

year. That is unacceptable. That is why Chairman MILLER's bill is needed. We need to protect the VA and those who go to it—the veterans who need the service. That is why I ask all, when we bring the bill up, please support it.

GUN VIOLENCE

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on gun violence.

Two-thirds of gun deaths are suicides, but rarely part of the conversation. These deaths are not inevitable. Allowing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to research this, along with doing universal background checks, can and do save lives.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. It is time for advocates to share stories of hope and to find solutions to self-harm. We must educate ourselves and our neighbors on signs and symptoms of depression to reduce suicide by gun.

Further work is needed. We must promote gun safety without stigmatizing those with mental illness. Congress must work to keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them: domestic abusers and individuals with violent histories like assaults.

This is too important. We must act now. No longer can we tolerate it.

STRENGTHENING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

(Ms. STEFANIK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, in my district, industries ranging from manufacturing to renewable energy production to mineral production regularly tell me about the need for a trained and qualified workforce. When I visit with students and families across my district, I hear about how eager workers are for these advanced opportunities.

Over the past 2 years, I have visited many of the BOCES, CV-TEC, and P-Tech programs throughout my district and know how critical the training they provide is to preparing our students to compete in a 21st century economy.

This is why I was proud to work with my colleagues on the Education and the Workforce Committee to pass the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. This bipartisan bill will help equip students with the skills and experience they need to find jobs that will lead to long, fruitful careers by encouraging more local control and flexibility.

I am pleased that the House overwhelmingly passed this important legislation, and I urge the Senate to pass it and send it to the President's desk.

VOTE ON GUN LEGISLATION

(Ms. ESTY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve and the American people demand a vote on commonsense, bipartisan gun safety legislation.

During the 7 weeks that Congress was in recess, thousands of Americans were killed by guns. Each one of those Americans was precious. They had family, loved ones, coworkers, and neighbors. In the 3 years and 9 months since 26 people were killed in my district—20 first-graders, six teachers and educators—we have had not one debate, not one vote on this legislation.

The time has come. The time is now. We demand a vote.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST AND APPEALS MODERNIZATION

(Mr. PITTENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTENGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5620, the VA Accountability First and Appeals Modernization Act, of which I am a cosponsor.

We owe our brave veterans a debt we can never repay. As a small token of our gratitude, we have the privilege of providing veterans with appropriate care and benefits. Too often, the care provided at the VA expresses the opposite of gratitude and does not demonstrate the privilege of serving veterans.

This legislation promotes accountability by allowing incompetent VA employees to be fired for poor performance or misconduct. This legislation will also help the thousands of veterans stuck in the appeals quagmire by providing veterans more options in the appeals process.

Restoring accountability and transparency at the VA should not be a political issue. I urge all my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 5620.

GUN ACTION THREAT OF CENSURE

(Ms. HAHN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HAHN. Mr. Speaker, it has been almost 3 months since I joined JOHN LEWIS and my Democratic colleagues right here for a sit-in on the House floor to demand a vote on commonsense gun violence legislation.

Instead of letting us vote, instead of confronting this issue, Speaker RYAN and my Republican colleagues left town. Now we are back in session, there is still no talk about holding a vote, but there is a lot of talk coming from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about punishing us for protesting on the House floor.

I hope they do. But I am not going to apologize for what I did. I am proud

that I did something to try to save lives.

I think they should apologize to the American people because they have not allowed us to vote on commonsense gun violence legislation. I think they should apologize, but they continue to do the bidding of the gun lobby. And I think they should apologize that, during our 7-week recess, 2,015 Americans were shot and killed.

My Democratic colleagues and I took action. They continue to sit on their hands.

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LITTLE KIM WANTS WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, "This is not directed at Japan. The nuclear development is toward the United States," said an adviser to North Korean dictator Kim Jung Un.

Frankly, Little Kim makes his father look normal. His saber-rattling regime has once again attempted to fire intercontinental ballistic missiles. Meanwhile, the administration is naively pursuing a strategy they call "strategic patience." In layman's language, that means "doing nothing."

This hopeless appeasement policy has not worked. The North Korean plan is to launch nuclear missiles from submarines at the United States. Isn't that lovely?

The rogue state's belligerence has put the entire region at grave risk of aggression, nuclear proliferation, and war.

Historically, North Korea, like Iran, was a state sponsor of terrorism. Eight years ago, the United States withdrew the designation when North Korea lied and promised to halt its nuclear program. But North Korea continues to develop nukes.

Strategic patience is a blissfully ignorant failed foreign policy. North Korea must have consequences for its aggressive and belligerent actions. Time to put Junior Kim's regime back on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, because he is a terror to world peace.

And that is just the way it is.

GUN VIOLENCE

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss gun violence facing our citizens and police.

Law enforcement officers and first responders across the country are faced with difficult and often unpredictable situations on a daily basis that require careful response to ensure public safety. That is why I introduced H.R. 5864.

This bill aims to provide officer and law enforcement personnel with appropriate intervention tools and techniques to address interactions involving individuals with mental illness experiencing a crisis.

H.R. 5864 calls for specialized training that provides officers with the tools to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, including stabilization and deescalation techniques; partnerships community resources; and provides funding to create State databases for public safety and outreach.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5864 to provide our police with additional resources benefiting our communities.

THE EPIDEMIC OF DRUG USE

(Mr. ZINKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ZINKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the need for us to work together to fight the epidemic of meth and other dangerous drugs. Meth affects all of our communities.

In Montana, the criminal justice and foster care systems are being pushed to their absolute limits. In Missoula County this year, 72 cases of meth. At the same time in 2007, there were zero. And the meth seizures are up 38 percent.

So what can we do? We need to stop the drug from making its way to communities, and we need to secure our southern border. The FBI, DEA, Border Patrol, and local law enforcement officials all say the same thing. Mexico is where the preponderance of the drugs are coming from. We know how to stop it and we can shut it down, and we can secure our southern border.

We also need to empower our health providers to provide addicts and users a path for recovery. All too often, those who suffer drug addiction also battle with mental health issues, and, sadly, it drives many to take their own lives.

I was at a powwow with the Assiniboine-Sioux, the great nation, and a gentleman told me a term for it, "oh-nee-op-ee," which means complete loss of hope. I haven't lost hope. I believe this House and this Nation are up to the task.

TRIBAL PIPELINE

(Mr. KILMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Speaker, recently, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe watched in anger as an oil pipeline project near their homes moved forward. Sadly, the tribe's concerns about the impact on their drinking water and on sacred lands was not properly taken into account, so the tribal members raised their voices, and they weren't alone.

In an unprecedented demonstration of support, thousands of Americans, tribal members from all over, including

many from my region, journeyed to North Dakota to stand in solidarity and peaceful protest with the Standing Rock Sioux.

The call to respect their rights was heard. Thanks to the Obama administration, construction in the disputed area has been halted so that there can be further review, and that is a victory.

But there is more work to do. I joined many of my colleagues to call on the Government Accountability Office to thoroughly inspect Federal policies that protect the health and environmental security of American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

We have a sacred trust and treaty obligations to our tribal neighbors that cannot be broken. Their sovereignty must be respected, not just on this project, but whenever the Federal Government is acting in a way that impacts them.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST AND APPEALS MODERNIZATION ACT

(Mr. ROTHFUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, our Nation is being ravaged by skyrocketing levels of prescription opioid and heroin abuse, and our veterans have been particularly hard hit. Today, 68,000 veterans are struggling with opioid abuse disorder.

Veterans suffer higher rates of opioid abuse than their civilian counterparts, and the number of opioid abuse disorders among veterans has increased 55 percent over the past 5 years.

This is why I joined my colleague from across the aisle, BILL KEATING, in introducing H.R. 5057, the Safe Prescribing for Veterans Act. This bill encourages increased safety in opioid prescribing practices by ensuring that healthcare professionals within the VA who are authorized to prescribe controlled substances complete at least one continuing medical education course in pain management every 2 years.

Last night, Mr. KEATING and I offered this proposal as an amendment to H.R. 5620, the VA Accountability First and Appeals Modernization Act, and it passed with strong bipartisan support. This amendment has the potential to save thousands of lives by increasing opioid abuse awareness among the nearly 55,000 VA health professionals working across the country.

I commend my colleagues for supporting our efforts.

THE NUMBERS ARE VERY GOOD

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's annual report by the Census Bureau brought some very good news to the American people.

Last year, for the first time in nearly two decades, three key economic indicators all moved in the right direction: median household income is up a staggering 5.2 percent, which translates into over \$2,800 a year for the typical American family; the poverty rate went down by the largest amount, or largest 1-year drop, in recorded history; and the number of Americans without health insurance has now dropped to a historic low. Add to all of that an unemployment rate at 4.9 percent, and we have witnessed the largest and longest streak of job growth in history.

These numbers show, even as we face serious challenges, our progress is real, our recovery is sound, and our reasons to hope are many.

IRAN MONEY FOR HOSTAGES

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, Iran is the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world, but that didn't stop the Obama administration from providing \$1.7 billion in cash, we finally found out, to the Iranian Government. This money, along with the \$150 billion already in sanctions relief that Iran previously received, will likely be used to finance acts of terrorism directed at our interests and our allies.

Many Americans at home are probably wondering why their government provided such a large cash payment to a country that sponsors terrorism, especially in the dark of night on a big pallet. The Obama administration says these payments were connected to an Iranian purchase of American airplane parts back in the 1970s.

Of all the disastrous foreign policy blunders this administration has made, this is the hardest one to understand. Paying \$1.7 billion in cash to one of our adversaries is outrageous, and the fact that these payments were used as leverage in order to secure American hostages raises serious questions about the administration and the State Department's judgment.

Iran refuses to act like a responsible nation that respects international norms and rules. Our government should treat them accordingly. That is why I am proud to sponsor Chairman ED ROYCE's bill, H.R. 5931, which will prohibit all cash payments to Iran.

HONORING THE HEROIC ACTIONS OF ROB MCCANN

(Ms. PINGREE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PINGREE. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a moment about Rob McCann.

Rob came to our office in Maine a year ago as a fellow with the House Wounded Warrior Program. Just as he