

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, May 11, 1999

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON).

### DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
May 11, 1999.

I hereby appoint the Honorable FRED UPTON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

### MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

### GUNS

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, our responsibility in Congress is to find ways for the Federal Government to be a better partner in making our communities more livable for American families, to ensure that they are safe, economically secure, and healthy.

Since I have been in Congress just 3 years, there have been eight multiple shooting deaths on our school campuses, with young children shooting other children and teachers. The epidemic of gun violence amongst our youth has tragic consequences in terms of loss of life, physical safety, the health of our community, to say nothing of the tremendous financial costs that are involved.

For all the attention to the Littleton massacre, this is, in fact, occurring every day. It is just that the pain is scattered from town to town, from city to city in isolated bursts that even without the massive national media coverage is nonetheless producing pain every bit as real.

Yesterday there was a conference at the White House on reducing gun vio-

lence amongst our children. It was assailed by some because it did not go far enough in suggesting steps that virtually every other country has done to reduce gun violence.

Over 5,000 American children are killed by firearms every year in this country. By contrast, only 15 people in the entire country of Japan were murdered with handguns last year. At the same time, it was attacked by apologists for gun violence, who contend that there really are no useful government initiatives to reduce gun violence other than stricter enforcement of laws, more prison time for criminals, and wider use of firearms.

I am heartened by the meeting and the discussion yesterday, because most Americans know that the people who hold the most extreme views are simply wrong. Just as there is no single identifiable cause of the Littleton tragedy, there is no single magic solution. But it is defeatist in the extreme and an abrogation of our responsibility as Americans, and especially as Members of Congress, to fail to do everything in our power to make a difference.

The research shows we can and that we will be supported by the vast majority of the American people if we do take action. For example, we must stop the travesty of allowing the gun industry to operate without protections for public health.

There ought to be the same scrutiny applied to real guns as applied to toy guns as far as consumer protections are concerned. We should not sell one more new gun in this country that does not tell us if there is a bullet in the chamber.

There ought to be no loopholes for the background check requirements of the Brady bill, which has prevented more than a quarter million known felons from buying weapons. We ought to extend that prohibition to deny people with a history of violent and reckless behavior the ability to purchase and own firearms.

The Federal Government should select a date in the near future when it will require that all the guns that we supply to our thousands of employees will be personalized so that that weapon cannot be used against them.

We ought to assure that people who manage their guns in a reckless fashion are held accountable. We ought to make the child access law pioneered years ago in Florida the law of the land, protecting families everywhere.

The leadership in this Congress ought to have the courage to insist that the

proposals be debated in the House of Representatives as they are this week in the Senate.

Once this sees the light of day on the floor of the House, we will find that, in fact, there are men and women in both parties who have the conscience, have the conviction to stand up to the apologists for gun violence and take these simple, common-sense steps to reduce the tragic toll that gun violence has had in our communities.

An important first step will be the Comprehensive Child Violence Protection Act introduced by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY). I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring her legislation and to urge the Republican leadership to finally find it in their hearts to allow this to be debated on the floor of the House.

The carnage of Littleton will occur again today in dozens of instances across America. I hope that this is the last day that Congress is missing in action and that this Congress finally steps forward to do all it can to protect our families and their children from senseless gun violence.

### TAX FREEDOM DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today, May 11, is Tax Freedom Day, which means, if the government began taking every dime of one's paycheck on January 1 of this year, one would have spent, on average, the last 131 days working just to pay one's local, State, and Federal taxes.

We call it Tax Freedom Day, but this year we really do not have much to celebrate. We have spent more days working for the government than we did last year. A later Tax Freedom Day indicates an ever-increasing national tax burden.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of this country cannot afford any more taxes. The typical American family already spends more than 38 percent of its income on taxes. That is more than most families spend on food, clothing, shelter, and transportation combined. In fact, the average American spends almost 3 hours of a typical 8-hour day working for the government.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to expect our hard-working families to

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.