

LET US STOP THE RHETORIC AND PASS REAL GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION FOR ALL OF AMERICA

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in listening to Susan Wilson, who lost her daughter, lost her child in Jonesboro, by the terrible and tragic use of a gun, it reemphasized the importance that we in this Congress lower any debate that is political and focus on getting the task done. That is why I believe the conference committee should meet; and that is why I believe the legislation that I offered last evening, the Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act of 2000, is a comprehensive gun safety proposal that we should address.

My legislation will protect children not only by raising the age of handgun eligibility and prohibiting youth from possessing semiautomatic assault weapons but by enhancing the penalties for those adults who recklessly disregard the risk that a child is capable of gaining access to a firearm.

We did it in Houston. We did it in Texas and it works. Parents and supervising adults must be held responsible for their children when their household contains dangerous firearms. This legislation also proposes penalty for youth possession of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons, as well as the transfer of such weapons to youth and provides school districts with incentives, Mr. Speaker, to have gun safety prevention programs.

We are losing lives. Let us stop the rhetoric and pass real gun safety legislation for all of America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the current Juvenile Justice legislation already passed by the Senate.

The American people have waited long enough for us to act on this legislation. We can no longer delay and wait for the next tragedy in order to take action.

It is imperative that we act now and not allow Republican leaders to dismantle the vital gun safety provisions contained within the current Juvenile Justice bill.

Simply passing a bill without any gun safety provisions would be irresponsible and a terrible mistake on the part of this Congress.

We must let the American people know that we are not afraid to take the steps necessary to enact responsible legislation.

We cannot allow the NRA to determine how this Congress acts at the expense of our children.

Today, I support Senator DASCHLE's past statement that the Juvenile Justice bill, which concerns access to guns and was adopted by both the Senate and the House, should move forward.

Furthermore, I support his belief that if the Juvenile Justice bill does not go to conference; each Member of Congress should file independent bills until safe legislation is adopted.

I am taking the initiative by announcing, my legislation which would increase youth gun safety. My bill "The Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act of 2000," is a comprehensive gun safety proposal.

My legislation will protect children not only by raising the age of handgun eligibility and prohibiting youth from possessing semiautomatic assault weapons, but by enhancing the penalties for those adults who recklessly disregards the risk a child is capable of gaining access to a firearm. Parents and supervising adults must be held responsible for their children when their household contains dangerous firearms.

This legislation also proposes an enhanced penalty for youth possession of handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons, as well as, the transfer of such weapons to youth. Furthermore, children will be required to be accomplished by a parent when attending gun shows. Finally, as a preventative measure, my legislation encourages each school district to provide or participate in a firearms safety program.

Through enhanced penalties for reckless supervising adults, gun safety education programs and limitations on the admittance of children into gun shows, my legislation seeks to prevent tragedies like the one that most recently occurred in Mount Morris Township, MI. This child shooting is the latest in a series of preventable shootings that occurred as a result of adults recklessly leaving firearms in the presence of children.

It is a shame that political maneuvering is still stalling even a nonbinding resolution like Senator BOXER's that simply supports child gun safety legislation. Yet, I would like to say how delighted I was to hear of Senator DURBIN's amendment that would offer more funding for providing gun safety education.

In the past few weeks my office has received many calls and letters from constituents who believe that we support legislation that will take away their guns.

It is obvious that the propaganda machine of the National Rifle Association is working to change our focus from the issue of children and guns and gun ownership in general. Like many of my colleagues, I do not oppose responsible gun ownership.

However, like President Clinton, I am concerned about children and their access to guns. I am concerned that guns are not regulated in the same way that toys are regulated. I am concerned that we do not have safety standards for locking devices on guns. I am concerned that we do not prohibit children from attending gun shows unsupervised. I am concerned that we have not focused on the statistics on children and guns.

This motion to instruct urges the conferees to act immediately on the Juvenile Justice bill. We cannot wait for another tragedy to occur. I urge my colleagues to support this motion.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AMERICA MUST DECLARE INDEPENDENCE FROM FOREIGN OIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, our Nation must again declare independence, this time from dependence on foreign oil, foreign energy.

Why is this the case? Not just because our citizens are finding the prices increasing daily at the gas pump, not just because heating oil has risen in price steadily over the last several months, not because there are warning signs that the gasoline prices will continue to rise throughout the summertime, not just because we know statistically that we have 55 percent of our domestic energy needs have to come from abroad, not just because of that.

But if we find that all of these reasons are not important enough, then measure this, I ask the American public: For the sake of our national security, we must declare our independence from dependence on foreign support and imports of energy.

No more can the American people stand the spectacle of our Nation grovelling at the feet of the nations of OPEC and begging them to send us more oil, begging them to sell us more oil, to produce more oil. Please make it possible for us to have the oil we need. Please, we are begging them.

The only superpower in the world has to depend on that kind of diplomacy, begging the nations to send us more oil?

Well, we are better than that and we have the ingenuity and the resources and the brain power and the stamina and the intent and the greatness to become self-sufficient in our country on our needs for energy.

Therefore, I am introducing today the first step towards the declaration of this new independence of the United States, a bill that would create immediately a blue ribbon commission to determine ways and means by which our Nation will become energy self-sufficient.

No more shall we depend on foreign source energies for our needs. This commission would have to look into, as I view it, the possibility of more domestic drilling in the Midwest, in the North, in the Northwest to develop fully the possibilities of Alaskan new explorations, to determine how best we can fully develop offshore drilling, all of these with due consideration for the environment but necessary for our national survival.

We must weed through these obstacles that have been placed in front of us and which we have imposed on ourselves. There is no longer time in this new century for that kind of obstacle to get in the way of our being self-sufficient as a Nation.