has the responsibility to pass comprehensive gun safety legislation now and put our nation on the path

to preventing such violence from happening again.

Mr. Speaker, gun violence affects individuals of all backgrounds in communities all across the United States. It is not a Democratic issue nor is it a Republican issue. It is an issue that affects every American in one form or another. Successfully reducing gun violence in this country will take more than just legislative action from Congress. It will take the collective effort of every American to change the course of our history and end gun violence in America once and for all.

RADICAL ISLAMISTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. COMSTOCK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for half the time remaining before 10 p.m.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, we have now learned that the administration is releasing or has released Muhammad al-Rahman al-Shamrani, a 40-year-old citizen of Saudi Arabia. He was transferred to Saudi Arabia on January 11, 2016.

Apparently, The New York Times had gotten ahold of documents regarding—and this is from an October 2008 recommendation for the continued detention under the Department of Defense control for Guantanamo detainee, and then it gives the long number—it is Muhammad al-Rahman al-Shamrani.

If you read what purports to be secret—I don't know how The New York Times got it—but you read over in his file that this Guantanamo detainee—that would be Mr. Shamrani—on 14 October 2007 stated: "When I get out of here, I will go to Iraq and Afghanistan and will kill as many Americans as I can. Then I will come here and kill more Americans."

He also stated: "I love Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, and if I ever get out of Guantanamo, I will go back to fight the Americans and kill as many as I can."

The detainee stated he hated all Americans and will seek revenge if ever released from Guantanamo. The detainee said that, if he is released, he would again participate in jihad against the enemies of Muslims, to include the United States. The detainee is proud of what he has done, and he is willing to do anything to fight against the enemies of Muslims. The detainee stated he decided to become more religious because of his dislike of the U.S. and its citizens.

So for those who have been confused about the rules of civilized warfare, there is nothing illegal, unconstitutional against the Geneva Convention for holding people who are part of a group who are at war with your country until the group they are a part of announces they are no longer at war with you.

Now, war was declared, as some of my Muslim leader friends in the Middle East and Africa tell me. It is obvious to the rest of the world that radical Islam

declared war on the United States back in '79 after President Carter laid the foundation to allow what he called a man of peace to come in and take over ruling Iran. His name was Khomeini. It was after that that our American Embassy was attacked and over 50 people taken hostages, Americans. Basically, we did nothing about it.

So I know the President likes to say that Guantanamo is used as a recruiting tool, but the fact is, oh, basically, if we get rid of Guantanamo, then that pretty much eliminates anger at America.

The fact is that while President Clinton was sending American military to protect Muslims who were being unfairly treated, there were not only attacks against Americans. There was planning going on, not only to attack the USS Cole, but to attack America, our facilities, our embassies, our buildings, and they were planning 9/11. There were no detainees at Guantanamo.

Yet, all of this plotting and planning—and from my discussions with people in the Middle East when I have been over there, with people who are from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, when I have been in those countries—I haven't been into Syria, but I have been right there at its border—but they all say the same thing. What they use to recruit is in 1979 we were attacked by radical Islamists. We did nothing under President Carter.

In '83, we were attacked and around 300 marines were killed in Beirut. Congress, under Democratic control, said we are getting our people out. So President Reagan ordered the evacuation from Beirut. Instead of fighting back, we ran home. I understand that Reagan felt that was one of the big mistakes of his Presidency.

So the attacks have been ongoing. The World Trade Center attack in 1993, the attack on the Khobar Towers, so many attacks under President Clinton. He sent a lot of tow missiles, blew up some tents. It seems maybe like there was an aspirin factory.

It was not Guantanamo that was the driving force in all of those years, decades of war against the United States. It didn't exist. The elimination of Guantanamo will not end the animosity and the desire of radical Islamists to eliminate America from the map along with Israel.

□ 2130

And just to be clear, today the story from Susannah George, "Islamic State Claims Responsibility for Baghdad Mall Attack," they are still at war. Whether they are JV or not, they are killing people.

Adam Kredo from the Free Beacon reports today, "Obama Administration Stonewalling Investigation into 113 Terrorists Inside United States":

"Senators Ted Cruz and Jeff Sessions disclosed Monday that they had been pressuring the Obama administration for months to disclose the immigration