

lethality within the communities. At some point, gun manufacturers are going to lose this immunity they have to being held accountable. The Congress never should have given it to them.

This is a sad day in the history of this country. Two people—it doesn't matter about their color—two people were shot because they happened to be in the wrong place in the presence of persons with lethality.

CELEBRATING FAITH MONTH

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, this week, we are observing the second annual celebration of Faith Month.

Concerned Women for America and other sponsors are encouraging legislators across our country to give public display of our personal faith freely and openly. What a great exercise this is.

Of course, even though there is a dangerous trend today to discourage the display or depiction of the exercise of our faith in the public square—certainly, there is a move to keep religion out of politics and to rigidly enforce the so-called separation of church and state—the Founders of this country would have certainly supported our efforts here today.

Indeed, this common misunderstanding about the separation concept—and it is an important one—is one that is useful for us to address. I think today is a good day to do it. In fact, it is one of my favorite subjects. It is a topic that I have debated and written and taught university courses on for about 25 years, about a quarter of a century. For two of those decades, I was in the courts defending religious freedom cases. I learned during that time that I really believe that this is among the most misunderstood subjects in our entire culture.

You see, most people today who insist upon a rigid separation of church and state are unaware that that phrase derives not from the Constitution itself, of course, but from a personal letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. He explained that because “religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God,” the language of the First Amendment is a vital safeguard of our “rights of conscience.”

Jefferson said he revered “that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between church and state.”

That is what he wrote in his letter to the Danbury Baptists, but Jefferson clearly did not mean that metaphorical wall was to keep religion from influencing issues of civil government. To the contrary, it was meant to keep the

Federal Government from impeding the religious practice of citizens.

The Founders wanted to protect the church from an encroaching state, not the other way around. The majority of the Founders, having personally witnessed the abuses of the Church of England, were determined to prevent the official establishment of any single national denomination or religion.

Of course, we know that, but here is the point. They very deliberately listed religious liberty, the free exercise of religion, as the first freedom protected in the Bill of Rights because—here is the key—they wanted everyone to freely live out their faith as that would ensure a robust presence of moral virtue in the public square and the free marketplace of ideas.

Volumes written on this topic can be summarized probably best and most concisely by reference to the sentiments of our first two Presidents.

In his historic Farewell Address, President George Washington, of course, famously said: “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”

Our second President, John Adams, came next, and he said: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

What these two Founders and their fellow patriots all understood from history was that there are many important rules and practices that can help build and sustain a healthy republic, but the key and essential foundation of a system of government like ours must be a common commitment among the citizenry to the principles of religion and morality.

The Founders acknowledged in the Declaration the self-evident truths that all men are created equal and that God gives all men the same inalienable rights. However, they knew that in order to maintain a “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” as Lincoln later articulated, in “this nation, under God,” those inalienable rights must be exercised in a responsible manner.

They thus believed in liberty that is legitimately constrained by a common sense of morality and a healthy fear of the creator who granted all men our rights.

The Founders understood that all men are fallen and that power corrupts. They also knew that no amount of institutional checks and balances and decentralization of power in civil authorities would be sufficient to maintain a just government if the men in charge had no fear of eternal judgment by a power higher than their temporal institutions.

A free society and a healthy republic depend upon religious and moral virtue because those convictions in the minds and hearts of the people make it possible to preserve their essential freedoms by emphasizing and inspiring individual responsibility and self-sac-

rifice and the dignity of hard work, the rule of law, civility, patriotism, the value of family and community, and the sanctity of every single human life.

They knew that this would be important, and without these virtues indispensably supported by religion and morality, every nation would ultimately fail.

Inscribed on the third panel of the Jefferson Memorial here in Washington is a sobering reminder to every American. It says: “God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?”

This a great time to preserve our faith. We can never back down. I thank the Concerned Women for America.

CHOOSE PROTECTING OUR TRANS CHILDREN OVER POLITICS

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to H.R. 734, a bill that chooses politics over protecting our children, specifically our trans children.

With all the challenges we are facing as a country, with all the challenges so many working and middle-class families are facing, it is astonishing that we are here debating legislation that seeks to target our children.

I intentionally say “our children” because I do believe as legislators we should be concerned about every child in America, whether they live in a red or blue State, urban or rural community, and however they choose to identify.

Yet, Republicans, not just in this body but in legislatures across the country, have set their mark on trans children. When we speak of trans children, by most estimates, we are talking about 300,000 people in a country of 331 million, and even fewer who participate in school sports.

Just think about that. With all the power bestowed upon us, upon this august institution, Republicans are choosing to use that might to prevent trans children from participating in sports. They do so instead of working with Democrats to provide tangible solutions to the challenges that so many Americans are facing.

Why are we not voting today to make permanent the expanded child tax credit, which lifted 2.9 million children out of poverty?

Why are we not voting today on legislation that would make pre-K available to all families and, in doing so, alleviate one of the most significant burdens that working parents face each and every day?

Why are Republicans not focusing on these issues, debating and voting on real change for the majority of American families?

This week, Republicans will constantly talk about protecting our children, yet they won't work to solve the

gun violence epidemic that we have in our country, an epidemic that continues to be a stain on each and every one of us.

We have to acknowledge the complete absurdity that Republicans are more comfortable sending their children to school to participate in active shooter trainings than they are having their children play alongside a trans teammate.

The leading cause of death of children in this country, in our country, is gun violence. Yet, Republicans are here trying to prevent trans children from participating in sports.

The GOP's title of this bill is Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act of 2023, but have we not asked ourselves about the children that this bill seeks to target? Who is protecting them?

When will we remember that we show our true strength by concerning ourselves with the most vulnerable amongst us?

We are supposed to be the ones who are guided by President Lincoln's encouragement to have faith that right makes might. Being on the side of those who others seek to marginalize is the right side of history and shows true strength.

Mr. Speaker, on the topic of strength, let me be clear about one thing. Every single trans individual in this country who continues to be their true and authentic self in the face of constant bigotry and hate has more strength and courage than anyone who chooses to vote for this bill.

As the Book of John reminds us: "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

As a father, I know that the single greatest gift that we can give our children is the love, support, and encouragement they need to be the truest and most authentic versions of who they are because we as adults know that this life is hard and that giving our kids that support is the least we can do.

Instead of trying to make life just a little easier, especially for those individuals who have found the bravery to be open about who they are, Republicans are trying to put out their inner light by making them feel different, by ostracizing them from their peers.

As I have said before and will say so long as it needs to be said, I love every single trans individual in this country because they are my brothers, my sisters, my neighbors, and my fellow Americans.

This bill is wrong. Targeting the trans community is wrong, and I won't stand for it.

Mr. Speaker, I am a "no" on H.R. 734, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

□ 1045

CONGRATULATING THE 2023 GRADUATING CLASS OF THE COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE AT TOURO UNIVERSITY NEVADA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. SPARTZ). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the 2023 graduating class of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Touro University Nevada.

This week is National Osteopathic Medicine Week, and I cannot think of a better way to celebrate than by highlighting the incredible success of our future doctors of osteopathic medicine.

Not only did these graduates achieve a 100 percent residency match rate, but I am also proud to say that 50 of them will be staying in Nevada where they will help fill critical healthcare needs in our State by helping combat our dire shortage of physicians.

Nevada ranks 48th in the Nation in doctors per capita. These future healthcare providers will fill in the gaps across our healthcare system from family medicine and pediatrics to emergency medicine, neurology, and psychiatry.

Too many Nevadans in rural and underserved communities do not have access to specialists in their area, which significantly restricts their ability to access healthcare services.

I am so proud that these doctors will be filling those critical needs, and I congratulate Touro University.

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEVADA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Nevada Air National Guard for their 75 years of service to Nevada and the entire country.

In that time, our servicemembers have supported national security, combat operations, and humanitarian efforts across the globe.

The Nevada Air National Guard began as a small fighter squadron comprised of World War II-era P-51 Mustangs. Its units have since evolved: flying in the Korean war, aerial reconnaissance throughout the Cold War, and numerous deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Here at home, the Nevada Air National Guard has also carried out significant humanitarian operations such as Operation Haylift, a daring supply drop to farmers and miners trapped by winter storms in 1948.

Today, the Nevada Air National Guard is perhaps best known for its continued use of our military's workhorse, the C-130, which, among other impressive capabilities, has been routinely deployed for firefighting operations with the U.S. Forest Service.

In 2021 alone, the Nevada Air National Guard made 331 flights, dropping more than 8 million pounds of fire retardant to help contain wildfires, preserve our public lands, and save lives.

Looking ahead, I look forward to working with the Nevada Air National Guard on their priorities, including a well-deserved upgrade to their fleet of C-130s, as they take on an even better 75 years ahead.

From Carson City to Reno and the 232nd Combat Training Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, I again thank everyone who has made Nevada Air National Guard strong for the past 75 years. Our State and country are safer because of it.

RESTRICTING ABORTION

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the frightening recent developments concerning the personal freedoms of millions of Americans.

A single judge in Texas has dramatically restricted decades-long access to safe and effective abortion medication in all 50 States.

Anti-choice extremists have made it clear that this is not the end. They did not stop at overturning Roe v. Wade. They will not stop at preventing women from accessing FDA-approved medications like mifepristone.

They have made it clear about their intention to restrict control and ban a woman's right to choose with Federal legislation. From the courts to Congress, a woman's right to choose is under attack. We will not be intimidated, and I am doing everything in my power to stop this.

My home State of Nevada, where voters decided by a 2-to-1 margin in 1990 to protect a woman's right to choose and just last fall voted to reject the extremist politicians leading this crusade to ban abortion nationwide, has made it clear where it stands.

I have made it clear that I am here to represent my district and my State.

Last week, I joined hundreds of my pro-choice colleagues in signing on to an amicus brief that has been filed with the Supreme Court, asking the Court to reverse the Texas judge's radical decision.

I am not giving up and neither should you. I support choice. The majority of Nevadans support choice. The majority of Americans support choice.

It is time for Congress and the courts to do the same.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

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

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I am the only Democrat Congressperson from Tennessee, so in some ways I represent the entire State on issues of concern to Democrats and people of progress.

Tennessee and New York, unfortunately, have been shameful in their conduct recently in the way they relate to government and in the lack of the way they relate to meaningful gun reform to protect our citizens from mass shootings.

In Tennessee there was the Tennessee Three. Three legislators who went to