

giving everyone in the world, including Iraqis, a chance at freedom. He felt that was really an important part of his mission.

She, also like Robert, felt that we should continue until we had had some measure of finality to the struggle.

So I guess, as the funeral concluded, I was reminded of the words of a young captain that I met over in Kuwait in 2002. This captain had been in Iraq for a year, and he said this; he said, if we pull out prematurely, three things will happen: Number one, those who have died will have died in vain, and that is very true. I think that is one of the things that the family of Jeff were trying to get across.

Secondly, he said, we will have gone back on our word to the Iraqis, and you may recall that that happened in the first Gulf War. We cannot afford to do that.

Then, thirdly, we will have indicated to terrorists everywhere that terrorism works, it is effective, and if they hang in there long enough, eventually, we will back down, and terrorism will only multiply.

I believe that strongly, and I think the family of Jeff Hanson feels that very strongly. I know we are involved in a great debate. There are many people who do not agree with that point of view. So, before long, we will have 300,000 Iraqis trained and equipped sometime late this fall, and that has been the target. At some point, we obviously have to turn it over to them and say, it is your ball, you run with it, now let us see what you can get done with it.

So we do not know how it is going to end up, but I do feel that we need to honor the feelings of so many who have sacrificed so greatly and think this national debate through very carefully before we make any preemptive or presumptive move that may be contrary to the wishes of so many who have suffered.

I thank the Speaker for this opportunity to reflect on the life of Jeff Hanson and his family, and we hope that Jeff and his fellow soldiers can see this through to a successful solution.

NATIONAL INSTANT CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking on the 109th Congress. There is not much time left to pass commonsense gun legislation that will keep guns out of the hands of criminals without infringing on anyone's second amendment rights.

When it comes to commonsense gun laws, the Congress has a dismal record. Thus far, this Congress has given corrupt and incompetent gun dealers immunity from negligence lawsuits. This Congress will make it a crime for two police departments to share informa-

tion from ATF's ballistics database. This Congress has tied the hands of law enforcement dealing with gun-wielding mobs during times of disaster, and it has made it possible for guns to be brought into hurricane shelters.

But now this Congress has a chance to redeem itself a little bit. Last spring, the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security approved H.R. 1415, the NICS Improvement Act, and the full committee markup is scheduled for tomorrow.

This is a bill that would increase the effectiveness of the existing National Instant Criminal Background Check System, the database used to check firearms buyers for any criminal record or any disqualifying criteria.

Overall, NICS has been a success. Since 1994, more than 1.2 million individuals have been denied a gun because of a failed background check. NICS also provides the vast majority of honest gun sellers with peace of mind in knowing that they are selling their products to citizens who will use their guns legally.

However, the NICS system is only as good as the information that the States provide, and unfortunately, many States do not have the resources necessary to enter all of their disqualifying criteria into the NICS system.

The end result is that felons and others who are not permitted by existing law to buy guns are passing background checks and buying guns through legitimate means.

In fact, 28 States have automated less than 75 percent of their criminal record history. In 15 States, domestic violence restraining orders are not accessible through NICS. Those and other loopholes have cost countless people their lives. It is only a matter of time before the system's failings provoke more tragedies.

We must improve the NICS system and allow it to do what it was designed to do. The responsibility for accuracy and effectiveness of the NICS system ultimately belongs to the States. However, many State budgets are already overburdened.

This legislation would provide grants to States to update the NICS system. States would be able to update their system, their database, to include felons, domestic abusers and others not legally qualified to buy a gun.

The bill's goal is to have all 50 States enter at least 90 percent of their disqualifying information into the NICS system.

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States that don't comply or fall short of these goals will be penalized with a 5 percent reduction of their Federal Department of Justice grant allocations.

Also, the bill would provide grants for State courts to promptly enter information to the NICS system. For example, when someone is served with a restraining order stemming from domestic violence, an inefficient NICS

system allows him or her to leave the courthouse and head right to the gun store. My bill would make sure all prevailing court records are entered into the NICS database before a crime of passion can be committed.

It is important to keep in mind this bill does not infringe on anyone's second amendment right, which I support. It creates no new gun laws. It simply gives States the resources to better enforce the current laws. If H.R. 1415 becomes law, law-abiding citizens who want to buy a gun legally will not experience any delay at the point of purchase. This bill poses no new burden on gun sellers or owners.

In fact, I first introduced this bill in 2002 with my friend and colleague Mr. DINGELL of Michigan, who is well-known for his strong support of gun rights. This legislation passed in 2002. Unfortunately, the other body didn't have time to take it up. This is something that we can actually get passed. This is something that we should be passing.

We see gun violence becoming more prevalent lately. I know. In my own Long Island district suburban area, over the weekend, we had many gun violence incidents. We are seeing more robberies with guns. These are illegal guns. We must enforce the laws that are on the books so we can save lives, and especially those that do survive these horrible tragedies so that we don't run up the medical costs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the debate on guns has been going on for a long time, and I understand that this body is nervous about the National Rifle Association, but we have to do what we can to protect the citizens of this country by making sure that illegal guns don't get into the wrong hands. It may not be a perfect bill. We are not going to be perfect in anything we do here, but we can certainly do better, and we should be doing better.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

H.R. 5866, A MEDICARE SOLUTION

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to go out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to talk about the way that this Congress and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services pays for patient access in the Medicare system and how they reimburse physicians.

Under the current formula, America's doctors participating in Medicare