

MEDIA VIOLENCE

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with Rep. DAN BURTON to introduce a joint resolution requiring the Surgeon General to prepare and issue a new Surgeon General's Report on media violence and its impact on the health and welfare of our children. It is by no means all we should do in light of the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, but is it certainly the least we should do.

Original cosponsors of this initiative include Representatives JIM MORAN, CONNIE MORELLA, JOHN SPRATT, JOE PITTS, JIM McDERMOTT, GREG GANSKE, and JOHN LAFALCE.

We join with every parent, school official, student, religious leader and every other American who is struggling to identify what has gone so wrong with the process of growing up in America that our kids can kill our kids without remorse.

This is not a new subject. If the horror that unfolded last week at Columbine High was in any way unique, we could comfort ourselves with the fantasy that it was the product of one or two sick minds. But we know that violence has become as American as apple pie, and we are reaping a bitter harvest as we continue to tolerate a culture which teaches kids to kill and be killed.

Our culture has become infused with violent images and messages and the methods of delivering those images has multiplied exponentially. Television shows that glamorize massacres, movies that pantomime violent school killing sprees, video games that teach children how to shoot to kill their targets and Internet sites filled with vicious, destructive messages all function as desensitizing, conditioning mechanisms making it easier for our children to commit heinous crimes without understanding the finality and brutality of their actions.

Violent TV and film images now have a new interactive digital face in video games and on the Internet. Guns are everywhere. Highly efficient assault weapons are available for sale on the street for the price of a pair of sneakers. More and more children are becoming alienated and depressed without the support structures needed to mediate their troubles, treat their illnesses, or protect them from themselves.

This is a very deep and complicated mess we're in, but it is our mess, a problem we share across the land. There is no place to run to escape its effects. We are facing a monumental task, which I would liken in its scope to a Marshall Plan for America, where the challenge is to rebuild the social structure of a society while respecting the Constitutional freedoms which all Americans cherish.

We can begin by examining the ways that children and young adults learn violence. The evil behavior that those young killers displayed at Columbine High School was not born in them nor learned from their parents.

The strong correlation between violent messages delivered to our kids and antisocial be-

havior delivered by our kids to society is well-documented. It was the fundamental finding of the Surgeon General's Report of 1972 and the Report by the National Institute of Mental Health in 1982. Both reports focused on television's impact on behavior. But since that time, the capacity of the entertainment deliver ever more graphic depiction of violence has vastly increased, and the outlets for delivering these images to children without the intervention of adults has multiplied many times. Moreover, the research community and the entertainment and interactive media has produced a vast compendium of research, polling, and analysis—much of it confusing and conflicting—but which is much more relevant to today's world than what was studied 15 or 30 years ago. The last government-sponsored review in 1982 includes the following introductory sentence:

"In view of the evidence that children are already attentive to the television medium by the age of 6 to 9 months, it is no longer useful to talk of the television set as an extraneous and occasional intruder into the life of a child. Rather, we must recognize that children are growing up in an environment in which they must learn to organize experience and emotional responses not only in relationship to the physical and social environment of the home but also in relation to the omnipresent 21-inch screen that talks, sings, dances, and encourages the desire for toys, candies, and breakfast food."

As the Information Age takes hold and as youth violence takes new and ever more disturbing twists through America's soul, we cannot afford to develop national policy on the basis of such a quaint view of the problem.

Therefore, we are calling on the Surgeon General to provide the country with a new Surgeon General's Report that reflects our contemporary crisis, that takes into account both the promise and problems of interactive media, and that makes findings and recommendations regarding how to combat the sickness of violence and to rebuild our national spirit.

Let me conclude by emphasizing my personal view that the President is correct to focus attention on the contributing factor of gun availability to children and the collapse of parental supervision with regards to dangerous weapons. Our response to the spread of guns into the hands of our kids has been as disproportionate as our response to the cultural glamorization of gun use.

And while I expect to learn much from the dialogue and the research we are asking for today, I do not expect the front-line function of parenting to be found any less fundamental to raising healthy children than it has ever been.

RECOGNIZING EAST HIGH SCHOOL AND THE "WE THE PEOPLE . . . THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION" PROGRAM

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the "We the People . . . The Citizen

and the Constitution" program, and specifically to applaud the East High School team that has come to Washington this year to represent Colorado in the national finals. These young scholars have worked diligently to make it to the finals and their hard work has gained them a deep knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and values of our constitutional democracy.

The names of the students are: Sarah Blum-Barnett, John Boisclair, Kristin Brauer, Elizabeth Clarke, Andrew Cundiff, Jocelyn Dudley, Michelle Ford, Lindsay Gilchrist, Michael Kaplan, Beth Linas, Natalie Lindhorst-Ballast, Brett Lockspeiser, Elizabeth McCartney, Anne McWilliams, Adam Mueller, Dan Murphy, Tristan Nelson, Brandi Raiford, Nathan Rose, Jeremy Schulman, Jeffrey Seversen, Ellen Strickland, Allison Tease. Additionally, I would like to commend their teacher Deanna Morrison who deserves much of the credit for the success of this great team and recognize both the District Coordinator, Loyal Darr, and the State Coordinator, Barbara Miller.

The "We the People. . . The Citizen and the Constitution" program is the most extensive educational program in the country developed specifically to educate young people about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The three-day national competition is modeled after hearings in the United States Congress. These hearings consist of oral presentations by the students acting as constitutional experts before a "congressional committee" made up of a panel of judges acting as Members. The student testimony is followed by a period of questioning during which the judges probe students for their depth of understanding and ability to apply their constitutional knowledge.

I know first hand how well this program works because I was a volunteer coach for years at a high school back in my district in Denver, whose students have done extraordinarily well in the We the People. . . competitions over the last decade. East High School has been among the top ten finalists 9 times in the last 11 years, and they won the competition in 1992.

Once again, I commend the East team for winning the State competition and I wish them the best of luck in the upcoming competition. I know Colorado will be well represented in the finals.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily