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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,

July 11, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

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

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my constituents' demand that Congress act to prevent gun violence.

Following yet another devastating shooting, the House has spent more than its share of moments engaged in contemplation. We have had plenty of times to pause and reflect. We have had more than enough moments of silence. The time to be silent has passed. Now it is time to act.

My colleagues and I held a sit-in here on this House floor 3 weeks ago to de-

mand a vote on solutions to gun violence. We were not engaging in some kind of stunt. We were not seeking publicity. We were speaking for the American people who have simply had enough. They have had enough gun violence, they have had enough moments of silence, and they have had enough carnage and devastation.

The Orlando shooting was the latest in a seemingly endless series of horrific mass shootings that have shocked us all, all of which we agree in hindsight were committed by people who should not have had access to a gun. The individual in Orlando had committed horrible acts of violence against his ex-wife. He exhibited such derangement and rage that he frightened classmates and coworkers. He was even investigated as a potential terrorist by the FBI. He was, in nearly every respect, the very last person we would want to be able to have a gun, walk into a gun store and legally purchase an assault weapon, a Glock, and a massive amount of ammunition.

He did not violate any laws in the purchase of these weapons because the laws we have are not good enough. Doing nothing is not rational. It is madness, it is folly, and it is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the American people expect and deserve real action, not toothless half measures engineered to silence the people trying to solve this problem. Please, no more games and no more inaction. Just give us a vote on real reform.

Last night, in the middle of the night, I found myself wondering why doesn't the Republican leadership let us have the vote on no fly, no buy and on expanded background checks?

After all, House Republicans have 247 votes; House Democrats, only 188; and not every Democrat might even vote for these bills. With the 59-Member majority, the Republican pro-gun position would certainly prevail.

Or would it? How many moderate Republicans in swing districts might ac-

tually vote against their constituents' desires or vote for their constituents' desires?

We cited polls again and again that 85 percent of Americans don't want people on the terrorist watch list to be able to buy guns, and 90 percent of U.S. citizens want to close the background check loopholes.

This is what political scientists call a tough vote. Vote for your constituents and you are in trouble with the NRA. Vote your conscience and you are in big trouble with the Republican leadership. And if you toe the NRA line, the most extreme position, you can be sure your Democratic proponent will let all voters know this fall that you voted with the terrorists.

Yes, a tough vote. Do what is right and moral and sensible and just, and you are in political trouble. Do what PAUL RYAN and the NRA want you to do and you are in political trouble. This is why the Republican leadership will do anything they can to keep from having a House vote on these issues.

But isn't this why we are here? To make the tough votes? To follow our conscience? To do what is right, damn the political consequences? At the very end of our careers, will the poets write verses about the thousands of easy votes we cast?

Neither party has a monopoly on wisdom or truth, but let's have the debate. Let our people argue and persuade and vote and be brave enough to live with the choices we make.

GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I take the floor today to continue the discussion that we started in this House about gun violence.

Something extraordinary took place here in the House of Representatives.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

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



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We had Members on this side of the aisle, Democrats, who came to the floor and who sat on the floor in the well of the House. That was extraordinary. No one has ever seen this happen before.

Why did this take place? How is it you can get every group in the Democratic Party to basically join in an action that had never taken place before?

What am I talking about?

I am talking about the Women's Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Progressive Caucus. I am talking about New Democrats. I am talking about all of those in our Democratic Party who do not always agree with each other. We work at it, but we have serious and credible disagreements. However, you did not hear any denouncement from any of our Democrats about what we were doing.

Why did we do this, and why did we have basically so much support for what we did?

When I say "support," I am not simply talking about Democrats. I am talking about people who left their homes, their businesses, and their workplaces and joined us outside. They even stayed for hours in the rain to say to us: Thank you for finally giving voice to this problem that we have in this country on gun violence.

The Members of the Democratic Party and those people who were outside basically said: We are sick and tired of the influence that is exerted by the gun lobby.

You have the NRA that owns too many Members of Congress and who can tell them what to do. There are Members who are intimidated by the gun lobby and the NRA. So what they do is they hide behind the Constitution and they will tell you that they are defending their constitutional rights.

None of us, in what we sat in about, talked about taking away anybody's guns. What we said was we have got to make sure that guns are not in the hands of people who should not have them; people who have committed crimes; people who have committed murder; people who have shown that perhaps something is wrong with them psychologically or emotionally. We should not make it easy for these people to have guns.

What should we do about it?

We have two very simple bills, and we begged the Speaker of this House to allow us to take up those bills, to debate those bills, to have them voted up or down.

Well, the Speaker won't do it. The Speaker won't do it because, as it has been described, he, too, is a handmaiden of the gun lobby, along with all of the other Members afraid to come and represent and to deal with the tough issues that confront us.

What were those bills all about?

One is very easy to explain: no fly, no buy.

What does that mean?

It simply means that if you are on a list that says you can't get on an air-

plane because you are dangerous, we know something about you that will not allow us to allow you to get on an airplane where you may commit an action that could endanger the lives of everybody on that plane and others even on the ground, no fly, no buy.

Why should we sell guns to somebody who we have said are too dangerous to fly on the airplane?

That is all we wanted on that bill, was a vote to say: Yeah, that makes good sense. If you cannot fly, you should not be able to buy.

What is wrong with that?

That is very simple.

Why can't they take up that bill? Aren't they concerned about who gets on the airplane?

Yes. But if you are concerned about who gets on the airplane, you should be concerned about who is able to buy a gun.

The other bill is just as clear, just as simple: universal background checks. We need to know who is buying these guns. Somebody will say: Don't we have something about background checks in the law?

Ladies and gentlemen, we are not covering what is on the Internet. We are not covering the fact that these gun shows are selling guns out of the back of their cars. They don't know who the people are. They don't care who they are, and they walk away with guns, and they go out and they kill people with them.

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, our Nation has endured a harrowing week, which has affected each and every one of us.

Senseless and tragic violence, mass shootings, and shootings of those who have sworn to protect us have become part of our daily dialogue. We are forced to cope with the loss of family members, friends, our neighbors, and the fracturing of our communities as a result of gun violence in our country.

My district is no different. Stockton, California, endured the Nation's first mass school shooting in 1989. A man opened fire at Cleveland Elementary School, killing 5 children and injuring 30 students and teachers. It was a senseless act of violence that prompted the California State Legislature to ban assault weapons.

This law helped pave the way for a Federal ban on assault weapons. Unfortunately, Congress gave in to pressure from the gun lobby and let the law expire in 2004. Today there are only six other States and the District of Columbia that have such a ban.

This past Saturday, a man gunned down in central Stockton became the city's 25th homicide of 2016. In the U.S., more than 10,000 Americans will likely be killed by gun murders this

year. Another 20,000 lives will likely be lost to suicide. The total number of gun deaths and violent injuries will be close to 100,000. The victims who make these headlines are just as important as the ones that don't.

But there is a brighter side to this story. In my congressional district, as well as in others around the country, there has been a real concerted effort to unite community services, law enforcement, neighborhood leaders, and others to work together to address acts of violence. Although this effort has brought people together and helped focus the community to reduce violence, constant vigilance and peaceful involvement remains needed.

Are there achievable changes to our gun laws within the Constitution that would make a difference?

Absolutely.

Should we, as Congress and the U.S. House of Representatives, work on behalf of our people we represent to take actions?

Yes. Absolutely.

America's poor and minority populations are disproportionately impacted by gun violence. A November 2015 ProPublica article noted that half of American gun death victims are men of color in poor, segregated neighborhoods.

If we really care about our citizens, we should be taking concrete steps to curb gun violence with responsible legislation, such as expanded background checks, a ban on assault weapons, a ban on felons and domestic abusers from owning guns, and gun safety features and safety training.

No one solution will completely solve the problem, but if something like expanding background checks to all gun sales will help keep guns away from dangerous people and save lives, wouldn't it be worth it?

Many Members of this body have heard the call of action from our constituents and took to the House floor in a peaceful, yet meaningful way. We have taken the call to action and joined our constituents at events in our districts. We speak each day, and we will continue to speak about what is needed to change the cycle of violence plaguing our Nation.

It is my hope that just as many folks in our communities strive to reduce all acts of violence that Congress will learn from them. We need a real dialogue about the challenges we face and what it will take to reduce violence in our communities. While such actions might seem difficult or impossible to achieve, we must join together in that pursuit and work toward a peaceful Nation.

Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a responsibility here in Congress, but the citizens and the residents of this country have a responsibility, too. To those contemplating violence, you are hurting yourselves and the people you care about. Nonviolence takes more courage and achieves so much more.