Chair, on behalf of the majority leader, announces the appointment of Deborah C. Ball, of Georgia, to serve as a member of the Parents’ Advisory Council on Youth Drug Abuse for a three-year term.

**ISSUES, NOT SOLUTIONS**

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NUSSELE). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I must say that I had originally requested only 5 minutes, but a number of things have happened in the last several hours that have forced me to come back and request more time to address the issues that I wanted to bring to the attention of the body today.

Certainly, some of the things that have been discussed by previous speakers here lead me to take the floor today and to do so for at least some time—5 minutes—more than 5 minutes.

When I was in high school, our class used to have the task at the end of the year of coming up with a motto, among other things, to attach to ourselves for the rest of eternity and it would always be faced in the little book, the annual. It would say the class motto was such and such for this, Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion after listening to the discussion for the last hour. I have a suggestion of what our colleagues on the other side of the aisle might use for their class motto this session, and it would be this: “Issues, not solutions.”

Mr. Speaker, let me just suggest that as the class motto for the Democrats of the 106th Congress. That their real purpose is to have an issue to run on and to avoid the possibility of achieving a solution in this body at all costs.

Now, I say that recognizing that it is certainly not a revelation, I bring to the body that this is the strategy that the Democrats are employing. I say say that because the minority leader has said that. The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) has indicated in articles that I have read, and certainly have been brought to the attention on the floor in the past, that it is his purpose to try and present as many obstacles as he possibly can to the accomplishment of the goals established by the majority in the area of education reform, in the area of tax reform, in any area important to the people of the country, there they would be.

It is not surprising, therefore, when we look at the majority responsibility of the Congress, that is the passage of 13 appropriations bills, that when we look at how that eventually got done, it got done without the help of the Members on the other side. Without the help of any of them. Maybe three or four at a time would come on board, but almost always it was the Republic licans in the Congress that had to carry the load because everybody over there was going to play hard ball because there was no solution.

The last thing they want, in fact, is a solution to the problem. So much rhetoric has been devoted to the Social Security issue. I am so glad to hear that at least we are differen on the other side with regard to Social Security and, in fact, holding it sacrosanct, because that is a very interesting thing. We, in fact, passed a law, passed a bill out of this House. It went over to the other side and that law was designed to, in fact, codify this idea of holding Social Security sacrosanct. Not using it for the general fund. Something that we even hear the President saying that he agrees to.

But what has happened, Mr. Speaker, I ask? Where is that bill? And why is it not now part of the solution to the Social Security issue?

Well, of course, it is because the Senate Democrats have had a filibuster. The issue has been brought forward five times in the Senate, and each time it has been filibustered by the Democrats and essentially killed.

So where is the desire for the solution here? It is not their desire. It is, in fact, to maintain an issue to go into the next campaign with.

Beyond that, when the discussion resolves to the next stage, and that is the fix for Social Security, where is the President’s plan for that? Has anyone heard of the President’s plan? I certainly have not. I recognize fully well that the continuation of the Social Security system is in great, great jeopardy; and we must do something to change that. And I do not even suggest for a moment that not spending Social Security or selling Social Security fund purposes will solve the Social Security problem. It will not. It does, in fact, however, slow the growth of government quite dramatically and makes us a little more honest to our constituents. Those two things are pretty good things in and of themselves.

But if, in fact, there is such a desire to fix Social Security, then of course we should hear something out of the White House about how we should go about doing that. That would be nice. That would be good. But we have not. Why have we not heard that, Mr. Speaker? Let me suggest the reason is because it does not fit the motto. The motto is, remember: “Issues, not solutions.”

COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL AND GUN CONTROL

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, let me go on to the purpose of my original request for this time to speak. It is my understanding that today a group of Members of this body held a press conference in which they unveiled a clock of sorts. And this clock, I am told, has recorded the amount of time, minutes and hours and days, since the event at Columbine High School. And it is meant, I suppose, well, I know it is meant as a political gag in order to try and embarrass the Congress for not being involved for quite, moved ahead on gun legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand the desire on the part of a lot of people, especially as we move to the very end of the session, to grasp at straws to do the most outrageous things in order to try to get the attention of the general public and in order to try to score some sort of political advantage.

But I must say, Mr. Speaker, as the Representative from Columbine, from that area, the school is half a mile from my home, and my neighbors have children there, and we suffered through this. I think we must be very careful where we are going.

I must tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, that to have this kind of political shenanigan pulled at this late date to try and remind us of when Columbine occurred, let me tell my colleagues, that certainly, the event in my district, there is not a parent of a single child who was murdered at that school or injured in that school who needs to be reminded of when that happened.

There is not a single living soul in my district that needs to be told what happened, how long ago, because it is etched indelibly in our memories and in my mind.

To suggest that any action taken subsequent to that time by this Congress could possibly have changed the situation there is, of course, both ludicrous and hypocritical. It is especially hypocritical, Mr. Speaker, because of course this Congress did attempt to address the issue of gun safety.

There was a bill, Mr. Speaker. There was a bill. It made it to the floor. H.R. 2122. Now, maybe it was not a perfect piece of legislation. There were certainly things about it that I had concerns about. But let me just go it just to remind all of us what exactly it was that we were talking about in that particular piece of legislation.

Under current law, background checks are not conducted at gun shows concerning transactions by private persons but, instead, are only required of Federal licensees. This allows for a loophole of sorts in the acquisition of firearms.

There was an amendment proposed as a matter of fact by a Democrat, by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DIXGELL). That amendment I believe was the most accommodating option, both in keeping guns out of the hands of the criminals and in protecting the rights of gun owners across the country. Certainly it was controversial. There were many people in my own district, certainly people in my own constituency that said it still went too far. As a matter of fact, I was the only Member in my delegation to vote for it. It
They put this bill out there. The Dingell amendment was part of it. We assumed, of course, that we would get support for some of it, but it may not have been perfect, because when was the last perfect piece of legislation that passed this body. Every piece of legislation is made up of compromises on both sides of the issue. Certainly it was not perfect for me, but I also knew that it was going to be the best chance we had of getting this kind of legislation out of this Congress. So did the other side, and that is my point. They also knew that that was the best chance we had.

So what happened, Mr. Speaker, after all the rhetoric about gun legislation, and I asked the people across the street holding press conferences and unveiling these clocks, telling us how long it has been since Colorado had 198 Democrats voting no. Republicans voting no. Let me say that again. The chart depicts this: 198 Democrats no votes, 81 Republican no votes. The final vote, 147 aye, 280 no. The 147 broke down in the following manner: Republicans, 137; Democrats 10.

Now, I do not know, I have heard of awards that are given annually, maybe monthly, or something by various members for the pork of the week award. There are all these things that are picked out, and people, individuals get sometimes these awards that are not really all that much appreciated.

I am not sure, but perhaps we should come up with a chutzpah award because I cannot think of a better word, a fine Jewish word to explain what we are talking about here when somebody can actually stand up here when somebody can actually stand up here in this body and tell us that we have prevented the movement of this kind of legislation of gun control legislation when this is the fact of the matter: 198 Democrat noes. 198. Republican noes. 81.

Who stopped it? Why did they stop it, Mr. Speaker? The answer I believe is the answer I gave at the beginning. It is the motto of the Democratic clip-ribbons of tombstones saying “rest in peace gun control measures,” I want to ask them where they were on the day that H.R. 2122 came to the floor.

I will tell my colleagues what happened when this bill came to the floor. It failed. It failed with 198 Democrats voting no, 81 Republicans voting no. Let me say that again. The chart depicts this: 198 Democrat no votes, 81 Republican no votes. The final vote, 147 aye, 280 no. The 147 broke down in the following manner: Republicans, 137; Democrats 10.

I will never forget the day here on the floor of the House when the final vote was taken on the tax relief measure. I was proud to be a Republican, perhaps more so than any other time since I have been here in the past 11 months, because we were actually doing something that was very, very characteristic, I thought, of Republican principles.

So it is absolutely appropriate for us to be divided on those issues, have battles on those issues, fight it out on this floor, go to a vote, everybody doing what they truly believe in their heart of hearts should be done because of their commitment to what is good for the country.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes other things happen, other things happen here, and decisions are made and events occur that really are not based on those heartfelt opinions and ideas. It is based on sheer, pure politics. I would say to my colleagues that when we look at the issues as we approach the next election, be very, very, very discerning. Mr. Speaker, be discerning and try to
Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) that I was not back in my office hanging on every one of his words. But when I realized he was doing this special order, I hoped he was doing it in reaction to the news conference which was held earlier today, the made-for-TV political news conference that was held earlier today, I wanted to come over and just visit with him a little bit about this. I had an opportunity to hear him.

Columbine for the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) particularly more than anyone else in this chamber, for him particularly, was a hard-hitting experience. Because this was in his district. But it adjoins my district. I have some addresses that are Columbine addresses.

And I do not know of any tragedy like this that has hit me so hard in a long, long time. It was a terrible tragedy to the folks that experienced it and to all of us in Colorado and, I hope, across the country.

The day after this tragedy, this tragedy I believe occurred on a Tuesday, on Wednesday the chairman of the Democratic National Committee from this House was standing before his colleagues in his conference saying this is a great political issue for us, a great political debate, and we need to flood the Congress with gun control bills because the Republicans will vote against them and this will be a great issue for us in the next election.

I was appalled. I was offended, I was disgusted that someone would jump in and make political hay when my heart was broken. We had had a terrible tragedy, and this was going on.

I also noticed that as we went through the debate and discussion about gun control after that, because they did exactly that, flooded the Congress with gun control bills; and as I looked at each one of those, it was my opinion that not a single one of them, had they been law prior to Columbine, would have altered the Columbine experience one iota. I think there were 18, 20, 21 laws violated there already. None of these new laws would have done anything. None of the laws that they were talking about at that news conference in the basement of this Capitol would have done one thing to alter the Columbine experience or to prevent an additional Columbine experience.

One thing that I think might help prevent something like that is if we would enforce the gun control laws which are on the books right now. And the gentleman has probably said all this before, but if we would enforce the laws that are on the books right now, which this Justice Department has had a dismal record of enforcing the gun laws that are on the books, absolute dismal record. And in an instant or two that I am aware of where a U.S. attorney or assistant U.S. attorney has taken it into his own hands to be strict in his enforcement of gun law violations, the gun crime rates have dropped like a rock.

But the Justice Department does not like that. In one case they were even trying to get a U.S. attorney fired because he was enforcing the gun laws too strictly. Now, what can I assume from that? All I can assume from that is if I were the laws on the books, and if it did reduce gun crime, then there would not be the motivation to accomplish their goal, which is to take away private ownership of guns in America. I do think that is this administration's goal in taking our guns away from us.

So we do not reduce the rate of crime with guns, because if we did that, then they would not have that argument. That is appalling as well. We need to enforce the laws that are on the books and stop making phony political hay out of one of the worst tragedies that has occurred in this country in a long, long time.

I thank the gentleman for having this special order and giving me an opportunity to express, too emotionally, but I feel emotional about it, some of my feelings about this situation.

Mr. TANCREDO. Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments; and I certainly and completely understand the position that is connected with making them because I assure the gentleman that I empathize in that regard.

I do not think, in fact I know, that there has been no more difficult issue with which I have had to try to deal than the issue of Columbine High School, not just from the standpoint of the pure politics of it, the issues of gun control and the rest, but the neighbors that I see when I go home every weekend and the children that I see and the concerns I have as a father.

And just perhaps for a moment, if I could be allowed, I would reference those concerns and ask for the prayers of America to be directed to the parents and to the children who are still suffering to this day. We are seeing every time when I go home this subject being brought up, and the papers play it up, and there are some very good things, positive things that are happening in terms of children being coming out of the hospital who are now walking, these kids that were so terribly wounded in this. Then we will have another setback, and we had one not too long ago, when a mother of one of the students took her own life.

And it is so hard for us to understand. We think about how much pain any community, any family can deal with or can endure. How much can we endure? And I look at those students, as I say, those children who are recuperating, and I thank God for their recuperation. Those physical signs of healing are there. Their scars are healing and we can see that, and that is good and as it should be. But, Mr. Speaker, what we cannot see are those scars that do not manifest themselves on the outside of the body. They are the scars in the mind and in the heart and on the soul, and they do not heal as quickly as the scars on the outside.

We do not see people coming out of the hospital being welcomed home withflowers and friends. We do not see them being moved this process along, when as I know in my heart that that bill they would live through the agony of this and are tormented by the thought of Columbine over and over again. And fear, fear in their hearts, fear of going to school, fear on the part of parents in taking their children to school, because they do not know what is going to happen and because they feel totally helpless. These are the things with which we are still dealing.

And I can tell my colleagues, my friends who had this press conference giving us the clock, they do not have to tell me when this happened. I know exactly when it happened, and so do those parents. And what they have done today does not help the healing. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one might even suggest that it digs deeper at the wound. And that is why I do have emotion in my voice; and I am filled with emotion about this, because this is not just a typical political debate or fight we are having here. These are about real people whose hearts have been broken, and it disgusts me to think that they are being used as pawns in this political battle.

But that is the only way I can see it right now. Because, Mr. Speaker, we could have had at least attempts at solutions. Although I was the only one, as I say, that voted for the bill, I know my colleague did not vote for the bill that I referred to, I was the only one from Colorado to have done so, and I know in my heart that that bill would not have changed anything had it been in place, I understand full well that there is really so little, in fact, we can do.

But what little we can do to have somebody then stand up later on and blame us, blame this side for not having moved this process along, when as anyone can see, 191 Democrat noes on the bill to 80 Republican. It was not us. But even had this passed, we would not have broken the schools, we would not be safe on our streets. Much, much more has to occur.

And in a way, my fear with this particular piece of legislation, and all the
We tried to make it worse by reducing the amount of funds being directed to poorest children. There are some tags on there. But if it went on the table, we brought it to the floor, and we dealt with it. We have not dealt with school construction. We have not dealt with the magnitude of a kingpin problem.

If we do not deal with the physical infrastructure of the public education system, we are sending a message that we really do not care about the system. All the other things we do will not matter if the physical infrastructure cannot carry out the task that we have set for our public education system.

But I am optimistic about that. I am optimistic about the fact that we will come to grips with the problem of school construction and the large amounts of resources that are going to be needed for that. The fact it is going to require billions and billions of dollars is no reason to back away from it. Because we are able to come up with billions of dollars for an interstate highway system and the continuation of the highway program.

We authorized $218 billion in the last session of the 106th Congress. We saw the problem as being big. And despite the fact that nobody wants to be tagged with the label of being a big spender, that highway bill certainly spent large amounts of money to deal with a monumental problem.

We should look forward to the second session of the 106th Congress with optimism. Because the fact is that the public out there clearly has made it obvious what their priorities are. And eventually the Republican majority is going to respond to what the public is saying through the polls and through the focus groups and through the fact that next year’s election cannot go forward with a record of ignoring what people are saying over and over again about education, about Patients’ Bill of Rights, about the minimum wage. All these things have to be dealt with.

I am optimistic about the year 2000, our first year of the 21st century and the second session of the 106th Congress. I am optimistic about it because of the fact that it is a presidential election year.

Presidential elections are always pregnant with surprises. I am optimistic that we are going to have some positive surprises. We can have negative surprises, too. We do not want another presidential election year where a Willie Horton commercial surfaced and the whole spirit of that Willie Horton commercial pervaded during the campaign and the electorate is treated to an appeal to go down to the lowest common denominator and racism becomes an overriding factor in the election.

Or the election that Ronald Reagan kicked off at Philadelphia, Mississippi.