

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the slaughter in Orlando struck me with special impact. The massacre of patrons of the gay night club focused deliberately on the LGBT community came at a time of unparalleled progress for equality, capped by marriage equality. It was jarring. Even though the struggle continues in places like North Carolina, these killings came at a time of amazing progress and hope.

But horrific episodes of gun violence are always personal for me, and not just because of the carnage of multiple shootings and murders. We have had shootings in Oregon in shopping centers and schools, mass shootings in a high school in Springfield and a community college in Roseburg. We have had many deaths and injuries and Presidential visits.

The gun violence issue started for me with the senseless freak death from a single shot of a high school friend from a passing car. It is personal. I saw this single, random shot devastate a family, friends, and classmates. My own brother took his life with a handgun. We know that, unlike other forms of suicide attempts, people with handguns almost always succeed.

After each horrific event, my hope—and those of millions of other Americans—are raised again. Maybe this time it will be different. You might ask how, if even the slaughter of 20 innocent first graders could not give spineless politicians the courage to stand up to the craven apologists for gun violence?

Well, in part, what is different was that, at Sandy Hook, those 20 little children and their six teachers struck a chord that remains. It laid the foundation to help focus the relentless outspoken efforts of President Obama and his entire administration in dealing with each little element of gun safety that was within their power to make us safer. We have Secretary Clinton running for President who has put a spotlight on gun safety throughout her campaign in a way unlike any we have seen in a Presidential campaign before.

One of the most encouraging signs for me is that there is a new approach to reducing gun violence, focused on gun safety. This is taking hold. A number of us have come up with our own plans.

A couple of years ago, I formulated my approach—looking at the concept we did with traffic safety—not a single magic solution, but a series of thoughtful, focused effects that, in traffic safety, ended up cutting deaths and injuries in half with education, research, enforcement, and policy changes, large and small, that had a cumulative effect of saving hundreds of thousands of lives. We can do this with gun violence.

An agenda of simple, commonsense approaches have been taken in other parts of the world, and it has made a difference. We see, in the United States, evidence in those States and communities that have taken action to reduce gun violence that people are, in fact, safer. It makes a difference.

Sometimes in politics, we can feel an issue crest, and I think we are watching it now. This week, we have a simple, single powerful little symbol. The no fly, no buy legislation would prevent people who we think are too dangerous to allow them to buy a ticket to fly on a plane, should not be allowed to buy an assault weapon.

Today, my colleagues and I are here supporting the notion that, if there is no bill to vote on, there should be no congressional break, demanding at least to allow us a vote on the floor of the House the same way there was some action in the Senate that gave people hope.

Let's do our part this morning to raise public awareness, to build momentum to make America safer. We shouldn't go home for the Fourth of July break without at least another small step forward. We owe it to the memory of tens of thousands who have died needlessly from gun violence, and we owe it to the tens of thousands of lives that we can save.

VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the situation in Venezuela is deteriorating very quickly. In Venezuela, the people are running out of medicine, running out of food, experiencing electricity shortages, and the regime cannot even provide basic goods for the people.

Time is ticking, Mr. Speaker. It is not a matter of if; it is a matter of when Venezuela implodes due to the destructive policies of Nicolas Maduro. And the United States cannot sit idly by and watch this train wreck occur before our very eyes.

Responsible countries in Latin America must also stand up and be a voice for those suffering in Venezuela. Last week, 15 countries from the region signed a joint statement that expressed respect for the Venezuelan Constitution and called on responsible nations to guarantee due process and human rights. This is a good first step, Mr. Speaker, and I applaud those countries, but more needs to be done.

Tomorrow, the Organization of American States, the OAS, will have a meeting to discuss this crisis. I know that there are some who are advocating for dialogue, but we have tried dialogue before, and it was unsuccessful as Maduro kept coming up with new delays and obstacles in order to prevent a solution. We cannot allow Maduro to continue the charade of a dialogue as a stalling tactic.

A referendum, Mr. Speaker, must occur this year. The people demand it. Because if it doesn't, then next year, Maduro can step aside, hand over power to his Vice President, and the same abusive regime continues while not addressing any of the underlying problems.

If a dialogue does occur, all sectors of the Venezuelan opposition must be at the table. That is only fair. But it cannot happen if some of them are in jail, and a precondition to any dialogue must include the release of all political prisoners.

The regime could show a good-faith effort by doing this, but instead, it continues to go the other direction. It continues to go backwards, postponing the appeal of a political prisoner, Leopoldo Lopez, indefinitely after it was scheduled to occur just 2 days ago.

With its repression, its corruption, and its disastrous economic policies, the Maduro regime is running Venezuela into the ground, and it is no wonder that Venezuelans feel like they are under siege. Riots are occurring on a daily basis, and according to one recent study, 87 percent of Venezuelans say they don't have enough money to buy enough food. This travesty is simply unsustainable, and the regime must be held accountable to the people.

Tomorrow at the OAS, I hope to see the hemisphere finally stand up for itself, stop allowing itself to be mollified by the regime's lies and stall tactics, and hold Maduro's feet to the fire.

Humanitarian aid must be allowed to get through to the people, and the referendum must be held this year. Let the Venezuelan people have their say and finally put an end to this suffering.

In September of last year, Mr. Speaker, I joined 19 of my colleagues in sending a bipartisan letter to Secretary Kerry and Secretary Lew urging the administration to enforce a bill that I passed with Senator MARCO RUBIO, the Venezuelan Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act, and to apply sanctions to regime officials in the Venezuelan court system in response to the unjust sentencing of Venezuelan activist Leopoldo Lopez.

I asked Obama administration officials: What justification do you have for not carrying out and implementing these sanctions for this miscarriage of justice, and what is the dollar amount of the assets seized of the seven individuals whom you have sanctioned?

The State Department has pulled some visas due to human rights violations, but I asked the State Department: Can you tell us how many visas the State Department has pulled, and who are these individuals?

Last week, at the OAS meeting in the Dominican Republic, Secretary Kerry stated that Venezuela should follow its own constitution and hold a free, fair, and timely recall referendum. Does he believe or expect that it will happen this year?

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Maduro has stated that he is ready to exchange ambassadors. I think this would be a big mistake because it will look as though we are legitimatizing the illegitimate Maduro regime. I hope that the State Department will not nominate someone this year to be Ambassador of Venezuela, and I hope that we, in the U.S., do more to help the long-suffering people of Venezuela.

GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, the horrific mass shooting that took place on June 12 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, is a stark reminder of the urgent responsibility that we have to reduce gun violence in this country. This monstrous attack on the LGBT community in a place of refuge and empowerment requires us to act.

The shooter in Orlando used an assault rifle that is virtually identical to the ones used by mass killers in San Bernardino, Umpqua Community College, Aurora, and Sandy Hook Elementary School. That is no coincidence.

Out of the eight high-profile mass shootings that have taken place in the past year, seven involved the use of an assault weapon. When an assault weapon is used in a mass shooting, the number of people shot increases by 153 percent, and the number of people killed increases by 63 percent.

These are weapons of war that are designed to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible. They belong on a battlefield; they don't belong in our communities; and I will continue to fight to reinstate the assault weapons ban.

This morning, I want to use the time that I have to talk about two proposals that the Speaker should bring up for immediate vote: no fly, no buy, and universal background checks.

This is really, really simple. If you are too dangerous to fly on an airplane, then you are too dangerous to buy a gun. But under the laws that we have in place today, someone who is on the FBI's terrorist watch list, who is too dangerous to get on a plane, can still walk into any gun store in America, pass a background check, and walk out with an assault weapon or any other gun he wants. In fact, from 2004 until 2014, more than 2,000 suspected terrorists bought firearms legally in this country, and they are going to continue doing so until we stop them.

Until 9/11, bombs were the weapon of choice for terrorists looking to strike the United States; but in the 15 years since then, 95 percent of terrorist deaths that took place in the United States resulted from gunfire.

It is impossible—impossible—to understand that House Republicans have now voted 13 times to block the no fly, no buy proposal that Congressman PETER KING and Congressman MIKE THOMPSON introduced to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists in this country. Why? What are they afraid of? That we might actually stop a terrorist from passing a background check before he buys an assault rifle at Cabela's?

Bring the no fly, no buy bill to the floor today. Let's have an up-or-down vote. Let the American people hold us accountable for where we stand. This should be a no-brainer.

More than 80 percent of Americans believe we should prevent suspected terrorists from buying a gun, and more than 90 percent of Americans believe that a background check should be required on every firearm sale so we can keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those with such serious mental illness that possessing a gun would make them a danger to themselves or others.

Bills are pending to fix our background check system and to require a background check on every gun sale. This is one of the single most important and effective steps that we can take to reduce gun violence in this country.

Right now, anyone can go to a gun show or get on the Internet and purchase a gun without a background check. As many as two out of every five firearm transactions today are conducted without a background check. It is too easy for a criminal, a domestic abuser, a terrorist, or someone with a serious mental illness to buy a gun through this loophole.

Every day, background checks block 171 attempted purchases by felons, 48 attempted purchases by domestic abusers, and 19 attempted purchases by fugitives. It is critical that we strengthen the background check system and require checks on all firearm sales so we can keep more dangerous individuals from acquiring these deadly weapons. Bring the Fix Gun Checks Act to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, we held a moment of silence last week for the victims in Orlando. I know that all of us have kept the victims and their loved ones and the people of Orlando in our thoughts and prayers since June 12. But the best way to honor the lives lost in this horrific tragedy is to do something to prevent it from happening to others. A moment of silence is not enough. We need a moment of sustained action in this Chamber, and we need it today.

Mr. Speaker, it will be an insult to the victims of this shooting and their families and every victim of every shooting in this country if we continue to do nothing to prevent future tragedies. Do not let this Chamber adjourn until we have voted on these critical issues. Bring these bills to the floor today. Nothing is more important than stopping the bloodshed and ensuring the safety and security of our constituents.

□ 1030

THE SENATE SHOULD PASS H.
CON. RES. 129

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WEBER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of H. Con. Res. 129.

To do so, let me share a story about a constituent of mine who is a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania. She was 11 years old when the German SS Nazis

marched into her town and gathered her and her family up. She was separated right away from her family, and, I guess fortunately for her, she did not appear Jewish to the German soldiers.

When she was asked her name, she told them it was Weber, which happens to be my name and the way my grandfather would have pronounced it when he came over from Germany on the boat in 1903. Anyway, the soldier thought she wasn't Jewish, so he let her go.

She ran into the forest, Mr. Speaker, and she hid in barns and other places until the end of the war. She spent the years of that war hungry and frightened but somehow managed to survive. She was liberated by the Russians at the war's end.

This woman, who was a young girl when she was 11 back during World War II, is now in her 90s and living in my district in her home in Galveston, Texas. Mr. Speaker, she is in need of 24-hour care to remain in her home. Unfortunately, funds are running low to keep her in her home, with the high cost of providers. She is unable to stay there, it looks like.

She lives on Social Security, but fortunately the Claims Conference has been able to assist her through providing funding by the German Government for 25 regular hours a week and some exceptional hours a week provided on her increasing healthcare needs.

Additionally, the Jewish community of Houston, through the generosity of a private fund which assists Holocaust survivors, through case management efforts of Jewish Family Service in Houston, has also been able to provide up to 59 hours a week of home care above that which the German Government has funded.

As of June 1, 2016, Mr. Speaker, the Jewish Family Service in Houston has not been able to continue this level of care.

She and other constituents of mine who are Holocaust victims would all greatly benefit from increased funding which is included in House Concurrent Resolution 129, asking the German Government to provide that funding for that very home care. This would ensure that those Holocaust survivors are able to remain in their homes with dignity for the remaining few years of their life.

Thankfully, H. Con. Res. 129 passed—with bipartisan support, I might add—in the House last week. I encourage our counterparts in the Senate to pass this legislation swiftly. Mr. Speaker, you know I am right.

CALLING FOR A VOTE ON BEHALF
OF THE VICTIMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I am ROSA DELAURO from the State of Connecticut. I represent the Third Congressional District.