

will have consequences for that child, and for this country, and our taxpayers, for the rest of their lives.

And we don't know for sure because none of the agencies have responded, but we hear that parents are going to court in mass trials and having their asylum claims denied—not heard, but denied—and then the parents are deported.

Does the government then go out and find the child in Chicago or Detroit, and send them back to their parents? Who knows? But probably not.

There is a certain devious and genuinely cruel kind of evil in separating a child from their mother. And they don't expect anyone on the Republican side of the aisle to say anything, because it is part of the strategy to help them keep their job.

Well, do you know what? Look, today, I am going to be joining with a group of hundreds of advocates from a diverse array of organizations, issues, and areas of this country, and we are going to demand answers.

□ 1015

And it is just not LUIS GUTIÉRREZ, but my friend and ally, JOE CROWLEY. We will be together today at a rally at Freedom Plaza at 1:30 here in Washington, D.C., and JOE and I will have other Members, including some who signed that letter I talked about and got the ball rolling.

Because do you know what? We cannot sit back and let our government systematically ruin the lives of families and scar children for life. When we said “never again,” we meant it. Never again, and that means right here in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter to the Cabinet Secretary, signed by 11 Democrats, demanding that answers be placed in the RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, June 8, 2018.

Hon. KIRSTJEN M. NIELSEN,
Secretary of Homeland Security,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JEFF SESSIONS,
Attorney General of the United States, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Hon. ALEX M. AZAR II,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY NIELSEN, ATTORNEY GENERAL SESSIONS, AND SECRETARY AZAR: We write to express our strong and emphatic opposition to the recently announced decision to prosecute migrants and asylum-seekers, which is a reprehensible action that violates U.S. treaty obligations, due process, and the law. The consequence of this policy is that children are routinely taken from their parents, with tragic results. There are widespread reports of more than 11,000 migrant children already in custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and hundreds of children—nearly half younger than 12 years old detained in Border Patrol stations when the law requires they be transferred within 72 hours to HHS. Serious and legitimate concerns have been raised about the deep trauma such separations cause these children, the questionable conditions in which they are being held and the absolute absence of a plan to reunite these children with their parents and families.

Separating families by force and punishing children and their families who are fleeing for their lives is immoral, unnecessarily cruel, and violates every science-based child welfare principle to act in the best interests of the child. We refuse to stand by while you systematically harm and traumatize thousands of children. Therefore, we call on the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to cease and desist with your so-called “zero-tolerance” policy and demand that HHS immediately begin reuniting these separated children with their parents. We also insist that you share with us the locations where you are holding these children and allow us and other Members of Congress to visit these locations and check on the conditions and welfare of the children.

Given the severity of the situation, an immediate response is appropriate. We ask that you respond to us with your plan to meet these requests by 12 noon on Tuesday, June 12th. Members of Congress stand ready to take action if these issues are not addressed promptly. Morality and human decency dictate that you reverse these policies and take immediate actions to end the harm you are causing to the children you wrenched from their parents and took into your custody.

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley, John Lewis, Luis V. Gutiérrez, Wm. Lacy Clay, Pramila Jayapal, Judy Chu, Jan Schakowsky, Raúl M. Grijalva, Adriano Espaillat, Barbara Lee, Al Green, Members of Congress.

HEROIN AND SYNTHETIC DRUG EPIDEMIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as the House considers legislation to address a heroin and synthetic drug epidemic plaguing our country, to honor the memories of two young people from my district: Morgan Brittany Axe, who died from a heroin overdose more than 2½ years ago, and Victor Orlando Woolson, who drowned after using synthetic drugs that he bought over the counter almost 6 years ago.

Morgan and Victor and so many others were touched by this terrible epidemic. Morgan and Victor were both active members of our community and touched the lives of every person they interacted with.

Before she passed away, Morgan worked at the Dewitt Animal Hospital and treated sick and injured animals on a daily basis. Victor was a high-achieving graduate of Mexico High School and was enrolled in Cayuga Community College, where he studied criminal justice and psychology.

Drug addiction is a terrible disease. Morgan became addicted to Xanax after the suicide of her boyfriend. She was just 17 years old at the time. Morgan became dependent on Xanax and needed it to function on a daily basis. She then progressed to other pills in order to numb her pain.

After a long battle with heroin and prescription painkillers, Morgan found the strength of sobriety for 8 months and was on the drug Vivitrol. Vivitrol magically makes it impossible for ad-

dicts to get high on heroin or painkillers.

After she found out that she was pregnant, Morgan went off Vivitrol because she did not want it to harm her child. Unfortunately, post-acute withdrawal set in, and Morgan relapsed.

Morgan did not have to drive to a drug house on Syracuse's west side to buy the bag of heroin that killed her. Instead, a career drug dealer delivered it to her house in Fairmount after cajoling her to use it.

After doing one bag of heroin, Deanna Axe found her daughter lifeless in her bedroom. Morgan overdosed and died, and her unborn child, Isaiah Douglas Lee Mathis, died with her. Morgan's drug dealer, Anthony Vita, was federally prosecuted and is now in prison for the next 15 years. However, Vita being in prison where he belongs, will never bring Morgan back.

Victor Woolson was your average happy-go-lucky teenager who had many friends. He was not only a loyal friend but a loving brother, uncle, and grandson. Victor graduated Mexico High School with an advanced regents diploma and had 4 years in the Marine Corps Junior ROTC program. In college, Victor was contemplating a career in law enforcement while attending Cayuga Community College.

While attending community college, Victor began experimenting with synthetic drugs that he was able to purchase legally over the counter. Because he could buy these substances over the counter, Victor assumed these illicit substances were safe. They were not.

At the young age of 19, Victor went into a shop, bought a packet of K2/Spice over the counter at a head shop in Oswego, New York, suffered a fatal reaction from smoking that synthetic marijuana, and drowned in Lake Ontario.

After Victor's tragic death, his mother, Teresa channeled her sadness and anger into advocacy and founded the Victor Orlando Woolson Foundation, or the VOW Foundation for short, which advocates for stronger legislation against synthetic drugs and assists individuals and organizations in providing services for mentally ill, homeless, and low-income youth in Oswego County.

It has been my honor to fight alongside Teresa, and this year I invited her to be my guest at the State of the Union in order to highlight the need to address and combat the use of synthetic drugs.

I am proud to fight in memory of Morgan and Victor and so many others, and in this Congress I introduced the Stop the Importation and Trafficking of Synthetic Analogues Act, or SITSA for short.

The SITSA Act modernizes the Controlled Substances Act by speeding up the process of placing synthetic drugs on the controlled substances list. Under current law, drug producers often make minor tweaks to legal substances that mimic the effects of

banned drugs and use this loophole to prevent law enforcement from removing these drugs from circulation.

In addition, the SITSA Act outlaws 13 synthetic fentynals that have been identified by the Drug Enforcement Administration as an immediate threat to public health.

Together, by passing this legislation, we can prevent synthetic drugs from, one, being imported into this country; two, being routinely mixed with heroin in fatal doses; and, three, being sold over the counter in head shops and bodegas throughout this country.

These efforts can't bring Victor Orlando Woolson back. They can't bring Morgan Brittany Axe back and so many others from our district and our country, but this is a start in the right direction to stop this terrible epidemic.

Every hour in this country, five people die from heroin overdose—every hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. We have got to stop it. We have got to keep pushing.

I am proud to be part of the legislation, and I am proud that the Congress is acting in such a meaningful manner.

AMERICA MUST REMAIN A SAFE HAVEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, the Trump administration and its attacks on families seeking asylum are in full force.

The Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, just announced this week that victims of domestic violence and gang violence will no longer qualify for asylum here in the United States. Victims of domestic violence and victims of gang violence will no longer be eligible for asylum, refuge, here in the United States.

This isn't about going after the perpetrators. What the Attorney General is doing is targeting the victims—not the perpetrators, but the victims—of domestic violence and of gang violence. Meanwhile, the administration continues to engage in the sickening policy of taking children, babies, away from their mothers and their fathers, just like this woman from Guatemala.

Mr. Speaker, this is an ugly hour for our Nation, uglier than we have seen in a very, very long time. As a father myself, my heart aches when I hear the stories of toddlers screaming for their parents who are sitting in a cell within earshot. If that isn't psychological torture, I don't know what is.

The stories my colleagues have recounted from the visits to detention centers are simply gut-wrenching. Any one of my Republican colleagues who supports these abominable policies should be ashamed.

Put yourself in the shoes of these people. They have just ventured hundreds, if not thousands, of miles to save their lives and to save the lives of their children. They have left everything they have known behind; every person

they have left behind because it is no longer safe to stay there.

They arrive in the world's greatest nation seeking refuge and asylum and turn to American authorities, willingly, and apply for that asylum. And what happens? Their children are ripped from their arms screaming and crying, all because they tried to save their children from a treacherous fate.

The Republican Party used to stand for and talk a lot about family values. Republicans of all stripes would tout it over and over again: family values, family values, family values.

There is no value in ripping a child from the arms of their mother. It is inhumane.

There is no value in keeping children alone in a steel cage without the love of their family. It is cruel.

There is no value in traumatizing children who cannot fend for themselves. It is torture.

My colleagues, America is asking, the world is asking: Where are your family values now? Where is your outrage? Where is your compassion? Where is your courage?

They don't need to do this to these families.

And don't let them fool you: the law does not require this, not one bit. This is a choice that is being made by President Trump—not the law, a choice—and it must stop. America must be on the side of children and families. America must remain a safe haven for those seeking safety and refuge.

Last week, 10 of my colleagues and I sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies on this reprehensible action. We called on them to cease and desist with their so-called zero-tolerance policy and reunite separated parents and mothers with their children.

We made very clear that we expected an immediate response; and surprise, we have gotten no response. They have offered no response to how cruel they are being, no response to the harm that they are causing to these children.

So I will stand in solidarity with these families. I will stand in solidarity with those fleeing violence and seeking asylum. I will stand up and I will shout out against these agencies until they recognize that these practices are unacceptable.

Democrats will keep fighting until the disgusting practice of taking children away from their mothers ends.

RECOGNIZING VINCENT GONZALEZ

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

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a member of our community in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, who was recently honored as a Red Cross hero.

Last New Year's Eve, Vincent Gonzalez of Levittown sprang into action following a serious accident in which

an impaired driver crashed his vehicle into the home of his neighbors Jim and Mary Albright.

Vincent provided immediate assistance to Jim, who was seriously injured and was bleeding heavily from a sustained head wound.

For the rest of that night, Vincent comforted Mary, who had to face the devastating reality of an injured husband, a damaged home, and the death of the family's beloved yellow lab because of this horrific incident.

Today, Jim, who is fully recovered, refers to Vincent as his and Mary's "guardian angel." I would like to honor Vincent for his quick thinking and selfless actions. I encourage all of my constituents to follow his lead and to look out for each other in times of crisis.

RECOGNIZING LOGAN KILLEEN

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize a heroic young man who is already teaching our community in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, the values of respect and compassion.

Logan Killeen of Fairless Hills was born with Treacher Collins syndrome, a rare disorder which affects facial bones and structure. Recently, Logan has undergone several surgeries to alleviate his condition, and he often wears a headband to assist with his hearing.

In the fall, Logan will be starting kindergarten at Oxford Valley Elementary School. That school recently held an assembly in his honor to teach fellow students that, even though Logan may look different than they do, he is just like them.

I commend Logan for his bravery, and I also commend Oxford Valley Elementary School as well. I want to commend both for their willingness to spread kindness to their peers and to our community.

I would also like to recognize Logan's parents, Matt and Nicole Killeen, for raising such a fine young man and for all that they do for individuals facing this challenge.

□ 1030

GUN VIOLENCE

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

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today yet again because Congress continues to do nothing as Americans die from the scourge of gun violence.

It is just over 2 years from the tragedy at Pulse nightclub that claimed 49 lives and changed hundreds of lives forward; 1 year since mass shootings in Baltimore, Maryland, and University City, Missouri, that claimed 2 lives and wounded 6 others; nearly 1 year since the Republican majority whip was shot just a few miles from here preparing for the annual Congressional Baseball Game; and I will add, this past weekend, 9 more wounded in Chicago and over 30 shot.