

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 history records. In 15 States domestic violence restraining orders are not accessible through the NICS system.

Mr. Speaker, each year we see thousands and thousands of people dying because of gun violence. We see so many more being wounded because of gun violence. We have a chance to enforce the laws that are on the books, but we need to help the States get the money to computerize the information that they have. We can save lives, number one. We can cut down on health care costs. And all that can be done by passing the NICS Act.

The bill was passed a couple years ago. Unfortunately, the Senate ran out of time. In January we here in Congress will be working 5 days a week; and I am hoping with that we will have the time to pass the laws that this country expects us to do, bread-and-butter issues to make us safe, to help the economy. We can do this. And I am hoping that the Judiciary Committee will bring up the NICS bill, pass it this year, and get it over to the Senate so that we can pass it there and have the President sign it.

The people spoke on November 7 and we here in Congress, Republicans and Democrats, will be working together. We have very large issues in front of us, but let us not forget about the small issues also, those quality-of-life issues for our constituents. Let us show America that we can do better. This Congress, this next Congress, will do better, and we will do a better job.

PROSECUTION OF TWO U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS: URGING A PRESIDENTIAL PARDON

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor today to bring to the attention of the House the unjust prosecution of two U.S. Border Patrol agents and to urge the President of the United States to pardon these two men.

Agents Ramos and Compean were found guilty in a Federal court for wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our southern border into Texas. These agents never should have been prosecuted for their actions last year; yet they had been sentenced to 11 and 12 years in Federal prison respectively. Agent Ramos served Border Patrol for 9 years and was a former nominee for Border Patrol Agent of the Year. Agent Compean had 5 years of experience as a Border Patrol agent. By attempting to apprehend an illegal alien drug smuggler, these agents were simply doing

their job to protect the American people. These agents should have been commended for their actions, but instead the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted the agents and granted full immunity to the drug smuggler for his testimony against our agents. The drug smuggler received full medical care in El Paso, Texas; was permitted to return to Mexico; and is now suing the Border Patrol for \$5 million for violating his civil rights. He is not an American citizen. He is a criminal.

Although it is clear that these agents fired shots at the drug smuggler to defend themselves and the border they patrol, Ramos and Compean were convicted mainly on the testimony of a habitual drug smuggler who claimed he was unarmed.

A sealed indictment for drug charges forbade the defense for calling into question the integrity of the drug smuggler as a witness. An October 26 article by Sara Carter of the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin quotes two of the drug smuggler's family members who said he "has been smuggling drugs since he was 14 and wouldn't move drugs unless he had a gun on him." Mr. Speaker, this came from the family member who knows this drug dealer. The family member also reported that the drug smuggler had been bragging about the money he is going to get in a lawsuit against the United States of America.

Despite my repeated requests for an investigation of this case and a request by a dozen Members of Congress for the President to pardon the agents, this administration has ignored the concerns of countless citizens who have decried the unjust prosecution of these two heroes. Mr. Speaker, I am calling on the President to listen to the concerns of the American people and to make it a top priority to pardon these two agents.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the last paragraph of my November 15 letter to the President: "Mr. President, you have an opportunity to reverse a great injustice committed against two agents who have given years of their life in service to this Nation and who have been unjustly punished for doing their job to protect our homeland. On January 17 of 2007, both Agents Ramos and Compean must surrender themselves to Federal authorities unless action is taken to overturn their sentences.

"I strongly urge you, Mr. President, to listen to the concerns of the American people and use the power of your office to pardon these two agents."

Mr. Speaker, I want to say again in closing that these two agents are heroes of this great Nation, and if anything, they should be rewarded and not crucified by the Federal Government for doing their job.

Please, Mr. President, listen to the American people.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

THE LAME DUCK SESSION AND IRAQ

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back in Washington for the final session of the 109th Congress. I only wish that the current leaders on the other side of the aisle had used their final days in the majority to actually exercise leadership and do something constructive for the American people. Instead we are here for the lamest of all possible lame duck sessions.

Just look at what we have done today. With all due respect to my Resources Committee colleague Mr. SIMPSON, the Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2006 really isn't one of the most pressing matters facing our Nation. And what about the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Designation Act?

My friends, we are in the middle of a war, a failed war, which a majority of the American people no longer want any part of; a war which, by the admission of the President's own choice for Secretary of Defense, we are not winning. More than 2,900 of our best and brightest American troops are dead because of this failed policy. At least 46,000 have been wounded, severely wounded. And it is not as if they have sacrificed for a noble cause. Iraq, which was supposed to spontaneously blossom into a democracy the minute our troops arrived, has instead been plunged into a civil war as a direct result of the American occupation. In fact, a lot of people are saying that "civil war" is really too generous a term for what is happening in Iraq. It is actually much worse. "Civil war" implies two sides battling it out for state control. What we have here is many factions of thuggish militia and vigilantes terrorizing the streets and killing indiscriminately. The director of the CIA recently referred to the violence as "Satanic."

So why then are we spending the people's time and the people's money deliberating on naming a room in the Capitol? It is no wonder people have lost confidence in Congress to do the Nation's work effectively. Instead of doing what we were elected to do, we are waiting with bated breath for the findings of a blue ribbon commission to tell us what to do in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, this is political cowardice, pure and simple. The Congress doesn't want to confront the problem and doesn't want to challenge the President. So we pass the buck to a group of unelected so-called wise men who appear prepared to

offer a watered-down compromise that will satisfy actually no one. I think it is appalling. What are we here to do if not to address the issues of national security, war and peace, and life and death?

And the White House, meanwhile, persists in a stubborn state of denial. The President continues to say he will not leave until the mission is complete, but at this point there is no clear mission nor how to know when it is complete. As he consistently has, the President is leaving open the very real possibility that our troops will be in Iraq for as long as he occupies the Oval Office.

The White House obviously wasn't listening to the message that was sent on November 7. But we are a co-equal branch of government, and we owe it to the American people to push for a course correction in Iraq. Obviously we won't make any progress on that front this week, but I look forward to the new year when the quacking stops and we will have a new Congress with a mandate and the fortitude to bring an end to this disastrous occupation and to bring our troops home.

URGING REFORM OF IMMIGRATION POLICY PERTAINING TO SANCTUARY CITIES

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

Ms. SEKULA GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak regarding a subject that is very important to my constituents in Congressional District 22 of Texas and has great national interest as well. This consideration is regarding much needed reform on our Nation's immigration policies, especially those policies that regard such sanctuary cities, as they are known.

As you are aware, my colleague from Texas, Congressman JOHN CULBERSON, led a successful effort to place an amendment in a recent bill that passed the House of Representatives but has not come forward through the Senate, and this bill disallows Federal funding to those cities who do not provide information to Federal immigration officers regarding illegal aliens. Cities such as Houston, cities that operate under general orders such as that signed by a police chief, those orders that prevent police officers from asking about the immigration status of criminals who commit claim C misdemeanors. Such sanctuary policies have contributed to rising crime rates and to, unfortunately, deaths of police officers, such as the death of Police Officer Rodney Johnson in Houston, who was killed this year by an illegal immigrant, one who had been arrested three times and deported once but then subsequently returned to Texas.

Americans are indeed saddened at the loss of our troops in the war in Iraq and also the war conducted across the world against terrorists. We have lost

almost 2,900 troops in the war in Iraq. But this figure has to be placed into perspective. We have been given information by Representatives STEVE KING, Republican from Iowa, who used data from the Government Accountability Office, the Violent Crimes Institute of Atlanta, and AAA Foundation, that says that 12 Americans are murdered every day by illegal aliens and 13 Americans are estimated to be killed by illegal aliens who are driving while intoxicated. This gives us a total of almost 4,700 Americans who are murdered annually by illegal aliens. These statistics must not go unrecognized. They call out for action.

Americans also are losing their property rights. Those rights are being trampled in favor of the rights of illegal aliens. Recently a jury awarded \$210,000 in damages against a rancher who was attempting to protect his property against trespassing by individuals that he thought were illegal aliens but turned out not to be, but he was really attempting to defend his property. He will ultimately be required to pay \$98,000 for trying to defend his property against trespassers. What about his rights? Ranchers have been put on notice that if they attempt to prevent armed trespassers from crossing their property, they could face financial ruin with charges of civil rights violations, especially if those trespassers happen to be illegal aliens.

This is not right. Legal is legal and illegal is illegal. Illegal immigrants should not be accorded more rights than American citizens.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue to the constituents in the congressional district in my part of Texas, Southeast Texas, District 22. Tackling the problem of illegal immigration will require full cooperation of all of our government resources, local, State, and Federal, and I call on this body to work diligently to help us solve this situation. We are all Americans and we must pull together to address difficult issues such as this. Taxpayers demand accountability from elected officials across our country, and they have made it clear that they will not tolerate uncooperative or inefficient use of government resources and their tax dollars.

I would like to urge you to work hard to ensure that this important provision that deals with sanctuary city policies is included in any version of immigration bills that do progress into law through this body.

HONORING DR. MARION FLECK

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Marion Fleck, co-founder of the College of Nursing at the Health Sciences Center of the University of New Mexico. She was recently honored

at a large gathering in Albuquerque, both for her enormous contributions to the field of nursing and also for her 90th birthday.

Marion Fleck is truly a remarkable lady, and her story is legendary. Born in Wisconsin on September 4, 1916, she earned a degree in nursing in her home State, a master's from Yale University, and a doctorate from the University of New Mexico with honors. In 1955 Dr. Fleck and Mary Jane Carter met with then UNM President Tom Popejoy, whose support led to his securing \$60,000 from the New Mexico legislature that year to found the first baccalaureate program in nursing in the State. Out of that initial funding, the college grew to graduate thousands of nurses over the years in every aspect of patient care: teaching, research, and all the nursing specialties. Of particular triumph, the UNM College of Nursing will be graduating its first Ph.D. candidates in the 2007 academic year.

Dr. Fleck was Dean of the UNM College of Nursing in the mid-1970s and also served in other important positions in the community. She worked in public health and also served for 17 years as the director of school nursing for the Albuquerque public schools.

She is loved and admired for her commitment and devotion to better health care by her fellow professionals, by students, and by the untold numbers of the community that she has served so well.

Dr. Fleck's late husband was also a legend in public education. Dr. Martin Fleck was a professor and chair of biology at the University of New Mexico. Like his wife, he was a caring and involved member of his community, serving on committees that either founded or supported the symphony, public parks and many educational programs. He was also a devoted family man who, with his wife, raised his children, Martin and Ann Hara.

Dr. Marion Fleck is a visionary whose unwavering enthusiasm, vigorous efforts and diligent action blazed the course for others. She inspired both students and health professionals to be the best they could and to strive to follow her example of commitment and devotion to professional nursing and public health. Because of her courageous and determined spirit over a century ago, thousands of citizens across New Mexico and the Nation have received quality trained nurses to strive to make a better life for others. I respectfully ask my colleagues to join me today in paying the highest tribute to a New Mexico treasure and a great American, Dr. Marion Fleck.

Thank you, Dr. Fleck, for your many years of extraordinary service.

(1515)

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