

Mr. Speaker, Congress can take a big step this year to knock down barriers to treatment. Just as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 tore down barriers to integration, just as the Americans with Disabilities Act tore down barriers for people with disabilities, this year we can knock down barriers to treatment for people who are suffering the ravages of drug and alcohol addiction. We can pass the Substance Abuse Treatment Parity Act and make treatment available for 16 million more Americans.

Mr. Speaker, let me just close by saying this is a life-or-death issue because chemical addiction is fatal if it is left untreated. So, I urge my colleagues, please join me in cosponsoring H.R. 2409.

OFFERING CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES OF VICTIMS OF TRAGIC AMBUSH SHOOTING IN CRAIGHEAD COUNTY, AR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DEAL of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise with great reluctance to address this body today. I am honored every time that I step into this Chamber, but this afternoon to be here and to speak on a topic that I am about to address, is the last thing I want to do.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to eulogize the lives of the five people, one woman and four little girls, who lost their lives yesterday in the senseless and tragic ambush shooting in Craighead County, Arkansas. I rise to offer my condolences to the families of these victims and to those that were injured and to the entire community as they struggle to make sense of the violence that we never dreamed would be visited upon our State.

As nearly everyone in the country knows from the media reports that we have been receiving, yesterday afternoon someone pulled a fire alarm at Westside Middle School in Craighead County, Arkansas. As teachers and students evacuated the building, they were greeted by a torrent of gunfire from nearby woods.

Among the victims is Shannon Wright. Mrs. Wright was a 32-year-old teacher who was shot while trying to shield sixth grader Emma Pittman from the hail of bullets. Mrs. Wright died at 7:53 last night, following surgery. Eleven-year-old Amber Vanover told reporters what she saw: "He was fixing to shoot her, and Mrs. Wright moved in front of her."

Eleven-year-old Natalie Brooks also lost her life. Paige Ann Herring and Stephanie Johnson, age 12, and Britany Varner, age 11, had their lives taken from them. A heartbreaking loss for their families and friends.

Sara Lynette Thetford, who teaches social studies to Westside sixth graders, stepped in front of 13-year-old

Brittney Lambie when the shooting began. Mrs. Thetford and Brittney remain in critical condition today. Eight more students were wounded in the shooting: Amanda Barnes, Jennifer Jacobs, Candace Porter, Ashley Betts, Tristan McGowan, Christina Amer, Jenna Brooks, and Whitney Irving.

Inevitably, tragedies produce heroes and there was no shortage of heroes yesterday. In addition to teachers Shannon Wright and Sara Thetford, Sheriff Dale Haas and the Craighead County Sheriff's Department, as well as the Arkansas State Police, did a commendable job of containing the scene and securing the surrounding areas.

The emergency medical response teams in Jonesboro and Craighead County, Emerson Ambulance Service, Patient Transfer Service, and Keller Ambulance Service, all showed great professionalism under difficult circumstances.

The paramedics and medical technicians from those three agencies worked together as a team and did a tremendous job of administering care to the victims. The doctors and staff of St. Bernard's Regional Medical Center did an outstanding job of preparing themselves for the chaos that entered the emergency room yesterday afternoon. They have also done an outstanding job of keeping the community informed of the status of the survivors.

I know that the families around Craighead County are thankful for the many counselors and ministers from Jonesboro and from around the State who have offered their services to help the children of Westside cope with this horrible tragedy. The people in the communities that make up Westside school district, Bono, Cash, and Egypt, will look to each and to the Lord in the wake of this tragedy. The fact that children were victimized in a place where they should be safe makes this ordeal even more difficult to comprehend.

We are all asking "Why?" Why did these young lives have to be snuffed out so senselessly? That answer may never come, and as many have suggested, the answer may be beyond our comprehension. Craighead County is a wonderful place full of people who for many, many years have worked to strengthen their community. It is a place where traditional values, faith in God, love of fellow man, and commitment to family are the pillars upon which the community is built and the source of strength that they will have to rely on now.

As is often the case when the world seems turned upside down, the Bible provides some solace. The 46th Psalm says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the sea."

If there is any place on earth that is capable of dealing with a tragedy of this magnitude, that place is Craighead

County, Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, my wife Carolyn and I, and our children, send our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the families and to the community as a whole, as does the entire staff of the offices of the First Congressional District.

We stand ready to assist in any way that we can and wish Godspeed to the people of Craighead County as we all continue to deal with this horrifying tragedy.

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

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

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 of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

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

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I join with the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY), my good friend, and all of our colleagues in wishing all the prayers to the First District of Arkansas and to all the families there,