

On Sunday, September 26, the President will host a reception here in Washington. The Group of 24 comprises a cross-section of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Group of 24 seeks to address economic growth-related issues in the developing countries and to strengthen their financial and monetary situation.

Mr. Speaker, while I welcome the president coming to Washington for these important international meetings, I would like to see Sri Lanka's Head of State return to our Nation's capital for a State visit.

Earlier this year I wrote to President Clinton asking that he formally invite the president. The last presidential visit from Sri Lanka to the U.S. was in 1984. President Clinton did respond to my letter, although he did not commit to extending such an invitation. However, as South Asia continues to assume a growing importance in U.S. foreign policy considerations, I hope and I will continue to push for a State visit.

Mr. Speaker, next week Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kadirgamar, will be making an official visit to Washington. Our Sri Lankan Caucus will be setting up a briefing with our Members and our staff with the Foreign Minister tentatively scheduled for next Thursday. I look forward to a productive meeting that will expand the dialogue between our two nations.

Mr. Speaker, bilateral U.S.-Sri Lanka relations have always been strong since Sri Lanka won its independence from British colonial rule in 1948. In addition to our growing trade relations, the U.S. and Sri Lanka have a shared stake in promoting security, stability, and democracy in South Asia. Sri Lanka continues to work to promote tolerance among the various religious and ethnic communities that make up its population. It is a country that shares many of our values, and we have many common interests that must continue to be pursued.

Mr. Speaker, I hope next week's visit by Sri Lanka's president and foreign minister will contribute to this process of closer relations with the United States, and I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to join me in continuing to work for closer ties between our two countries.

GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight again because we still have not passed legislation to add direction to the issue of gun violence in America.

Given that we have been plagued by gun violence in our schools across the country, to the most recent shootings involving Jewish children in Los Angeles and members of a Baptist church in

Ft. Worth, Texas, it is clear that there is an overwhelming need for gun legislation. We have an opportunity as a body to address this issue.

The juvenile justice bills from the House and Senate which are currently in conference committee can provide the American public with the action they deserve on this critical issue.

I urge my colleagues to support my bill, which would require child safety locks on handguns, a bill which would require all sellers at gun shows, flea markets, and other weapon markets to run an instant background check on every one of their purchasers, and a bill which would close the loophole in the Brady law which would prevent felons from acquiring guns. We should also raise the handgun purchase age from 18 to 21 to effectively protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, events around the country illustrate the need for these changes in our laws to be enacted. Thirteen children under the age of 19 are killed each day because of guns. In 1996 alone, 4,643 young people were killed by firearms. Guns cause one in four deaths of teenagers age 15 to 19. Firearms are the fourth leading cause of accidental death among children ages 5 to 14.

Each year gun violence is getting worse. From 1984 to 1994, the firearms homicide rate for 15- to 18-year-olds increased over 200 percent, while the non-firearm homicide death rate decreased 12.8 percent.

How many more shootings, Mr. Speaker, must occur before this body will take substantive action? How many more children must be slaughtered by guns before we pass laws to protect them? Is it necessary for every congressional district within each State to experience some traumatic, violent event before we act on the issue of gun violence?

Gun violence affects all Americans regardless of age, class, religion, or socio-economic status. Many countries around the world do not have the same level of gun violence as the United States. This is a problem that has a clear solution, legislation to stem the tide of violence that has plagued us as a Nation.

Mr. Speaker, in my State of California alone, the number of incidents of gun violence over the course of 10 years is unacceptable.

In Berkeley, Kenzo Dix was gunned down by a 14-year-old schoolmate when he was accidentally shot when the two were playing with a pistol. In Los Angeles, a 14-year-old boy was accidentally shot in the head and killed by a friend showing off his father's handgun. In Oceanside, 4-year-old Christopher David Holt unintentionally shot and killed himself with a .357 Magnum revolver he discovered in a concealed compartment at the head of his grandfather's bed.

Of the 5,000 children who die each year because of guns, which averages out to 13 per day, nearly 500 deaths are accidental.

My child safety lock act, Mr. Speaker, which I introduced in the 105th and 106th Congress, would have prohibited any person from transferring or selling a firearm in the United States unless it is sold with a child safety lock. This bill and other legislation currently in the conference committee will address this issue.

We must have the ability to cross party lines, Mr. Speaker, forget our political and ideological differences, and pass legislation to avoid the continued senseless bloodshed and loss of innocent lives around our country.

I urge my colleagues to support legislation which will create a safer environment for all Americans and preserve the future of our children.

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

(Mrs. MINK of Hawaii addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HURRICANE FLOYD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, two of us will be talking on the floor and maybe others will join us later on.

Mr. Speaker, according to FEMA, the route many take to visit Disney World in Orlando, Florida, is Interstate 95, and it was designed to withstand the 500-year flood and more.

When Hurricane Floyd, with its mighty wind and its rushing waters, swept through North Carolina, it caused Interstate 95 to close. Indeed, as this photo shows, and I will pass a couple of them so my colleagues can see it, Highway 301 split in two, washed away, left impassable.

In fact, initially more than 500 roads were impassable. Railroad tracks, and I think my colleagues will see that in this, railroad tracks were broken up and rendered unusable. Bridges were closed. Helicopters or boat, transportation mediums few in North Carolina, has been the only means of travel for many throughout the hurricane impacted areas.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Floyd left in its wake the worst flooding in the history of the State of North Carolina. And more rain fell yesterday. The people of North Carolina need help. They need help now. It is not charity they seek but a chance, a chance to recover, a chance to restore, a chance to rebuild, a chance to put their lives back on track. It is the kind of a chance that we as Americans afford each other when tragedy of this magnitude strikes.

At least 42 persons are known dead. Many more are unaccountable for, still missing. The Tar, Neuse, Cape Fear, and Lumber Rivers are all above flood