

In the new Protect Life Rule being put forward, I hope President Trump and his administration follow through on it to help protect those freedoms to decide if those centers want to be part of that or not. Indeed, centers that don't promote and push abortion will be the ones that come forward and receive this type of funding that is so necessary and the right thing that the American people and the majority want to see happen.

So I commend this effort. I commend the administration for contemplating and pushing through with this. I thank my colleague, Mr. SMITH, for always being that strong voice for what is right. Well done, sir.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for his eloquence and his principled and very courageous stand.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to anchor the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour.

I would like to thank the Congressional Black Caucus chairman, CEDRIC RICHMOND, for his leadership in this effort.

For the next 60 minutes, we have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about issues of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus and the millions of constituents whom we represent.

Tonight's Special Order hour topic is gun violence and gun violence prevention.

Mr. Speaker, how many more lives?

Mr. Speaker, there are 13,000 gun homicides a year in the United States. On an average day, 96 Americans are killed by guns.

Sadly, our children are not untouched by this senseless violence. On an average day, seven children and teens are killed with guns, and since 2013, there have been 311 school shootings.

Kyle McLeod;
Angelique Ramirez;
Chris Stone;
Jared Black;
Kimberly Vaughan;
Sabika Sheikh;

Cynthia Tisdale;
Glenda Ann Perkins;
Shana Fisher;
Christian Garcia.

On Friday, eight children and two of their teachers were slaughtered during the early morning hours of the school-day, and those were their names.

Many students thought it was a drill when a fellow student wearing a "Born to Kill" shirt opened fire at his school. Throughout the weekend, witnesses and survivors recounted the sheer terror of the shooting and its frenzied aftermath.

This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Enough is enough. We know that there are ways to reduce gun violence in our communities and in our schools. There are solutions.

Today, the movement is being led by young people from around our country, including the Ninth Congressional District of New York that I am honored to represent. In April, I met with students from March for Our Lives NYC.

In my hands are the postcards. I have nearly 100 letters from my constituents calling for us to take up some of these solutions. My constituents are calling on me, their Representative in this esteemed body, and upon all of us to do something now.

One student wrote:

We shouldn't have to be marching for this. Children are dead, lots of them. Do something. Anything.

"Please help," wrote another.

Mr. Speaker, that meeting was nearly 2 months ago, and this President and this Congress have done absolutely nothing.

Since the Parkland shooting, countless numbers of children have died in their schools and in their communities because of our inaction. Our inaction puts our children in danger.

One student wrote:

It is time to serve the American people and not the gun lobby.

One teacher stressed the need to protect kids and staff. Another said:

Schools and teachers need more funding for books, salaries, social support programs, and counseling, not more guns.

One letter came from someone who had actually been shot:

One in three people in the U.S. knows someone who has been shot, and I am one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, am a survivor of gun violence. While serving in the New York City Council during the year 2003, all colleagues were coming back from a recess period, and we were excited to see one another. One of my dearest and closest colleagues, the Honorable James E. Davis, came to work that day as we all did, excited about doing the work for the people of the City of New York.

Unfortunately, James E. Davis had befriended his assailant. His assailant walked into the chambers of the New York City Council and unleashed a violent attack on Mr. DAVIS that took his life. That attack took place in the workplace in front of all his colleagues.

To this very day, I need to just close my eyes, and I can transport myself back into that moment where members had to scramble to the floor, where members ran out of the chambers and barricaded themselves in the speaker's office waiting to be rescued, not knowing whether we were being attacked or it was a lone assailant, not knowing whether our colleague would survive or whether he would perish.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, we have continued to see senseless death due to uncontrolled unwillingness in this body to do what we know we can do: to do background checks, to make sure that we provide a pathway for those who have mental health concerns to receive treatment, and to ban AK-47s and AR-15s.

If you are 18 and have to be registered to drive in the United States of America, you should also have to be registered to carry a firearm.

We know there are plenty of stories of gun violence that are not shared on the House floor, and many more receive no media coverage.

The gun epidemic has hit underserved communities of color particularly hard. Gun homicide rates in these neighborhoods have reached a critical point, where homicide rates often reach 10 times the national average.

□ 2015

While gun-related deaths have fallen in New York, in parts of my district, the death toll has risen since last year. In Brownsville, Brooklyn alone, murders are up.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a national crisis. Urban violence has too often been left out of the national conversation about guns, gun running, and gun trafficking, and instead, too often, the epidemic in urban centers is used by many as a misguided, misdirected distraction so that our conversations on gun reform, racial justice, or police tactics are disregarded. But gun violence intervention programs have been shown to be effective at breaking the cycle of violence and impacting communities.

The question is: Will Congress truly get serious about supporting these programs? Will we get serious about universal background checks? Will we get serious about limiting access to weapons of war?

Nine out of 10 Americans agree that we should have universal background checks, including three out of four NRA members. But this Republican Congress has shown to be spineless.

In the East Room of the White House, the President expressed his solidarity with the people of Santa Fe and said his administration would do everything in its power to protect schools and keep guns away from those who should not have them.

Just earlier this year, he also vowed to take action after the Parkland shooting. At that time, the President said he would look at stricter background checks and raising the minimum age for buying an assault weapon. But Donald Trump did not press for

any action on any of those initiatives. Lies, once again, to the American people. Congress did not follow through. Shame on us for our inaction. We are well past time for action, Mr. Speaker. The time is now.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from the Second District of Louisiana (Mr. RICHMOND) to address this Special Order hour of the Congressional Black Caucus, our chairman.

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, let me thank Congresswoman CLARKE from New York for those very insightful and passionate words.

Just a few moments ago, we listened to Republicans talk about the sanctity of life and how they want to protect everyone. They will protect anyone, as long as they don't have to go up against the NRA.

What we have here is, we are protecting our children. We always say our children are our future. We should act like it.

This weekend, I was speaking at Baker High School's graduation and I realized that while we were celebrating those 139 kids' graduation, there were families from Santa Fe that were preparing home-going celebrations for their children.

Dr. King once said that there comes a point where silence is betrayal. We have passed that point in this body, in this Congress, a long time ago. Our silence is betraying our future. It is betraying our children. It is betraying their parents.

So, when we take a moment of silence and we ask to pray, let us not pray to end school violence. Let's pray for the courage to actually do something about it.

I know all my friends on the right like to claim they are the Christian right. But if they were the Christian right, they would pray for some courage and they would do something. But there is an old gospel song that says:

"Lord, don't move my mountain. Give me the strength to climb.

"Lord, don't move my stumbling blocks, but lead me all around."

What it is saying is: Lord, give me the strength to fight my battles. Give me the strength to help myself.

So, if we are going to pray as a body, if we are going to pray as a Nation, we should be praying that this body musters up some courage to do something about it. I am not saying that there are not any good suggestions on the other side. I am saying they won't address the hard suggestions about access to high-capacity cartridges, guns that shoot over and over and over and over again. I am talking about weapons of mass destruction in our community.

We don't have to go look in Iraq or Afghanistan for weapons of mass destruction. Go look at your nearest sporting goods store, your nearest pawn shop. We are selling them right here in this country. Everyone doesn't have to get a background check.

So I would just say that the time is now. The time was yesterday.

I will just leave the body with this fact. When we had more people killed in school shootings than we have lost in the military this year, that should say something about this country, that should say something about where we are headed, and I would just hope that the two sides could come together, although I don't have much belief that we will get action from the other side until the NRA gives them a permission slip.

But our children are far too fragile. When our children start to believe that this is the norm, as opposed to the exception, we all need to go home and take a look in the mirror and say that this is not about the next election. We should muster up the courage, because this is absolutely about the next generation.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for those very thoughtful words. I hope that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will heed his admonition because, indeed, action needs to be taken, and it needs to be taken now.

Without further ado, it is my honor and privilege to yield to the gentleman from the Second District of Illinois, Ms. ROBIN KELLY, who has been an ardent defender, an outspoken advocate for gun violence prevention.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Congresswoman CLARKE leading this gun violence session. I will tell her, it is sickening to me that I am here again. I cannot believe I have been here 5 years and we have not brought one gun violence prevention piece of legislation to the floor.

There is legislation that a variety of people want to bring to the floor, but for some apparent reason, Speaker RYAN and Speaker Boehner before him, I guess they don't care enough about our kids dying not only in schools, not only in mass shootings, but dying in the streets of various cities in our Nation. It is absolutely ridiculous.

American children are being massacred. They are being massacred in city parks and in classrooms, at movie theaters, concerts, and even in their car seats, because of this Congress's criminal—that is what I said, criminal—inaction on gun violence.

Last week, instead of debating broadly supported legislation to ensure a background check on every gun sale, we spent hours debating a deeply flawed farm bill that would take food out of the mouths of hungry American children.

I don't think we care about children in this Congress, at least my colleagues on the other side. This disaster of a farm bill failed because it didn't meet the needs of American farmers and families, just like we are failing to meet the needs of American families on gun safety.

Mr. Speaker, couldn't we have better spent our time debating and advancing a bill to save lives? Shouldn't we be more interested in protecting the lives of American children?

Instead of working to take food away from hungry children, perhaps we should work to take guns away from dangerous individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say last week's events in Santa Fe, Texas, were unusual. I wish I would say this never happens, that it that was unusual or a freak accident. But that is not true. In fact, one of the young ladies said she was not surprised. It has been happening all over and she knew it would come to her school. That is an absolute shame that that young lady said that.

I wish I could say that about Palmdale, California, or Mobile Alabama; Parkland, Florida, or Raytown, Missouri. But I can't and I won't because, again, it is not true.

School shootings are no longer unusual, no longer shocking. They happen nearly every week in our Nation. It is only May 21 and we have already had 22 school shootings this year. Twenty-two school shootings in a matter of 5 months. Yet, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle see no problem with this.

The GOP offers thoughts and prayers, but nothing in the order of solutions or actions. Do you hear what the people are saying?

They don't want any more thoughts and prayers. They shun TV and radio interviews about this crisis, while mothers and fathers cry themselves asleep in an empty house. They speak about investing in mental health and expanding school security, while people who should never have guns walk into gun shows and walk out with the latest in military-grade weapons.

They produce a budget that really takes away from mental health.

We are better than that and the American people certainly deserve better than that. Every single day, Mr. Speaker, there is a mother burying her child because of gun violence. Every single day, dreams of college, a career, and a family get packed into tiny pine boxes because of House Republicans' gross negligence and inaction.

One thing is crystal clear: While the House majority may not have pulled the trigger, it is a blind embrace of inaction that makes it just as guilty—guilty for the murder of Bailey Holt, 15, in Benton, Kentucky; guilty for the murder of Jaelynn Willey, 16, in Lexington Park, Maryland; and guilty for the murder of Martin Duncan, 16, of Chicago, Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard us say it over and over: How many more? When is enough enough? How much more guilt will you bear? How many more times will we hold moments of silence with no follow-through on action?

When will this Congress have a fraction of the courage that Scott Beigel showed at Parkland? When will House Republicans follow the example of Victoria Leigh Soto in Newtown and actually protect kids' lives? When will Speaker RYAN show the slightest bit of courage that Aaron Feis had?

Instead of finding the courage to act, this House, this Speaker, the majority have stood on the sidelines while kids die, and all because of those big, fat NRA checks and because they don't have the courage. That is disgusting and it is wrong.

As we look to assign responsibility for these mass shootings, as we ask ourselves: Why all the violence? Where did it come from? As we ask ourselves: Why does this keep happening? We need to look no further than Longworth 1233, Speaker RYAN's office, for the responsibility of inaction, the responsibility of omission, and the responsibility of being too beholden to the NRA to save lives, instead of beholden to the people of this country, to the mothers and fathers who have lost their kids, to the future kids going to school.

When will it end?

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her words and for really laying out the framework for which this Congress needs to act. She said that it is a shame and a disgrace. I agree wholeheartedly. But I think that even more, our Republican colleagues need to search their souls, particularly those who claim to be of the Christian faith, which is the faith that I practice. Indeed, they are going to be called to account for their inaction. All I would ask is that the Lord have mercy on their souls, because there is blood on their hands.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I yield to the gentlewoman from the Third District of Ohio, Mrs. JOYCE BEATTY, an outspoken advocate, one who comes from a State where, again, gun rights are something that people pride themselves in. Commonsense gun measures are something that everyone is crying out for.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York, but more importantly, I thank her for anchoring tonight's message against gun violence.

Mr. Speaker, I come here tonight with a heavy heart. I don't have a written script, but I was so touched when I listened to Congresswoman CLARKE's opening statement and then when my classmate and colleague, Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY, spoke.

□ 2030

I wanted to come tonight because I want everyone listening to us to know to ask the question, Mr. Speaker: Why are we lagging behind? To ask the question: When are we going to do more than one moment of silence when there has been an unnecessary shooting?

We do it when there is national attention. But what happens when that young person in their backyard, what happens when that person is killed by a gun in their home? All lives matter, Mr. Speaker.

So, tonight, our message is clear. Americans have asked us to do some-

thing. I had the opportunity to witness thousands and thousands and thousands of young folks who came together to March for Our Lives because this is their way of life, and they felt that they should do something, and they did.

And at the end of the program in the Third Congressional District, they looked to us as leaders and said: What are you going to do for us? What are you going to do about this?

So I thought about it, and I went to my office, and I thought maybe I can take all of these commonsense gun laws and roll it into a bill that is called the Safer America for Everybody Right Now Act.

It won't solve the entire problem, but this is what we are called to do. We are called to come here and try to make a difference. We come to this floor just tonight talking about saving lives, talking about how much we care for families. We run on a platform of caring about our children and family and saving lives, and, yet, we come here and can't get a piece of legislation put before the Congress to vote on it. Mr. Speaker, that is not right, and it is not fair, and the American public deserves more.

Lastly, let me just say, I can remember sitting in that church when nine innocent churchgoing lives were taken. I can remember going to Ferguson and being at the site where a young African American boy's life was taken with a gun. I can tell you about being with the mothers in the movement and the pain and the agony in their voices when they talked about the loss of their child.

I was here as a freshman with Sandy Hook, and you know, I was at the nightclub in Florida. What more does it take, Mr. Speaker, than us coming here tonight asking you to do more than sit in that chair; asking you to put fair legislation on this floor so we can vote on it? That is my ask tonight.

Please support some of the bipartisan legislation that we have. Please look at putting funds in for mental health. Just do something to help us have a safer America now.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) for bringing her plea to the floor. She is absolutely correct. The inaction of the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the matter of gun violence in America is appalling.

So we call on him to bring bipartisan legislation to the floor. We have the votes to pass it. The question is: Do we have the will? Do we have the spine? Do we have the courage to do what needs to be done in the 21st century to protect our communities from this onslaught of gun violence?

Having said that, it is now my honor and my privilege to to yield to my co-anchor to share his thoughts with us this evening, none other than the gentleman from Pennsylvania, DWIGHT EVANS.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Congresswoman CLARKE, for leading this critical Special Order to speak about the national epidemic of gun violence, an important topic to all of us.

Sadly, though, Mr. Speaker, it seems that most Members only need to dust off their talking points from the last mass shooting, which was in Florida at Parkland. As the Grammy-winning artist, Kelly Clarkson, noted over the weekend, the same script plays out: vigils are held and the dead children are in our thoughts and prayers and life goes on, with most of the rest of us hoping and praying that our loved ones will not become a victim.

Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker. The same old script, which we play the same old game over and over again, we have these vigils, we come to this floor, we make these prayers, and the reality of it is, we hope and pray that someone will not become a victim.

Yet nothing gets done because the GOP leadership refuses to do anything about gun violence. The Black community is at a critical time because we have a lot to lose, because too many of our neighborhoods, unfortunately, have been subject to gun violence at a consistent rate, crimes which often goes unpunished because of unreliable and reluctant witnesses.

And the same President who asked what do we have to lose, twitters away his time in a tunnel. It seems like he has no conscience when it comes to these children dodging bullets, because he does nothing but cower and duck responsibility.

On February 14, this Nation once again witnessed a horrific tragedy that took place at a high school in Florida. Seventeen lives were taken at the hands of a gunman with too much firepower. And now, another shooting, 3 months later after Florida and 7 months after Las Vegas in October. The horror and the tragedy that shook the Florida high school should have been the last.

Yet, tragically, our Nation has lost too many loved ones at the hands of gun violence, at the point where we often see the same reaction: hand-wringing, blaming going around, but nothing is being done to stop the violence. And now in a small town in Texas, it is being done again.

The city of Philadelphia knows all too well the lives lost at the hands of gun violence. In 2017, we saw our city experience its largest homicide epidemic since 2012. There were over 317 homicides in Philadelphia, according to data from the Philadelphia Police Department. And with the continued surge of gun violence in Philadelphia, last year I handed a letter to the Pennsylvania attorney general, Josh Shapiro, outlining our Commonwealth needs to use all resources possible to advocate for commonsense gun reform.

Since I handed that letter to our Commonwealth's attorney general, we have had more heartbreak in America,

including the unspeakable tragedy at a church, a place of worship and refuge in Texas, and a mass shooting at a concert in Las Vegas, Florida, and now Texas.

Too often these tragedies occur because there is unimpeded access to guns. There are over 300 million guns in America. Most are owned by law-abiding citizens without harmful or dangerous intent, yet a gun in the wrong hands can lead to the horrific situations witnessed most recently in Las Vegas, Texas, and Florida.

Nearly 1.7 million children live in a home with a loaded, unlocked gun. Every year, thousands of kids are killed by firearms as a result. Our goal here in Congress must be to make sure our communities and our churches and our children are safe.

When we hear from the President on these matters, you listen to a voice that does not sound like the Commander in Chief or the soother in chief, but a President who, frankly, does not understand his job and too often lacks empathy, which was the case shown last week.

We are in the business of doing no harm. As elected officials, we are here to help move our neighborhoods forward, not backwards. I stand before you today to tell you, just as I have always done, I will continue to advocate for commonsense gun reform to keep everyone in our neighborhoods safe. It is evident that we must do more than the current status quo.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, today, under the leadership of our chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and the leader of this Special Order, Congresswoman CLARKE, that we are determined—we are determined to stay as long as we have to and continue to be in everyone's face about this issue.

Enough is enough. You have heard Members this evening say it about their districts, but it is not just in our districts. It is all across the country. Enough is enough. We all have to collectively recognize that this is not Democrat or Republican, but this is about the people in America.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say to you and to my colleague, who is leading this effort—and I thank her for showing the kind of leadership that is necessary in this effort, and she is doing a fantastic job in the great State and city of New York—in Brooklyn, that is. I want to make it very clear. She is leading this effort.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for his words of wisdom and for his statistical data.

And just to add to the conversation is that we have not counted those who were injured in all of these gun violence episodes across this Nation, those who have been traumatized by exposure to such carnage that is unfolding right before their very eyes. There are individuals in hospitals right now, as we speak, trying to recover from the

most horrific gun violence that has ever hit their communities. We don't know that all of them will heal, and, you know, this should be motivation to everyone in this Chamber to act.

We are all just a moment away from a tragic occurrence. And as a matter of fact, it wasn't that long ago that our colleagues were set upon at a Congressional Baseball Game practice. It boggles the mind. You have to ask yourself, where is the sanity when individuals who were gunned down at a Congressional Baseball Game practice have not mustered up the courage to bring a bill to the floor? Unbelievable. Unforgivable.

Having said that, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina, ALMA ADAMS, the 12th District, who is an advocate as well for commonsense gun measures in this Nation to come and bring her comments at this time.

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York and the gentleman from Pennsylvania for organizing this event tonight. Thank you for allowing me some time.

Like many of my colleagues, I have come to the floor to speak on this topic too many times. In the last year, we witnessed dozens of school shootings, and each time we say it is too soon to discuss a solution to the violence.

Instead, we call for a moment of silence. Mr. Speaker, it is not too soon, but it will soon be too late. Thoughts and prayers and silence, they just aren't enough. We need action, and we need it now.

In 2018, there have been more than 20 school shootings, which have resulted in more deaths than lives lost in military combat. Students and their parents shouldn't have to wonder whether they are safe in school. They shouldn't have to fear going to school.

As a grandmother and mother and retired educator, that shocks me. As an American, that infuriates me. It is time Congress has the moral courage to act. Like Fannie Lou, I am sick and tired of being sick and tired of the same old 1 minute, 1 minute, 1 minute rhetoric. We owe the students and families of Santa Fe and Stoneman Douglas and Sandy Hook and Columbine and all of our children all over this country so much more. No more executions. Let's pass some legislation to help end this tragic epidemic immediately.

We must not wait. Our Nation can't wait any longer and our children can't either, so let's do the right thing because it is the right thing. You know, the time is always right to do what is right.

□ 2045

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the 12th District of North Carolina, the Honorable ALMA ADAMS, for bringing her comments to the floor. At this time, clearly across this Nation, we represent very different districts, but there is one thing that we all have in common, and that is a reverence and

a real concern about the human condition; and the fact that here we are, once again, coming to the floor to plead with the leadership of this body to bring commonsense gun violence prevention laws to the people of this country. We won't stop until that occurs.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN), an outspoken advocate, who has done everything within her power to bring a voice to the voiceless, particularly those who are trying to come to grips with the violence that is unleashed in this Nation, and the lack of action coming from the leadership here in the House of Representatives.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for leading us in this Special Order hour on such an important topic.

It is safe to say that we are past the point of enough is enough because, apparently, enough is not enough.

Every time we face down another mass shooting, we have another moment of silence.

The United States has more gun deaths than any other developed nation, and it has far higher levels of gun ownership than any other country in the world. The U.S. has nearly six times the gun homicide rate of Canada, more than seven times that of Sweden, and nearly 16 times that of Germany, according to United Nations data.

Mass shootings constituted less than 2 percent of gun deaths in 2013. However, the U.S. makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population, but holds 31 percent of global mass shooters. We can go on and on and on and on with statistics.

We know what researchers have found. Researchers have found that when there is commonsense gun safety legislation, the number of deaths associated with guns decreases. We know that there was a 2016 review of 130 studies in 10 countries, published by Epidemiologic Reviews, which found that new legal restrictions on owning and purchasing guns tended to be followed by a drop in gun violence, a strong indicator that restricting access to firearms can save lives.

Since 2012, there have been 46 moments of silence on the floor of the House of Representatives addressing the tragic deaths in mass shootings.

And what have we done?

We get up for 46 moments of silence and we do nothing.

I have but a few comments left, and I would like to direct those comments to the chair behind the microphone because the person that holds that chair holds all of the power in determining what our agenda will be in this House.

The person who sits in that chair makes a determination whether or not we value those innocent lives we are losing every single solitary day because people who shouldn't have guns have access to guns, or whether or not we should just have one more moment of silence. And it is the person who sits

in that chair that is the biggest problem between doing what makes sense, what people expect from us, what we need to be doing, and doing nothing.

I am the grandmother of a 5-year-old child. She will be going to public school for the first time in her life. When her father went to school, they had fire drills. When she goes to school, she will be having active shooter drills.

Do you have any idea what that means to a next generation; what that will do to their mind, their personal sense of security?

They won't even want to go to school because they will be afraid that they will not be protected.

The person sitting in that chair right now can give us an opportunity to respond to the majority of the people in this country and bring before this House commonsense gun safety legislation. There are hundreds of bills in the hopper, languishing to be brought up.

We don't have the courage. No, not we. I have the courage. My colleagues, in my caucus, have the courage.

The person who sits in that chair represents the majority of the Members in Congress, and they have demonstrated that they lack the courage, the will, or the desire.

But do you know what?

The next child who experiences death at the hands of someone who shouldn't have a gun could very easily be one of their children. We better get sensible about what we are doing. Screw the NRA. They are screwing us.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for those comments. I feel her sense of frustration, I feel her outrage, and I think many Americans—as a matter of fact, the majority of Americans—do when they hear the outcries of the parents who have learned that their children have been gunned down in school; when they see their children on life-saving equipment in hospitals because they are hanging on to life by a thread; when they see their children duck down under their beds because they hear a car backfire, having flashbacks from the trauma they experienced in school, hearing mass gunfire taking place before their very eyes; when they don't want to go to school because they remember the rivers of blood that they witnessed as children and teachers' lives were being sucked out of them, due to the gun violence that was unleashed in a place that is supposed to be safe for them to learn, to grow, and to mature.

Mr. Speaker, we can't hear you.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), someone who the Congressional Black Caucus looks to for a lot of our legislation when it comes to criminal justice, and when it comes to understanding the role that we can play in advancing progressive legislation.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for allowing me to speak on this very important issue, and I thank her for leading this

Special Order on this important topic, which is gun safety, especially as it relates to school safety.

Keeping all students and educators safe is a top priority. On Friday, we had another tragedy. A small town that few could point out on a map is now infamous. Santa Fe High School, near Galveston, Texas, experienced a mass shooting, leaving 10 dead: Eight students, two teachers. Several students said to the media, they knew this would eventually happen to them.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those students and with the families suffering from acts of gun violence, but enough is enough.

This shooting marks at least 16 shootings in schools just this year. Using the same metrics, there have been hundreds of school shootings since the April 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado: Marjory Stoneman Douglas; Sandy Hook; Columbine; Virginia Tech; and now Santa Fe.

We watch, year after year, as students and educators lose their lives to gun violence, both in and out of school. Yet, in the decades since Columbine, Congress has taken virtually no action.

Instead of ignoring these tragedies, Congress must have some hard conversations about guns, about mental health, about bullying, and about policies that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline. And more than just conversation, Congress must act with policies built on evidence-based research, not slogans and sound bites. We all agree that we must do all that we can do to protect our students and prevent violence of all forms, including gun violence.

In the wake of Columbine, the knee-jerk reaction was to put more police in schools, invest in security infrastructure such as metal detectors, and turn our schools into fortresses. The research, based on such policies, is clear that more guns and schools built like Fort Knox will not make our students and teachers safer, and likely will negatively impact vulnerable students.

There is evidence that with more police in schools, they will be more likely to arrest the children than to protect the children. After Columbine, we passed legislation providing services for those caught up in the juvenile justice system, but, unfortunately, over the years, that funding has evaporated.

After Sandy Hook, no action was taken either. The Democratic Gun Safety Task Force made a list of recommendations of actions we could take, like an assault weapons ban, limiting the size of magazines, closing loopholes in background checks, more investments in mental health, and funding evidence-based policies that reduce crime. Unfortunately, no action has been taken on this list of initiatives.

Yet, we have seen virtually no action, even after the situation in Parkland, Florida. Instead, we have seen calls to arm teachers, allow racial dis-

crimination in the name of safety, and equip every school with more armed police officers. These measures have created a culture of fear and anxiety that actually makes the school-to-prison pipeline worse, and it does nothing to increase school safety.

We know what needs to be done to address school shootings. We need to equip our school leaders, teachers, and parents with the resources necessary to ensure access to school-based mental health services; we need to prevent bullying and harassment; and we need to achieve safe and welcoming learning environments for all students.

Comprehensive and collaborative interventions will help address school violence, improve school climate, and keep students safe. Students desperately need the staff and resources to better meet the mental health needs of students. We must invest in hiring more school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Trauma-informed care is a framework that helps all stakeholders recognize the signs of trauma and provides training on how to support children coping with trauma.

And we need proactive, not reactive, approaches to handling school discipline. Unfortunately, far too many schools today do not utilize the prevention interventions and, instead, rely heavily on suspensions and expulsions. The evidence is clear: the overuse of exclusionary discipline and the disparate treatment of students of color and students with disabilities robs our most vulnerable students of the opportunity to learn and to achieve.

In 2014, the Obama administration released a guidance package that focused on clarifying schools' obligation under Federal civil rights law to identify and address racial bias in discipline policies and practices. Those guidelines showed localities how to reduce those disparities without jeopardizing school safety. The guidance has recently been under attack from the administration and congressional Republicans, who are actually trying to claim the guidance has contributed to the school shooting in Parkland. Not only is this claim exploiting a tragedy to advance previous priorities, it is also factually false.

The guidance package, in no way, required schools to change discipline policies if disparities did not exist; and if the disparities did exist, they were not required to take any action that reduced school safety. Further, the guidance rightly pointed out that research shows suspensions and expulsions are ineffective and, actually, a harmful means of handling school discipline.

Mr. Speaker, Congress needs to take action because what we have done so far is not enough. We must enact commonsense gun violence prevention measures, and we must provide resources to educators and students to increase access to mental health services. I hope that as we move forward from yet another tragedy, that we can

stand together, ready to support our teachers, students, and families with real, evidence-based solutions.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the Third District of Virginia, the Honorable BOBBY SCOTT, for those comments.

Mr. Speaker, I neglected to mention that he is the ranking member on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and has really brought forth to us the real tangible information that we have about what happens to our young people in school when such tragedies occur, and what all of the fallout and by-products can be when we institute nonsensical policies, like having teachers arm themselves in the classroom, or the overreliance of law enforcement in the school environment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for bringing those facts to the floor and really laying out for the American people what it really means for our students to have to experience this violence within what is supposed to be the sanctity of their classrooms.

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Having said that, let me just close this evening's Special Order hour by expressing sort of the collective outrage of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus for the inaction of our Speaker and our colleagues on the other side of the aisle in the Republican Party who are not stepping up to show courage and determination to really bring an end to what we see as a violent epidemic in our Nation at this time.

Our colleague called upon colleagues in the body today to stand with him if they had witnessed or have experienced gun violence in their communities, to stand with the families whose names he read off today of children who perished in Texas. I found it interesting, when I looked at the floor—I didn't go to the floor because I knew it was just a ploy. But when I looked and saw how many colleagues were standing there with him, I said, if only they brought some legislation to the floor to end all of this, it would pass, because just about every colleague has been impacted by this outbreak in horrible gun violence across this Nation.

We need our legislation to be brought to the floor. Not doing so is really an affront to the American people, and it is certainly uncivilized and, some would even say, barbaric, because we have the knowledge, the wherewithal, and the ability to make a difference in the lives of the American people. It is up to us, the people who they have elected, to do the work that must be done on their behalf.

Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker. Lives are being lost minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, month by month, year by year in America because of the inaction of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLLINGSWORTH). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, Dr. BURGESS, for all the hours of work. It is not just a lot of fun up there on the Rules Committee, but I appreciate the work on behalf of our Conference.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a tragic number of days emanating from Santa Fe, Texas, due south of my home in east Texas, down in RANDY WEBER's district. It truly is tragic.

It is tragic, as well, when people in this country have become so comfortable persecuting Christians, demeaning Christians, that they put no stock, in fact, belittle anyone's mentioning of praying for the families or even praying for the country, which is where we have got to be.

There is a God. It is the same God that is referenced above my head and behind me, that same God in whom a lot of us trust. It just says: "In God we trust." That is the national motto, but I guess it would be more accurate to say, "In God, whom a lot of us trust" because of the condescending, demeaning comments made about Christians, about praying.

Prayer does work, it does matter, but not when a majority of the country is prevented from discussing Christianity publicly. I mean, this was a country where Christians from different parts of the world fled to. It was a destination, a glorious destination where people could come and live as Christians and not be persecuted, because Jesus himself said we would be hated, but he said: Remember, they hated me first.

We were told we would suffer for His sake, and He has certainly shown how brutal that could be. But as the oligarchs in black robes have taken over legislating, executive activities, as well as their own judicial activities, they have walked our country to the brink of despair. They have taken prayer—and I am talking about the oligarchs in black robes, the judges.

I was once a judge, felony judge, then a chief justice of a court of appeals, and I know how easy it is to think so highly of oneself. When a black robe is donned, our imperfections are covered up. And by our office, we are supposed to have some higher form of reason than our fellow people.

It is just not so. It is not so.

People have had it forced down their throats that, when it comes to education, it can't be education about religion, particularly Christianity. Oh, you can talk about Islam. You can talk

about Buddhism. You can give glowing reports about such things and what it takes to believe about the four pillars of Islam, but you don't dare talk about Christianity, because that is when the courts go nuts, say you have exceeded your bounds.

Schools have been told that they need to reinforce in a child's mind the relativism of different positions, where right to some may be wrong for others, and wrong for some may be right for others. There is no black and white, right or wrong. There is simply relativism.

John Adams, in 1797, as our second President of the United States, gave a warning that cries through over 200 years, over 220 years. He said it clearly:

This Constitution is intended for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

He was a very wise man. This Constitution of ours, the one we took an oath to follow here in this very Chamber, it doesn't work in a country where the people are not taught morality.

When John Adams said morality and religion, he was particularly talking about Christianity and Judeo-Christian morals as one finds in the Ten Commandments, as symbolically evidenced by the fact that Moses' supposed likeness directly above and in front of me is the only face of all of those profiles that is full face and not the side, because at one time he was considered to be the greatest lawgiver of all times.

At the time, it was the Ten Commandments that were considered to be so vital that those who came before us believed were the greatest laws ever given. But through the oligarchs across the street in black robes, they have said: Don't mention God. It is okay to use "Jesus" as long as you use it as a one-word exclamatory statement. It is fine to take God or Jesus' name in vain, that is fine, that is okay, but don't use it in a statement that you have sincerely with all your heart chosen to follow Jesus. That is just too inappropriate.

So Adams, he was right. Whether you call them oligarchs, multiple monarchs, they have helped lead this country in a direction it really didn't want to go, been ahead of the country forcing us down this road to the dustbin of history.

It is just so clear. If you are not going to teach the Judeo-Christian morality on which this country was founded, on which the revolution came about—without the churches of the day and the Great Awakening of the 1700s, there would not have been a revolution. Without a Second Great Awakening in the 1800s and some of the churches' leadership, we would never have seen the end of slavery in America.

The world will never see the end of slavery. There will always be slavery in the world, but it is such a hideous form of people mistreating other people, I literally pray that it will not revisit this Nation, this once great Nation.