such individuals are not able to purchase a firearm from a licensed gun dealer.

To date, background checks have prevented over two million guns from falling into the wrong hands.

The Administration's two new executive actions will help ensure that better and more reliable information makes its way into the background check system.

The Administration, however, has acknowledged the need for collective action and continues to call upon Members of Congress to pass common-sense gun safety legislation and to expand funding to increase access to mental health services.

I too call upon my colleagues to come together and pass legislation that will help stop the loss of innocent lives.

While we have made some progress in strengthening the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which is used to run background checks on those who buy guns from federally licensed gun dealers to make sure they are not prohibited by law from owning a firearm, we must do more.

I am a strong supporter of a right of privacy and I am particularly sensitive and protective of patient privacy rights.

I support the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that was passed by Congress in 1996, and includes privacy protection for medical records, which includes mental healthcare information.

However, there are specific areas under federal law that allow the disclosure of medical information to authorities, and in these instances there should be an agreement that when a person poses a threat to themselves or others (as determined by a court or adjudicative authority with the medical and legal knowledge and authority to make a determination that a person poses a threat to themselves or to others) should not be allowed to purchase a fire arm.

Technology that could be deployed to access court records and arrest records as they relate to mental health and violent behavior should not rely upon a list that may become outdated or could be used in ways that are not consistent with the intent of enhancing gun safety.

The ability to access information that is accurate and available for the limited purpose of affirming or rejecting a request to purchase a firearm without indicating the source of the decision or the reason for the rejection would still protect privacy rights while also protecting the public.

The president's proposal on mental health and gun violence is to enforce the laws already in place.

Under a federal law enacted in 1968, an individual is prohibited from buying or possessing firearms for life if he/she has been ''adjudicated as a mental defective'' or ''committed to a mental institution.''

A person is ''adjudicated as a mental defective'' if a court—or other entity having legal authority to make adjudications—has made a determination that an individual, as a result of mental illness: 1) Is a danger to himself or to others; 2) Lacks the mental capacity to contract or manage his own affairs; 3) Is found insane by a court in a criminal case, or incompetent to stand trial, or not guilty by reason of lack of mental responsibility pursuant to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

A person is ''committed to a mental institution'' if that person has been involuntarily committed to a mental institution by a court or other lawful authority. This expressly excludes voluntary commitment.

It should be noted, however, that federal law currently allows states to establish procedures for mentally ill individuals to restore their right to possess and purchase firearms (many states have done so at the behest of the National Rifle Association, with questionable results).

It is undoubtedly true that people who are a danger to self and/or others because of mental illness should be prohibited from owning firearms.

It is less clear, however, how to tailor new policies to better protect the American public while at the same time avoiding the stigmatization of Americans with mental illness.

Any strategy to address the lethal intersection between guns and mental illness should focus of the key facts:

On average, more than 100,000 people in America are shot in murders, assaults, and other crimes.

More than 32,000 people die from gun violence annually, including 2,677 children under the age of eighteen years old.

Suicide is the leading cause of gun related deaths in America.

60 percent of deaths by guns in America are the result of individuals using these weapons as a means to commit suicide.

Some of these deaths might have been prevented if there were adequate background checks.

Each year hundreds of law enforcement officers lose their lives to gun violence been shot to death protecting their communities.

Millions of guns are sold every year in ''no questions asked'' transactions and experts estimate that 40 percent of guns now sold in America are done so without a background check.

National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was created in 1998 to require potential gun buyers to pass an instant screening at the point of purchase.

Ensures that purchasers are not felons, domestic abusers, mentally ill, etc.

NICS has blocked sales to more than 2 million prohibited people.

NICS stops 170 felons and 53 domestic abusers from purchasing guns every day.

The most serious issue facing NICS is the ''private sale loophole''.

This allows anyone who is not a federally-licensed dealer to sell guns without a background checks.

An estimated 40% of gun transfers—6.6 million transfers—are conducted without a background check.

Armslist.com is the largest online seller of firearms.

66,000 gun ads are posted by private sellers on a given day, 750,000 per year.

Nearly 1/3rd of gun ads on Armslist.com are posted by high-volume unlicensed sellers (approx. 4,218 people).

High-volume sellers posted 29% of the gun ads.

High-volume sellers posted 36,069 gun ads over 2 months.

This would equate to around 243,800 guns each year by unlicensed sellers.

50% were familiar with federal laws but decided they didn't apply to them.

1/3rd of ''want-to-buy'' ads are posted by people with a criminal record.

More than 4 times the rate at which prohibited gun buyers try to buy guns in stores.

Approximately 25,000 guns are in illegal hands.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

AUTONOMY VERSUS RELATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for 30 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to a talk show one day when a 13-year-old girl called in. She was confused. At that tender age, to put it mildly, she talked about how she had been walked all over by her peers and subjected to the exploitation of an older man. She had no sufficient sense of self-possession to know that she had been used. She had no community support, no adult around her to protect her.

The radio commentator was aghast. But, sadly, Mr. Speaker, this was another troubling example of a culture of exploitation that is raging all around us today.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of light on the horizon. In a few weeks, tens of thousands of young people from around the country will assemble around this Capitol to deliver a simple message.

These young people are saying this: They will no longer tolerate the indifference. They will no longer tolerate a culture of exploitation. They will no longer tolerate the darkness of the abortion industry.

They are members of the generation that have witnessed firsthand the devastating consequences when wrong ideas take hold in a society, when the smartest people in the land—the Supreme Court Justices—are misguided and do not value all lives, when certain industries profit from pain.

These young people are saying that women deserve better than abortion. They are saying that children should be welcome, no matter how hard the circumstances. They are saying that no one should be abandoned. There should be no choice between a child and that child's mother.

Mr. Speaker, it is understandable that many people are reluctant to enter into arguments about abortion. It is difficult. It is painful. So many people have experienced this individually or with family members. But we have to be honest.

Mr. Speaker, if you look behind me at the dais here, you can see the words ''peace,'' ''liberty,'' and ''justice.'' We have these words all around our Nation's capital, our Nation's monuments.

But, in truth, we cannot find peace in a society that does not protect its most innocent lives. We cannot find liberty when we are indifferent to one another and simply turn away when a woman

faces difficulty. We cannot claim justice for all when we throw away the innocent unborn life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to delve for a moment into the deeper reasons for these divisions over abortion and the deeper reasons why we have such a caustic debate.

For those of us who are pro-life, it can be hard, frankly, to understand why everyone just doesn't see our perspective. But I believe that much of the ugliness surrounding the abortion debate hinges upon the competing values of personal autonomy versus relational responsibility, once again, personal autonomy versus relational responsibility.

Of course, working hard, making something of yourself, refusing to let difficult circumstances overcome you, are all hallmarks of a well-ordered life essential to an individual's progress as a person.

But, Mr. Speaker, rugged individualism can lead to rugged isolationism, crushing the vitality of the human heart and leading to loneliness, hopelessness, and ultimately despair.

And could it be, Mr. Speaker, that the confusion surrounding abortion is the loss of an understanding of the dignity of each person as they are set in the environment of a community?

On this deeply painful topic of abortion, the primary community in question is, first and foremost, the unique bond between a mother and her child, followed by the bond of the extended family and extended community.

All politics—all life—Mr. Speaker, is ultimately founded on relationships. Happiness depends upon social life, on interdependency. A healthy society depends upon stable and healthy relationships for promoting sustainable values and our greater ideals.

But because of cultural confusion, we establish a false choice. Is it a woman's right to choose or is it a child's right to life? This should not be a consideration in the broader community that is committed to bonds of solidarity.

Sadly, I believe, we have lost sight of the degree to which the logic of radical autonomy, severed from foundational principles that order human relations, namely, in charity, have created the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

Individuals who are alone so often become disassociated from mutuality and community. Decades upon decades of this cultural conditioning leaves us with an aggregate understanding that our strength is only found in ourselves. No wonder a young woman, scared, alone, or abandoned feels such pressure to abort.

Mr. Speaker, during last year's historic papal visit to the United States, Pope Francis highlighted the need for what I call social conservation.

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At its root, social conservation is the answer to the widespread longing in all of our hearts, that longing for a culture of meaning, of purposefulness.

Pope Francis promoted universal human values, the importance of society, the primacy of the family, the dignity of work, the responsibility of people to properly steward the natural environment, and the sanctity of all life, especially the poor, the elderly, those who are marginalized, and the unborn.

This holistic approach of Pope Francis does not fit our political class distinctions, which rage all around us in this body. So this is not a Democrat or Republican issue, it is about the protection of persons and how we build a truly healthy society.

Children in the womb are vulnerable, precious members of their families. We must defend them, not in isolation, but as a part of the social fabric upon which our shared future as a people depends.

Now, some abortion advocates charge that defenders of the unborn are pro-life only until birth of the child; that the pro-life position is a part of a grotesque fiction called the war on women. That is a very painful accusation.

In the end, I wish we could rise above this, because I believe everyone should agree that the choice between radical autonomy as a justification for abortion, versus relational responsibility, is a false choice. To be pro-life is to be genuinely pro-child, pro-woman, and pro-family.

No matter how hard the circumstances, we should all be loving enough, caring enough, and we certainly have resources enough to protect both the mother and her child.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to look for ways to reframe this entire debate, to look for some light. Maybe there will continue to be deep philosophical differences over the question, but maybe there is some common ground.

A spectrum of policy proposals could more effectively build wider coalitions, I believe, in the pro-life debate, advancing cultural conversion instead of cultural war. Initiatives could include an assault on the scourge of coercion, which forces many women, including young girls, to have an abortion at the hands of an uncaring boyfriend or unscrupulous doctor.

Can't we find it in ourselves to attack this injustice? I would like to believe we can.

What about incentives for businesses to provide better pregnancy and new parenthood assistance, including maternity and paternity leave? Some of my colleagues speaking before me mentioned some of these proposals. No woman should be forced to choose between a paycheck and her child.

Other ideas could be adoption, enhanced adoption facilities, countermeasures against workplace pregnancy discrimination, classifying pregnancy as a qualifying event for health insurance, initiatives for responsible fatherhood.

That is not my idea, that is President Obama's idea. In fact, I commended him for that because he raised it in the State of the Union, as I recall, about 2 years ago.

Finally, I think we should channel money from the abortion facilities which are receiving America's taxpayer dollars, which most Americans disagree with, by the way, toward nurturing pregnancy health centers, and there are many beautiful examples of this all around the country.

By pursuing these policy proposals, maybe we shift the cultural understanding that it is not a choice between radical autonomy—I can only find strength in myself, me, as an individual, I am alone, abandoned, no matter how much I need others—and a relational responsibility that we all have for one another.

Let's elevate this idea of that relational responsibility of interdependency within community because we are living in a shattered society.

Nothing else is working, Mr. Speaker. We are in an age of anxiety and a time of growing threat to the family, the very basis of the strength of this great Nation.

Now, more than ever, compassion should be our first principle.

Abortion is violence. Abortion is not health care. Abortion is a false choice that no one should ever be forced to make.

Let's elevate the ideal of motherhood, protect it, nurture it, respect it, provide for it, celebrate it, the genius of the feminine, and the beauty of all life.

Mr. Speaker, in a few short weeks, these young people who will, by the thousands, tens of thousands, crowd around this Capitol, they are really telling us one simple truth: Love them both, just love them both.

I yield back the balance of my time.

PROTECTING OUR SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL) for 30 minutes.

Mr. RUSSELL. Mr. Speaker, it was New Year's Eve in Blanchard, Oklahoma. Eighteen-year-old mother Sarah McKinley, alone with her 3-month-old son, heard a ruckus at the door. Two men were outside trying to break it down. Grabbing her baby and barricading the door with her sofa, she immediately called 911.

In the frantic and desperate situation that followed, it became clear that law enforcement would not arrive in time to prevent the assault by armed intruders. She informed the dispatcher that she had a shotgun, and asked if it was all right to shoot the intruders, should they make their way inside.

Wisely, the dispatcher told Sarah: ''I can't tell you to do that, but you do what you have to do to protect that baby.''

Sarah already knew what she might have to do, and hoped against hope