

NRA RHETORIC

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, Shame, shame, shame. The NRA's leadership has once again shamed our nation, the American people, and its own members. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's Executive Vice President, on national television, suggested that the President of the United States promotes violence for his political gain. LaPierre said, "I've come to believe that he needs a certain level of violence in this country. He's willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda and his vice president too."

To all the parents who lost a son or daughter to gun violence, LaPierre is telling them to blame the President and not the guns. I would not be surprised to hear the NRA's leadership blaming school grief counselors of inciting more school shootings so they can have more business.

How can the NRA leadership ignore the fact that thirteen children die each day from gun violence? How can they ignore the fact that a majority of Americans want Congress to pass sensible gun safety measures? How can they lay blame on a President who supports background checks at gun shows, a ban on the import of large-capacity ammunition clips, and the sale of child safety locks with every handgun?

It's time for the NRA leadership to wake up and smell the gunpower in our communities and classrooms, and step out of the way of meaningful gun safety legislation. I submit the following New York Times editorial entitled "Desperate Rhetoric from the NRA," for the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 14, 2000]
DESPERATE RHETORIC FROM THE N.R.A.

Americans have become used to hearing nutty talk from leaders of the National Rifle Association. But Sunday's outrageous assertion by the group's executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, that President Clinton is "willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda" deserves special condemnation.

Mr. LaPierre made his sick suggestion that the president relishes having gun tragedies to exploit in an interview on ABC's "This Week." He was there to push the N.R.A.'s demonstrably false line that the nation already has enough gun laws on the books if only the administration would enforce them. Thanks largely to the N.R.A.'s lobbying, those laws do not adequately address issues of supply, distribution, design or child access.

In a new advertising campaign the N.R.A.'s president, Charlton Heston, accuses Mr. Clinton of engaging in lying and scare tactics to win support for gun control measures bottled up in Congress. But for dishonesty, it is hard to beat the N.R.A.'s own whopper in trying to portray the group as a friend of the reasonable gun safety measures it has been fighting to defeat or water down.

The sparring came just days after Mr. Clinton's meeting with key Congressional leaders at the White House failed to produce progress in freeing a modest gun control package from the House-Senate conference committee where it has been stalled for months. The sticking point remains the strong gun-show provision that cleared the Senate last May over the N.R.A.'s vehement

opposition. This provision would extend to gun-show sales the same background check requirement that now applies to guns purchased from licensed dealers.

Two Democratic senators, Charles Schumer of New York and Richard Durbin of Illinois, are planning to step up the pressure by attaching gun control amendments to other legislation coming to the floor. This will force recorded votes on matters with broad public support, like mandatory trigger locks and background checks of buyers at gun shows, flea markets and Internet sales.

Only two weeks ago a 6-year-old killed a classmate with a handgun, one of many reasons gun regulation promises to be an issue in the long political campaign ahead. The chief obstacle to saner gun control remains the obstructionism of the N.R.A., whose extremist views and rhetoric should offend Americans fed up with all the gunfire.

CONGRESSIONAL RURAL CAUCUS

HON. ALLEN BOYD

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. BOYD. Mr. Speaker, today more than one hundred of my colleagues and I celebrate the formation of the Congressional Rural Caucus. Our bipartisan group will serve as a unified voice on behalf of rural Americans. One in every four Americans, or 62 million people, reside in rural areas and an additional 15 million Americans live in small cities and towns. Unfortunately, too often the logistical difficulties rural residents face prevent their concerns on issues like education, healthcare and agriculture from being heard. Our caucus hopes to share with our colleagues in Congress the unique needs of rural citizens and remind them of the important contributions rural America makes.

One of the most important concerns facing rural areas is the current agriculture crisis. While the majority of the United States has enjoyed a decade of unprecedented economic prosperity, our nation's family farmers have not benefited from this abundance. In the wake of NAFTA and the implementation of a national farm policy destined for failure, America's farmers have suffered, and many are on the verge of bankruptcy. This economic distress has impacted not just farmers, but the entire rural community.

Ensuring our farmers have the opportunity to compete with international growers on a level playing field is more than an issue of protecting the way of life of rural Americans; it is an issue of national security. No one wants our country to be dependent on third world nations to supply our evening suppers, but if we fail to act now, when our farmers are in need, that scenario could become a reality.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Congressional Rural Caucus to develop a viable alternative to the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act. Now that we are united, our caucus has the strength in numbers to turn Congress's attention to this important issue.

HONORING THE O'NEILL SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCING

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to thank the O'Neill School of Irish Dancing for taking part in the New Haven's St. Patrick's Day Parade during their visit to the United States. It is an honor for New Haven to host them at this annual celebration.

In my hometown of New Haven, Connecticut, St. Patrick's Day is a very special holiday. Every year the parade committee works diligently to sponsor a group from Ireland to participate in the celebration. This year we are honored to have the O'Neill School of Irish Dancing join us from Bornacoola, representing communities from Leitrim and Longford Counties in Ireland. In all, 57 boys and girls, ages 8 to 15 will travel to the U.S. to perform in the New Haven Parade and will be featured in the big parade in New York. These exceptionally talented young people will be performing a combination of traditional Irish step-dancing with pieces from the popular shows of Riverdance and Lord of the Dance. Our community certainly shares the excitement in their attendance.

Even more impressive than their young talent is the commitment and dedication they have put into making this trip possible. Inspired by the excitement of performing, these young people managed a variety of fundraisers to finance the trip. With tremendous community support and enthusiasm, both in Ireland and in the States, they achieved their goal and were able to raise enough money for the trip. They are truly a remarkable group of youngsters.

On behalf of the New Haven community, I am pleased to welcome the O'Neill School of Irish Dancers—we are certainly thrilled to host them during their visit. My sincere appreciation to the many people who have helped them join us for the upcoming celebration. I would like to extend my very best wishes for continued success. Happy St. Patrick's Day!

THE OCCASION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RURAL CAUCUS KICK-OFF

HON. EVA M. CLAYTON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, not long ago I made a statement on the Floor of the House that, I believe, underscores the pressing need for a new and revived Rural Caucus.

I noted that, at the Farm Resource Center, a national crisis line for farmers, those seeking help can not get through.

The line is always busy. Small farmers and ranchers are struggling to survive in America. In fact, small farmers and ranchers are a dying breed. And, because they are a dying breed, quality and affordable food and fiber for all of us is at risk.

Passage of the 1996 Farm Bill sounded the death knell for many of our Nation's farmers and ranchers.