

A livable community is one where people are safe, healthy, and economically secure. Gun violence undercuts each of those elements. We are not safe today in the epidemic of gun violence, whether it is in Mount Morris Township, Michigan; Littleton, Colorado; or Springfield, Oregon. Gun violence is a leading cause of death and injury, 12 per day for children alone. And our families are not economically secure. Gun injuries, injuries, cost almost \$20,000 per incident to treat, and the cost of a gun-related death is approximately one-third of a million dollars.

In the face of overwhelming evidence about gun violence, the gun apologists continue to argue that guns somehow make us safer, and simple common sense gun legislation is unnecessary. By their logic, we could get rid of metal detectors in airports. Yes, a few guns might get through, but almost certainly well-armed passengers would gun down the terrorists.

A little article in today's Post notes that for the second time in a week, a passenger was arrested on a plane for assaulting a pilot. Would we be better off if that passenger had been armed so that there would have been a gun battle instead of a fist fight?

The NRA argues that the people who want to reduce gun violence have blood on their hands, that they want a certain level of violence. I was with the President of the United States as he visited the victims and the families in my State in Springfield, Oregon; and I know that such an assertion is as untrue as it is sick and twisted.

Tragically, it is consistent with the NRA's approach and that of their apologists. They oppose even the most simple common sense approaches. If they had their way, the Brady Bill would not have passed and 400,000 felons and mentally ill people would have had guns outright, instead of eliminating that opportunity for them. Does anyone think that that would have made us safer?

We do not have to be stalemated by this argument. There are simple common sense approaches. We can require safe storage of guns. Maybe it would not have made a difference for that little 6-year-old boy and the girl he shot in terms of that home, but maybe the gun would not have been stolen in the first place if it had been in a lockbox.

We can lead by example by making sure that smart gun technology is available for law enforcement officials. One in six law enforcement officials who are killed with a gun are killed with their own service revolver or that of one of their partners. If the Federal Government and State governments would announce that next year we will not purchase guns that are not personalized, that cannot be wrestled away, we could move that technology forward by leaps and bounds.

We can make guns safer to reduce accidental death and injury. Why in the

name of all that is holy do we sell guns in this country that do not tell you whether or not there is a bullet in the chamber, when we have mandated child-proof bottles for aspirin and cigarette lighters? Why do we have more consumer protections for toy guns than real guns? Sadly, it is the apologists for the gun lobby who have had their way.

We can also keep guns out of the hands of violent felons; not just violent felons, but violent misdemeanants as well. A study at the University of California-Davis has demonstrated that those who are convicted of misdemeanor crimes are 7.5 times more likely to be charged with new crimes than those with no criminal records. The vast majority of people who own guns, as well as normal citizens who do not, support prohibitions like this.

Finally, we can take a step here in Congress today. We can end the gridlock. The Republican leadership should, must, let us move forward. The conferees on the juvenile violence bill have not met since August, hung up over these gun violence provisions. They ought to meet. They ought to meet today and allow us to vote on these simple, common sense provisions.

Finally, people at home today have an opportunity and responsibility themselves to reduce gun violence. Parents should not only demand that Congress act, but they should make sure that if they have a gun in a home, that it is stored safely, and if a child of theirs is going to go next door to play at a neighbor's house, they ought to find out if there is a gun in that house and demand that it be stored safely before their child plays there.

There is no excuse for continuing to tolerate the highest rate of gun violence in the developed world in our country.

INS MANAGEMENT NEEDS TO DO ITS JOB

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

Mr. METCALF. Madam Speaker, I do not have to remind this House about the fine work of our Border Patrol agents. They put their lives at risk every day to slow the flow of illegal drugs into this country and to keep our borders safe from dangerous aliens. Their work in helping to arrest a suspected terrorist near Port Angeles, Washington, in December was exemplary. We all appreciate their efforts. Due to the current inept management of the INS, however, the job of these officers is made much, much more difficult.

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Over the past two fiscal years, Congress has appropriated funds for the

INS to hire 2,000 new Border Patrol agents. The agency has failed to hire anywhere near that number, and every new agent they have hired has been assigned to the southern border, even though our northern border also has problems.

In fact, until recently, the INS had been detailing agents from our already shorthanded northwestern border to shore up its Border Patrol officers in Arizona. At one point, nearly 10 percent of the field agents in Washington State were assigned to the southern border. The INS has indefinitely postponed the details, but refuses to call a permanent halt to transfers to the southern border.

This is not what Congress wanted. There were supposed to be more agents in Washington State, not less. I agree that there are serious problems on the southern border. That is why the INS was given so much money for the Border Patrol last year. The INS management needs to do its job and hire more agents instead of robbing from one shorthanded border to fill out another. There is no reason why northern border staffing should not be increased.

Last week, with my colleagues, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS), I sent a letter to the INS Commissioner, Doris Meissner, demanding a permanent end to transfers of the northwestern Border Patrol agents and urging higher staffing levels on the northern border.

Madam Speaker, how many more illegal drugs and weapons will flood across our northern border before the INS finally cleans up its act?

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, should the Medicare program offer prescription drug coverage? What good is insurance if it covers the diagnosis, but not the cure. Of course, Medicare should cover prescription drugs.

Why can we not target coverage to just the lowest income seniors? I can think of several reasons why that is a bad idea. First, Medicare endures in this country because every American contributes to it and every American at the age of 65 will benefit from it. A third of all seniors, over 10 million seniors, lack drug coverage; millions more are barely insured; employers are dropping their retiree coverage and private health insurers are cutting back their prescription drug benefits.

This is not an isolated or a status problem that can be solved in a piecemeal fashion. It is broad based and it is