

GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call upon the President and the Congress of the United States to act without delay and pass legislation to prevent gun violence and mass casualties from shootings.

The community of Parkland, Florida—along with the rest of the country—is still reeling from the horrific tragedy that took place at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglass High School on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018.

Our hearts still ache with sadness and disbelief for the families and loved ones of the 17 students—sons and daughters, brothers and sisters—who lost their lives in this senseless, horrific act of domestic terrorism.

It is safe to say that America is sick and tired of being sick and tired of gun violence.

That is why we must act now to stop gun violence, protect citizens, and save lives.

Here are the top 6 actions the President and the Congress can and must take now to protect our communities:

Require universal background checks to keep guns out of dangerous hands;

Extend the waiting period to purchase or transfer dangerous—weapons like the AR-15 pending completion of a background checks to 7 days;

Raise the minimum age to purchase or transfer dangerous weapons like the AR-15, high-capacity magazines, ammunitions, and silencers from 18 to 21 years of age;

Ban military-style assault weapons;

Limit high-capacity magazines; and

Increase access to mental health services.

We can take action without infringing on the 2nd Amendment rights of Americans.

We need to make it harder for criminals to obtain guns by strengthening the background check system.

We need to ensure that mental health professionals know their options for reporting threats of violence—even as we acknowledge that someone with a mental illness is far more likely to be the victim of a violent crime than the perpetrator.

We must also make safe gun storage a priority.

As the founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, a senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, and the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, I have listened far too often to the testimony of individuals who have survived tragedies or lost loved ones as a result of gun violence.

In the words of President Obama after the 2013 Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, "We're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics."

While it is certainly true that violent crime and homicide rates in this country have been declining in recent years, they are still far above those in other industrialized nations.

There exists a culture of violence in America; a subculture that with today's technologically advanced weaponry is far more dangerous to public safety than ever before.

At no point in our nation's history has a single human been more capable of inflicting

massive death and our society is producing more individuals who seek to employ such means to carry out their ill intentions.

Far too often, the tool of choice for would-be killers are military-style assault weapons with high-capacity magazines.

Every day, on average, 92 Americans are victims of gun violence, resulting in more than 33,000 deaths annually.

In raising this issue, we recognize and respect other cultures that exist in America; law-abiding citizens who are responsible in their ownership of firearms.

Many of these citizens are responsible with respect to the lethal capacity of their firearms, opting not to obtain assault weapons or to equip assault weapons with 30, 50, 75, or 100-round magazines.

Here is what I think the Congress can and must do to reduce gun violence without abridging the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans.

Extend the waiting period to purchase or transfer dangerous weapons like the AR-15 pending completion of a background checks to 7 days.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 4268, the "Gun Safety, Not Sorry Act."

Raise the minimum age to purchase or transfer dangerous weapons like the AR-15, high-capacity magazines, ammunitions, and silencers from 18 to 21 years of age.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 5088, the "No Mass Atrocities With Guns Act" ("No MAGA Act").

Reinstate and strengthen the federal ban on assault weapons.

I am an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3947, legislation that will reinstates the assault weapons ban that has been introduced by my colleague, Congressman DAVID CICILLINE of Rhode Island.

Reinstate a federal ban on bump stocks and high-capacity magazines holding more than ten rounds and allowing a shooter to inflict mass damage in a short period of time without reloading will save lives.

I will soon be introducing the "Stop Abuse, Violence, and Ending Lives Act of 2018," legislation to ban the sale and possession of bump stocks.

Require a background check for every gun sale, while respecting reasonable exceptions for cases such as gifts between family members and temporary loans for sporting purposes.

I am an original co-sponsor of H.R. 4240, the "Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2017," legislation that requires universal background checks and closes the gun show loophole that has been introduced by my colleague, Congressman MIKE THOMPSON of California.

It is estimated that four out of ten gun buyers do not go through a background check when purchasing a firearm because federal law only requires these checks when someone buys a gun from a federally licensed dealer.

That would be like allowing four out of ten people to choose if they would like to go through airport security.

This loophole allows felons, domestic abusers, and those prohibited because of mental illness to easily bypass the criminal background check system and buy firearms at gun shows, through private sellers, over the internet or out of the trunks of cars.

Strengthen the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database

to ensure it is up to date by requiring federal and state agencies to transfer important records to the database expeditiously since without the information, the reliability of a background check is questionable.

Pass legislation aimed specifically at cracking down on illegal gun trafficking and straw-purchasing which often puts guns in the hands of people who are prohibited from having them.

Straw-purchasing is when a prohibited buyer has someone with no criminal history walk into a gun store, pass a background check and purchase a gun with the purpose of giving it to the prohibited buyer.

Restore funding for public safety and law enforcement initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence.

Congress should fund law enforcement's efforts to reduce gun violence, while supporting federal research into causes of gun violence.

There is no reason the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or the National Institute of Health (NIH) should be prohibited from researching the causes of gun violence.

That is why I have co-sponsored H.R. 1832, legislation that authorizes the appropriation of funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for conducting or supporting research on firearms safety or gun violence prevention.

I have also co-sponsored H.R. 1478, the Gun Violence Research Act, which repeals the provision that in practice prohibits the Department of Health and Human Services from sponsoring research on gun violence.

And there is no reason for the restrictions federal law places on our law enforcement officers' ability to track and combat the spread of illegal guns.

Close the holes in our mental-health system and make sure that care is available for those who need it.

Congress must improve prevention, early intervention, and treatment of mental illness while working to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness.

Access to mental health services should be improved, the shortage of mental health professionals should be addressed, and funding should be made available for those programs that have proven to be effective.

That is why I have co-sponsored H.R. 1982, the "Mental Health Access and Gun Violence Prevention Act," legislation that authorizes the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Social Security Administration to: (1) increase access to mental health care treatment and services, and (2) promote reporting of mental health information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Help local communities get unwanted and illegal guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.

Congress should help support and develop local programs that get unwanted guns off our streets, such as gun buy-back programs that proved so effective in Australia.

Finally, we must address our culture's glorification of violence seen and heard through our movie screens, television shows, music and video games.

Congress should fund scientific research on the relationship between popular culture and gun violence, while ensuring that parents have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about what their families watch, listen to, and play.

Here is what I think neither the President, the Congress, nor state and local governments should not do to reduce gun violence.

We Should Not Arm Teachers because they are not trained to handle weapons; this is not what they signed up for.

We Must Not Surrender to NRA even though the gun lobby has long enjoyed tremendous influence over congressional Republicans and some Democrats.

Persons who live in fear of gun violence and mass shootings at schools, theaters, places of worship and work, and public spaces are not afraid of the NRA.

What they are afraid of is an AR-15 in the hands of a mentally unstable person. Americans are a can-do people; we do not bemoan our problems and accept terrible outcomes.

We act to solve them.

We have made our cars and trucks and roads safer and reduced traffic fatalities.

We have virtually eradicated polio, small pox, and other debilitating and life-threatening diseases.

We respond immediately to natural disasters caused by hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, floods, and man-made disasters caused by acts of terrorism.

When it comes to reducing or preventing gun violence, we must summon that same spirit of American resolve and know-how and get the job done.

We can do it; after all, we are Americans.

RECOGNIZING GAINESVILLE'S TOP SPELLERS

HON. DOUG COLLINS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize two Gainesville students,

Hannah Stewart and Rasmit Devkota, who recently earned the title of the area's top spellers after competing in the local spelling bees.

Hannah Stewart, a fifth grade student at Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy, won the Gainesville City School System's elementary spelling bee competition, clinching the victory by correctly spelling "infraction."

Rasmit Devkota, a seventh grade student at Gainesville Middle School, triumphed in the middle school spelling bee competition. Overcoming thirty of his peers through seven rounds, the word "ricochet" delivered Devkota the championship title.

Devkota went on to represent the city of Gainesville at the Georgia Association of Educators Regional Spelling Bee, which determined who would compete at the state-level.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Hannah Stewart and Rasmit Devkota for their academic achievement and wish them well as they move forward in their education.