

reach effectively, as Members of Congress, all of our constituents who are dependent on information that we receive: the waiters and waitresses, the traveling public, the aviation persons, the public hospital providers, all of those persons in our districts.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join the task force. Let us work together because it is a crisis. We are in a position to help the American people in the best way that we can, and that is with information.

CONGRATULATING PRESIDENT ON IMPOSING PUBLIC CHARGE RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to address and congratulate President Trump on imposing the public charge rule with regard to public benefits.

You know, around here, we get along on many different items bipartisan in nature, and I enjoy working with my Democratic colleagues. But one issue that I think is at the crux of the disagreement and dislike of President Trump is something I agree with him very strongly on, and I think all the American public ought to know about it, and that is something referred to as the public charge rule.

Ever since the 1800s in this country, we have tried to make it a point that people who come here from other countries not come here and wind up on public benefits or welfare or what have you.

Unfortunately, we weren't doing a very good job of enforcing this rule until President Trump stepped up and put a rule that went into effect last October, saying that if you are here as an immigrant, you are not eligible for food stamps; you are not eligible for low-income housing; you are not eligible for Medicaid; you are not eligible for other means-based benefits.

President Trump, having a soft heart, continues to allow immigrants, immigrant children, to receive free and reduced lunch, Medicaid, and even are eligible for student loans.

Nevertheless, I think it was a very good thing for President Trump to do. Our immigrants are the future of America.

Right now, in America, our immigrants are far more likely than the native-born to take advantage of public benefits. A study shows that 63 percent of noncitizens versus 35 percent of the native-born are on some form of public benefits. With regard to food assistance, 45 percent of the immigrants, compared to 21 percent of the native-born, are on public benefits.

Well, anybody can go through a tough time. And I should point out that President Trump does not remove your ability to stay here, just to be on

public benefits for a month. It has to be for a period of several months, and once you are on those benefits, we want you removed.

The reason for that is, for the future of America, we want people who are self-reliant and paying taxes. We already take care of our native-born who, to a huge degree, for whatever reason, have to rely on our fellow citizens.

Right now, we are in a position in which a much higher percentage of people—63 percent of noncitizens versus 35 percent of native-born—are taking advantage of some benefits.

If you look at food stamps, between 2004 and 2019, the total number of people on food stamps in this country went up 50 percent. That is a huge increase. It is particularly a huge increase if you take into account the economy in 2019 was about as strong as it is going to get.

I, therefore, applaud President Trump for stepping up to the plate and trying to restrict immigration to people who can take care of themselves, all the while making sure that we are taking care of the children of people who are here.

I also want to point out that people who are here illegally should not be eligible for those benefits. But, again and again, I hear people from my district, and I think from public comments made by people—like the Governor of California or the mayor of New York—that I don't believe local officials are at all times prohibiting people who are here illegally from getting benefits.

In any event, particularly as long as we have birthright citizenship, I think the policy before Trump got here is misguided and, ultimately, will lead to a decline in the quality of life in America.

I am, therefore, very glad that the Supreme Court allowed President Trump's rule to be upheld. But we have to caution America in that this is not a statutory thing. This is not something that has passed Congress.

The only reason we are trying to hold down the number of people who are here who are not citizens from getting benefits is President Trump. It could easily be true that by this time next year, we will go back to the days in which a high number of noncitizens are taking advantage of public benefits.

Like I said, I think for some people, the generosity of the public benefits will encourage people to adapt a lifestyle in which they are eligible for them, which is a real crime.

In any event, I would like to say one more time—I don't always get invited over to the White House, in case President Trump is watching—thank you, President Trump, at a time of trillion-dollar deficits, for stepping up to the plate and trying to improve the immigrants that we have coming in the country.

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

CONGRESS NEEDS LEADERS, NOT GUN LOBBY SHILLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PORTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, we have promised to serve the American people, and this means keeping American families safe and secure. But for too long, Congress has put fealty to the special interest of the gun lobby ahead of our safety.

I cannot afford to live in fear of special interests. Why? Because every single day when I send my three children off to school, I live in fear for their safety; because I have seen the pain on the faces of those parents whose children never came home from school, the parents who hugged their children good-bye in the morning, never knowing it would be for the last time; because no parent should ever have to mourn a child lost to preventable gun violence; and because, as your Member of Congress, I have the power to fight for change.

This is the power that Congress has, and this is why 1 year ago, we passed landmark legislation to reduce gun violence in this country.

Under current law, only federally licensed vendors must conduct background checks, but this creates loopholes for private sellers. This means that there are no background checks on private sales, including gun shows and online transactions.

The Bipartisan Background Checks Act closes this loophole and will ensure that nearly all gun sales are run through the National Criminal Background Check System.

This legislation is common sense. In fact, two former GOP Congressmen wrote an op-ed in *The Washington Post* in support of the legislation. They said: "This bill doesn't take away anyone's guns." It represents "a critical step in the right direction at a time when more and more Americans are touched by gun violence."

This is a clear, commonsense, American solution that is now being held hostage by Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, the President, and the gun lobby.

And this is a uniquely American issue. No other country experiences the same epidemic of gun violence.

In fact, guns are the second-leading cause of death for American children and teens; nearly 1,700 are killed by guns every year. In my home State of California, an average of 246 children and teens die from guns every year.

Since the beginning of 2014 in California, over 14,000 people, including, heartbreakingly, 120 law enforcement officers, have been injured or killed due to gun violence.

Mr. Speaker, 47 of those people hurt or killed were in my district in Orange County, the 45th. We have lost 34 members of our community in just 4 years to gun violence.

Orange County families have made their feelings heard, time and again, that they want us to strengthen gun violence prevention laws. I am standing here as proof that Orange County wants action on gun reform. Keeping our families safe is at the heart of our community's values.

I want to share a story of one Orange County family with my colleagues here in Congress. This is a story of a family who experienced loss from gun violence and, yet, found the strength to dedicate their lives to making sure that others don't experience similar tragedies.

Mary Leigh and Charlie Blek from Orange County have fought tirelessly for commonsense gun legislation in California. Their son, Matthew Blek, was only 21 years old when he was shot and killed while visiting New York City. He was a victim of armed robbery by teens using a small handgun, also known as a junk gun.

In memory of their son, the Bleks founded Orange County Citizens for the Prevention of Gun Violence in 1995. For 5 long, hard-fought years, they advocated for safety regulations that would rid California of the type of gun that killed their son, and they succeeded.

California used to produce 80 percent of the junk guns for the Nation. California no longer produces these junk guns and has enacted safety standards for handguns.

Still today, the Bleks are vigilant in preventing the gun lobby from finding a way to sell dangerous handguns in California. The Bleks now lead the Orange County chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. I am personally very grateful for their efforts. No family should ever have to go through what the Bleks suffered, but too many in our own communities have. And because the Senate has yet to act, nothing has changed.

It has been 1 year since we passed H.R. 8. It has been almost 2 years since the Parkland school shooting, and over 7 years since the Sandy Hook shooting. And until this Congress, there has not been any change coming out of Washington.

Time is running out. Congress has the power to stop more people—more children—from dying from gun violence, and we must act.

Now more than ever, we need the American people to insist that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle stand up to the gun lobby and stand up to join in the fight to reduce gun violence. We all have a duty to be leaders, not shills for the gun lobby, not cowards afraid to lose an A-rating. Our children deserve our courage.

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Our children deserve leaders who will fight to ensure that families are safe at school, in parks, at the movies, and at concerts.

As your Member of Congress, as a mother, and as a member of the Orange County community, I will never back

down from this fight. I will not be bought, and I will not be silenced by the gun lobby or by the President.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentlewoman for anchoring this extremely important intervention and Special Order Hour.

I wasn't really sure whether or not I would have the strength to stand before you today because we have had yet another mass shooting just in the last day. It seems like this is a daily event.

It happened, unfortunately, in my own hometown, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When these things happen, you try to distance yourself from them. You say to yourself, you know, it doesn't have an impact on me personally.

But, unfortunately, of the five victims, I knew one of them very well. I have known him since 1992, an immigrant, who was a father, a husband, a grandfather, a wonderful person who left the Soviet Union to come and seek a better life for him and his family, a life of freedom, only to be met with death.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a year, today, I believe, that we sent H.R. 8 over to MITCH MCCONNELL's graveyard, while our constituents are planning on putting their loved ones in the grave.

It is Sandy Hook. It is Columbine; Newtown; Oak Creek, which is adjacent to my district; Florida, the Pulse mass killing; Parkland; churches, Mother Emanuel Church, the Sikh Temple; movie houses; for God's sake, an elementary school. There is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.

What I have come to learn too quickly is that it will have an impact on you personally, as it happened to me last night.

Yesterday, my friend went to work, and today his family is gathering to put him to rest. Of course, my heart aches for them because I knew them, but I knew all of the victims of gun shootings. And I say: How long is how long?

It is the reality in this country. I know people make the argument, Mr. Speaker, that, oh, we need to do something about mental illness.

There is mental illness all over the world, but there are not these shootings because there is not the easy access to guns. And we ought to use the tools in our toolkit to be able to vet people before they receive these guns.

How terrible is my restimulated memory of Zina Daniel, a constituent of mine who provided services in the spa industry. Her estranged ex-husband put out an ad saying: I need a gun, and I need the gun right now.

He was sold the gun in a fast-food parking lot—no vetting, no background check, just sold a gun. All of the indicators were there that he was up to no good: I want a gun, any kind of gun, any caliber, and I want it now.

That is how Zina Daniel and her coworkers lost their lives; Zina Daniel, leaving children on this Earth to be cared for, with no mother.

While I don't know the circumstances of the weapon last night, I can tell you that we see our citizens with military-type weapons, nothing that can be justified for the many hunters we have in Wisconsin, weapons that mutilate people and butcher them and mangle the bodies of children, disfiguring people so badly that they can't be identified when their parents show up at the morgue.

There are stories of these AR-15s brutalizing these bodies so terribly that it is just a second source of trauma for parents to see their deceased children in this condition, children as young as 6 years old, barely at the dawn of life, dead from gunfire.

Please do not let their cries go on unheard. We need the Senate to pass comprehensive gun legislation yesterday because one death is too many.

I speak for the students who lead protests all over this country demanding more.

I speak for the moms who diligently march and protest every single day demanding more.

I speak for all of the citizens in our districts who have wept too many times.

I speak for those children who don't feel like they will get an opportunity to grow up and to have a voice, those who cannot vote, and they are depending on the adults, adults like MITCH MCCONNELL, to act.

I pray that MITCH MCCONNELL does not experience the pain and agony that I am experiencing today, having to get on that airplane and go and face my friend since 1992 and her children in the wake of this. I hope that he will rest tonight, as I will not be able to rest tonight.

Perhaps this is just one person who died, just five people in Milwaukee who died, but this was a very important person to my friend. This was a part of our community. This was a part of our commercial industry. He was a very important part of the MillerCoors family. He was our neighbor, and he was a human being.

We are calling upon the humanity of you, Senator MCCONNELL, to explain yourself to this man's wife, to his two daughters, to his grandchildren why we can't have a sensible background check piece of legislation.

Someone that I loved very much is on their way to the graveyard. Please dig up our legislation from your graveyard, Senator MCCONNELL.

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin, for her powerful words in this time of tragedy in her district. I thank her for bringing the voice of those we lost to the United States Congress. I really appreciate her passion and compassion.

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

HONORING CARMEN CARRASQUILLO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO) is recognized for the remainder of the hour.

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewomen from Wisconsin and California for their wise words and for invoking the angels that we lost in Florida as well.

In honor of Women's History Month, I would like to recognize Carmen Carrasquillo.

Carmen is a graduate of New York's Baruch Community College and earned a business management certification from Columbia University. She worked as the administrator of the Boriken Health Center for the indigent community in East Harlem, New York.

Since joining the council in 1992 as the senior center coordinator, Carmen has worked with residents and leaders to initiate and sustain programs serving seniors and disabled adults. These have earned the Osceola Council on Aging Senior Center numerous awards for maintaining the independence and dignity of our constituents, including Outstanding Senior Center in the State of Florida.

Her background as a bilingual teacher led to the first English classes for Spanish-speaking adults in Osceola County. This also led her to become a founding member of BRAVO, a non-profit organization that provided necessary information and referrals to a newly emigrating Hispanic population in Osceola County. Carmen was also named Woman of the Year in 1994.

Carmen assisted the Council on Aging with the opening of the first Hispanic site, Centro Latino Americano Edad de Oro, in the Buena Ventura Lakes Community Center, also known as the Roberto Guevara Community Center.

She was also one of the founders of the Senior Follies with the Osceola Center for the Arts, partnered with Southwest Airlines on a Home for the Holidays program, organized volunteer activities for AARP Community Care Days, organized Hispanic outreach for the South Florida Water Management District, started an intergenerational program with New Beginnings Educational Complex that partners at-risk high school students with seniors in various social activities, operating the Federal Emergency Food Assistance program and local food bank that supplies commodities to the poor and area organizations feeding the poor in Osceola County, and was appointed to the Florida Department of Agriculture TEFAP Advisory Board by Charles Bronson, our former ag commissioner.

For that, Ms. Carmen Carrasquillo, we honor you.

HONORING DEBORAH GUERRERA GALE

Mr. SOTO. Mr. Speaker, in honor of Women's History Month, I would like to honor Deborah Guerrero Gale.

Deborah Guerrero Gale moved to Florida in 1978 from upstate New York, where she worked as a banking accountant after graduating from Ulster County College. Once in Florida, she decided to switch careers and became a draftsman by studying engineering at Valencia College.

Deborah worked for Walt Disney World Ride & Show Engineering as an electromechanical designer for 10 years. She later returned to college to earn a bachelor's degree in human resources at the age of 40 from Barry University and held positions in Disney Human Resources, Organizational Development, and HR Information Services.

Deborah was raised by caring, progressive parents, Barbara and John Guerrero, who instilled in her a belief in the basic human dignity of all people. Through them, she learned that she could make a positive difference in the world and that she could achieve anything with hard work.

This belief inspired a drive for volunteer service in the community, such as organizing projects for foster teens residing at The Grove, an adolescent residential center for at-risk teens, and Help Now, a domestic abuse shelter.

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She also served as president of the Celebration Women's Club, supporting women's charities and college scholarships. While living in Celebration, she was a founding member and president of the Democrats of Celebration.

After retirement, Deborah turned her attention full-time to civic activism and founded the Democrats of St. Cloud Club and was elected as chair of the Osceola County Democratic Party in 2019.

Deborah's belief that she can make a difference has fueled her passion to advance causes that can make our community and our county a better place for the next generation.

Deborah lives in St. Cloud with her husband, Michael Womick. They have one daughter, Jenna Womick Stowers, and a grandson, Treton James.

For that, Deborah Guerrero Gale, we honor you.

HONORING GIORGINA PINEDO-ROLON

Mr. SOTO. In honor of Women's History Month, I would like to recognize Dr. Giorgina Pinedo-Rolon.

Dr. Giorgina Pinedo-Rolon was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and moved to the United States in 1986. Since then, she earned a master's in TV production and journalism and a Ph.D. in social psychology.

Giorgina has extensive experience in television, print, and radio and has worked in various roles for Telemundo Orlando, Casiano Communications' Imagen magazine, and other local news outlets.

Currently, she works for the city of Orlando as the director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Giorgina has been very involved in the business community and the local

government of central Florida. She has been recognized for her work with the following awards: Don Quijote Awards' Professional of the Year; Girl Scouts of Citrus' Women of Distinction Awards Visionary of the Year; Orlando Business Journal 40 Under 40; Working Together Outstanding Community Service Award; and the Executive of the Year, HABLA Awards.

Dr. Pinedo-Rolon is a board member of the Crimeline and Girl Scouts of Citrus. She is also chair of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Metro Orlando's Government Affairs Committee and a member of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness' Family Homelessness Committee. She was a former board member and chair of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando, the Economic Development Commission, the Orange County Membership and Mission Review Board, the Coalition for the Homeless, the Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Fund, Easter Seals, and a former president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists' Central Florida Chapter.

She is a member of the National Association of Professional Women, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, American Association of Marketing and Public Relations, Hispanic Public Relations Association, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Orlando, and a lifetime member of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

Giorgina is married to our Orlando police chief, Orlando Rolon, the first Puerto Rican to hold that position. She has two stepchildren and three grandchildren.

For all this and more, Dr. Giorgina Pinedo-Rolon, we honor you.

HONORING DR. ANGELA M. GARCIA FALCONETTI

Mr. SOTO. In honor of Women's History Month, I would like to recognize Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti.

A native Floridian and the daughter of Cuban exiles who completed their degrees at Florida colleges, Dr. Falconetti has a personal commitment to the Florida college system and to ensuring all students have the chance to receive a quality education. She has developed a vision to strengthen student success and has advocated successfully at the State level for critical funding.

Her two decades of service in three States include extensive experience in all aspects of higher education administration. She holds a bachelor's degree with specializations in communications and education cognate from New York University and a master's degree and a doctorate degree in educational leadership from the University of North Florida, with specializations in instructional leadership and postsecondary education and adult learning.

She later completed an endowed postdoctoral fellowship in community college leadership with the University of Texas at Austin while working as a research associate for the Community College Survey of Student Engagement.