

are also typically acts of domestic or family violence. An Everytown, USA, analysis of every mass shooting between 2009 and 2015 found that 57 percent were committed by intimate partners or the family of victims.

Research shows that commonsense gun laws have a marked effect on improving women's safety from gun violence. In States that require background checks for all handgun sales, 46 percent fewer women are murdered with a gun by an intimate partner. And State laws ensuring that convicted abusers or those subject to domestic violence restraining orders are separated from their firearms are also associated with reductions in gun violence against women. But because of loopholes in these laws and failures to enforce them, they do little to curb the uniquely lethal American problem of guns and violence against women.

Four gaps in the law are particularly harmful. First, Federal law does nothing to keep guns out of the hands of abusive dating partners or convicted stalkers. The Federal law prohibits domestic abusers from buying or owning guns but doesn't apply to dangerous people convicted of misdemeanor stalking offenses or to dating partners, even though more women in the U.S. are killed by their dating partners than their spouses.

Second, in 35 States, State law does not prohibit all people convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes and all people subject to restraining orders from buying or using guns.

Third, and importantly, Federal law allows domestic abusers and stalkers to easily evade gun prohibitions by purchasing guns from unlicensed private sellers. That is the Mack Truck loophole. Federal law only requires background checks for gun sales at licensed dealers. Sixteen States require checks on all handgun sales, but in the remaining States, prohibited abusers seeking to avoid a background check have very little trouble purchasing a gun from an unlicensed dealer they meet online, at a gun show, or in a parking lot.

Prohibited domestic abusers know about this loophole and they have taken advantage of it to deadly effect. And, in fact, in a first-of-its-kind investigation of illegal gun sales, Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that one in four prohibited purchasers seeking guns online had a domestic violence arrest.

Finally, 41 States do not require prohibited abusers to relinquish the guns they already own, so I have joined in legislation to prohibit these guns from falling into the hands of domestic abusers. We know that a proven way to help with people who are not eligible to purchase guns, such as felons and domestic abusers, is to expand and strengthen universal background checks on all firearms sales no matter where that sale takes place. And, very tragically, our lax gun laws make it easier for abusers to acquire a firearm than it is, in fact, to purchase a box of Sudafed.

So you ask, Mr. Speaker, why do we protest? Why did we take the dramatic action of taking to the floor of this House?

It is because we have had enough, and we know that, working together, we can and must change the fact that women across this country lose their lives to gun violence by their domestic abusers.

Nine American women are shot and killed by their husbands and intimate partners every single week. We can do something about it. Let's close the gun show loophole.

BIPARTISAN GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION MEASURES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, this House's silence on preventing gun violence and keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals is a betrayal of the American people.

Americans are 25 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than in any of our peer countries; and since the horrific shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in my district, in the last 3½ years, 100,000 Americans have lost their lives to gun violence. Think about that—100,000 Americans. That is the size of a good-sized American city, every single one of them dead because of a gun. And this House—this House—has done nothing.

We are elected to respond to the needs of the American people. We are elected to keep Americans safe; and right now, felons, domestic violence abusers, even suspected terrorists can buy a gun of their choice without a background check, no questions asked.

And the bad guys are well aware of this big, gaping loophole in our laws. Here is what an al Qaeda spokesman said in a propaganda video in 2011:

"America is absolutely awash in easily obtainable firearms. You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center and come away with a fully automatic assault weapon, without a background check, and most likely without having to show an identification card. So what are you waiting for?"

The real question is: What are we, what are we in this Chamber, waiting for?

We have the no fly, no buy bill, a bipartisan bill to close the terror loophole, and we have a bipartisan bill to strengthen background checks so that they apply to all commercial sales of guns.

Now, I know many Americans assume that the laws we have on the books are strong enough, it is just a question of enforcement; but, sadly, that is not true. That is not true. Somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of all gun sales right now do not go through background checks at all, not at all, so the bad guys just have to go to an unlicensed dealer or go online.

And let's be very clear. Twenty years ago, when Congress passed the background check bill, when they passed that bill, people didn't buy guns online. People didn't buy much of anything online, so Congress didn't even have it in its head to close a loophole it wasn't aware of. But it is now this Congress', it is now our job to respond to the needs of the 100,000 Americans who have died in the last 3½ years and to take action to save lives.

Now, no single law—no single law—can end gun violence, but we do know that laws work. They work, and improved background checks save lives.

For example, in Connecticut, our permit-to-purchase law has reduced gun homicides by 40 percent. That translates into 296 lives saved over a 10-year time period.

In States that have closed background check loopholes, 46 percent fewer women are killed by domestic partners, and 48 percent fewer on-duty police officers are shot to death. That is half of those lives saved. And each one of those lives saved is precious. Each one has a family. Each one has loved ones. Sometimes we forget that when we are talking about thousands of this and hundreds of that and millions of dollars and trillions of dollars. Each and every life is important and precious, and we are sworn to help the American people.

Here is the bottom line. Better laws work, and background checks work to save lives.

The bill that the majority is bringing up this week doesn't really help. In fact, it addresses the terror gap in ways that will hamper the FBI's efforts to keep us safer.

But let me be very, very clear. Without background checks on every single gun sale, no matter what we do on closing the terror gap, it won't matter, because the bad guys will continue avoiding the law, whether it is domestic violence abusers, felons, the dangerously mentally ill, or suspected terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, there are steps we can take to make our communities safer; there are steps we can take to save lives; and I call on this House to call up, this week, the bipartisan bill to expand background checks.

ADDRESSING THE EPIDEMIC OF GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we reflected on how fortunate we are to live in a country that gives each of us a voice in our government. Today, this Congress will, once again, ignore the voices of millions of Americans by refusing to address the epidemic of gun violence in our communities.

Yesterday, we honored the courage that millions of Americans have demonstrated throughout our history by standing up in defense of their fellow citizens. But today, this Congress will

not muster the courage to hold a vote on two proposals that are supported by roughly 90 percent of this country and that can save American lives.

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve to be heard. They deserve a vote. If the U.S. homeland security community places a person on the FBI terrorist watch list or determines that a person is too dangerous to board an airplane, then surely we can agree that person is too dangerous to buy a firearm.

This week, the majority will introduce a bill that pretends to close this gap in our homeland security laws, but, in reality, it would create a system in which it is both legal and likely for suspected terrorists to buy a firearm.

The Republican measure takes no fly, no buy and turns it into no fly, no problem. Under their proposal, if a known or suspected terrorist attempts to buy a weapon, they will be denied that ability for a mere 3 days.

From the moment they attempt to purchase that firearm, the following things must happen, all within 72 hours, to prevent that purchase: the Attorney General must file a petition in Federal court; the court must schedule a hearing; the suspect must be provided actual notice and the opportunity to appear at that hearing with a lawyer; the court must rule on the petition. And if all those things do not occur in 3 days, the suspect is legally entitled to buy a weapon.

Not only does the Republican bill set an impossible timeline, it also requires the Justice Department to meet an extremely high burden of proof. A sale would only be prevented if the court finds probable cause that the suspect has committed or will commit an act of terrorism.

The Republican proposal is specifically designed to ensure the Justice Department fails and the suspect is allowed to buy a gun. It is a fig leaf to cover up the Republicans' refusal to take any meaningful action on gun violence. It is no surprise that this bill is supported by the gun lobby.

Instead of spending our time on toothless, ineffective proposals, we should vote on the original no fly, no buy bill that will keep guns out of the hands of suspected terrorists.

We are also demanding a vote on a bipartisan proposal to require that commercial gun purchases include a background check, background checks for all. I have yet to hear one good explanation on why this should not be the law of the land. If a dangerous person cannot pass a background check at a licensed gun dealer, they should not be able to avoid a background check by going to a gun show or purchasing a firearm over the Internet.

In States that have closed loopholes in their background check laws, 48 percent fewer on-duty police officers are shot to death—but my colleagues across the aisle still refuse to hold a vote.

Mr. Speaker, 33,000 people were killed by gun violence in America last year.

The American people deserve more than moments of silence. They deserve action to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people.

□ 1300

They deserve to have their voices heard. They deserve to send their kids to school without fearing an assault-style weapon will be waiting for them. But, at the very least, they deserve to know where each Member of Congress stands. I am asking my Republican colleagues to find the courage to hold a vote on real gun violence prevention legislation that will save American lives.

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House will finally consider legislation to make reforms to our background check system for firearm purchases. Now, Mr. Speaker, the word "reform" can either be a noun or a verb. As a noun, reform means a change for the better, improving a situation without revolutionary change, a moral improvement. But I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, that in this instance, the reform we are about to vote upon is a verb, where it simply means to form again or to become formed again.

Americans are demanding a background check system that is a change for the better and is not riddled with loopholes. They demand a system that protects the rights of law-abiding Americans while preventing dangerous individuals from obtaining weapons. They demand a system where, to purchase a gun, you must pass a background check. Unfortunately, the bill before us, crafted by the NRA, will not deliver this to the American people.

One of the fundamental loopholes in the Brady bill, which requires background checks for most purchases, is that, if the sale is not approved after 3 days, a firearm dealer can make the sale anyway, even though the background check is still pending. Tragically, this loophole has been given a new name and nine new faces following the attack at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston on June 17, 2015.

Prior to that fateful day, the Charleston shooter was arrested in Columbia, South Carolina, on March 1, 2015, and charged with a felony drug offense. FBI Director James Comey has since confirmed that, as part of this arrest, the shooter admitted to the city of Columbia police that he was in possession of drugs. Under the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, an unlawful drug user or addict is prohibited from purchasing a firearm, and this information should have barred the shooter from the purchase.

Now, on Saturday, April 11, 2015, the shooter attempted to purchase a firearm in West Columbia, South Carolina,

and the background check process was initiated. Now, Mr. Speaker, 91 percent of FBI background checks are processed within minutes, and gun dealers are informed the buyer is either approved or denied; however, the other 9 percent require additional scrutiny by FBI examiners and are not processed immediately. The Charleston shooter's background check was marked "delayed/pending."

Though the shooter was arrested on March 1 by the city of Columbia police, he, for some reason, was taken to the Lexington County jail, and his arrest record listed the arresting agency as the Lexington County Sheriff's Office. Columbia, South Carolina, is in Richland County. This clerical error was noticed by a Lexington County corrections officer shortly after and corrected, but was only corrected internally. That correction was not given to the FBI.

On Monday, April 13, when the FBI investigator sought to get more information about the shooter's March arrest, she initially contacted the Lexington County Sheriff's Office for more information, who informed her that the case was in the city of Columbia. Not seeing a listing for Columbia on the Lexington County law enforcement list, she contacted West Columbia, who had no knowledge of the arrest.

By Thursday, April 16, the background check was still listed as delayed/pending, but three business days had passed. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, he was allowed to purchase a gun, and nine souls lost their lives because of this loophole. We should close it and do it today.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Loving and merciful God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As the Members of this assembly return from days away celebrating our Nation's birth, grant them measured patience and a spirit of common purpose in addressing the pressing issues of these days.

We pray for the needs of the Nation, the world, and all of creation. Bless those who seek to honor You and serve each other and all Americans in this House through their public service.