

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, May 9, 2000

The House met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 9, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN COOKSEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 317. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress on the death of John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York.

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 not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) for 5 minutes.

ON SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a couple of comments on Social Security.

If the American people insist that it be an issue in this presidential campaign, it will receive the kind of discussion and debate that is needed and very appropriate.

Social Security is one of our most important government programs. Spendingwise it is our largest government program. Social Security benefits takes a larger percentage of the Federal budget than the Department of Defense, more than we spend on the other 12 appropriation bills.

The interest on the total debt is about 20 percent of our total budget. Social Security payments represent approximately 22 percent of the total Federal budget.

It has been suggested by some that Social Security is not that big a problem; that if we are able to have the kind of economic growth that we have had in the past, then the economy will take care of the problems. Two facts need to be considered: One, that the official estimate of increase in GDP, (gross domestic product), is not going to be as great in the next 30 years as it has been in the last 30 years, simply because, even with the increase in productivity, we have fewer workers trying to produce the gadgets, the gadgets, the goods and services that represent the GDP. GDP ultimately represents productivity times the number of people involved in trying to utilize that productivity. So the growth in GDP is slowing down.

Secondly, because of the fact that Social Security's benefits are based on earnings, the greater the earnings, the higher the eventual benefits are going to be. So even if we were to have an exceptionally strong increase in the economy, GDP, the cost of benefits would grow proportionally.

Existing retirees have a cost of living or inflation index to adjust their benefits. Future retirees, as they retire, have their Social Security benefits increased based on wage inflation that is higher than standard inflation. So, again, as the economy expands, with lower unemployment and higher wages, so will the cost of eventual benefits.

So over the short run, we see an increase in Social Security taxes coming in that makes the situation look somewhat better than it is because, ultimately, eventually, when those workers retire, they are going to receive that much higher Social Security benefit.

Now, some have said let us do nothing. We do not want to disrupt this great program where we are guaranteed a monthly payment for the rest of our lives. The problem is that we are running out of money in the Social Security system. It is, in effect, going broke.

Some people have said, well, look, somehow government is going to keep those promises. But in that regard, let me just bring to the attention of those interested, what happened in the past when Social Security had problems. The Congress and the President in 1977, reduced benefits and increased taxes.

In 1983, again short of money. What happened? Again, benefits were reduced and taxes were increased.

Seventy-five percent of Americans, Mr. Speaker, now pay more in Social Security tax than they do their income tax. It is important we face up to this problem this election; that we do not put it aside, that we do not demagogue it; that we do not start criticizing some of the solutions. Because if we start criticizing particular parts of the solutions, it will be that much tougher, when Democrats and Republicans ultimately get together, hopefully under the leadership of a President that is willing to move ahead on this issue, to save Social Security, to keep it solvent.

MOTHER'S DAY AND GUN SAFETY RECOGNITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, one of the most cherished holidays is pending this week, when so many families will gather to honor mothers, those that live and those who have gone on. This is a special time to recognize the value of an important component of our family.

Many mothers will take this opportunity this week to show their complete horror and great concern for the number of children that we have lost to gun violence. They will take this challenge and take this cause not in a political manner but in a manner of compassion and belief. We expect millions of mothers to come to Washington, D.C. to express to the world, not only this Nation, that America is, indeed, a civilized country that values life and recognizes that it does not have to have this macho holding of guns to be able to show itself a Nation of dignity and laws and humanity.

I would hope that Americans will take a moment as they honor mothers to reflect upon the importance of this message; that Americans will also put aside politics and ask themselves the same question: Do we need to arm ourselves with the numbers of guns that we have so that the guns in America now almost outnumber the population?

Even though we would imagine and hope that our children go to schools that are safe, we pray every day that that is the case, and I applaud the Nation's school districts, urban and rural

☐ 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.

alike, in their efforts that they have made to be safe and to have our children safe, there is no refusing to acknowledge that the world knows America through the eyes of Jonesboro, and Pennsylvania and Columbine, and it knows this Nation of laws and of dignity and of respect for the Constitution as a somewhat violent Nation.

It seems appalling that we cannot listen to the majority of Americans who are willing to accept reasonable gun safety laws, such as the legislation that many of us have put forward, in particular I have put forward legislation, that asks for adults to be held responsible if guns get in the hands of children; to support trigger locks; to, in fact, provide a nationwide educational effort that reasonably stays away from politics and begins to tell children about the dangers of guns.

But lo and behold, here we go again, to take a moment when mothers are coming forward as mothers, organized by mothers and organized by respective communities, using the resources of their own, not being propelled by any emotion other than there is too much bloodshed with respect to our children, because more of our children die from homicide and die from guns than any other civilized nation or any other nation, yet the National Rifle Association takes this week, I guess this is their counterproposal, to promote advertisement to suggest that they are prepared to give \$1 million to provide for gun safety in America's schools or to deal with America's children.

Really, what I say to the National Rifle Association and Charlton Heston, and all of those who would propose that they are sincere, is to join the mothers in their march; stand up and actually be seen not as antagonists but a sincere person who believes in gun safety, not the hypocrisy and the outrage of putting on advertisements and to suggest that they have one iota of the slightest concern about passing real gun safety legislation.

For if they did, then they would see the ridiculousness of the gun show loopholes; that anyone, no matter what their background, can walk into the thousands of gun shows unrestricted across America and buy guns. They would understand that that does not violate the second amendment if we simply ask that there be regulations and restrictions on those purchases. It does not interfere with law-abiding citizens who buy guns, it does not interfere with sports enthusiasts, gun collectors, no one who is seriously interested in abiding by the law and holding their guns safely in their homes. And, yes, it does not prohibit anyone from protecting themselves against that intruder, although the statistics show that most gun violence in homes is family to family because the guns are there.

So we are quick to be able to prosecute an 11-year-old boy that tragically

shot another human being, but we do not look to the systemic problem of that little boy's condition and the exposure to guns. And we are appalled when a 6-year-old shoots a 6-year-old, but we do not address the question of the systemic problem of guns in America.

So I applaud the mothers and will be supporting them as a mother myself, and I hope that we will mourn over no more lost and dying babies and children because of guns. And to the National Rifle Association I say, take the ads off and stand up and be counted for something that is real; real gun safety, real support for the stopping of the killing of our babies.

SELF-DEFENSE AND RIGHT-TO-CARRY LAWS

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, after the speech by my colleague, I think it is useful to perhaps tone down the rhetoric and bring some statistics and some information from Dr. John Lott, a distinguished scholar at the Yale University Law School, and talk about experts on crime and what they have to say.

Mr. Speaker, I have an article from the Washington Times that is dated April 26 that I will make a part of the RECORD wherein Dr. Lott highlights a number of cases in his article detailing how anti-gun advocates routinely admit facts, figures, and they change statistics to generally develop a misinterpretation of gun ownership in America.

Along with Dr. Lott, a Professor Bill Landes from the University of Chicago has done extensive research on waiting periods, sentencing laws, background checks, and other current gun control laws and they compare those with the effect on deterring so-called "rampage killings." As to their conclusions, Mr. Speaker, I will quote directly from their article:

"While higher arrests and conviction rates, longer prison sentences and the death penalty reduce murders generally, neither these measures nor restrictive gun laws had a discernible impact on mass public shootings. We found only one policy that effectively reduces these attacks: The passage of right-to-carry laws."

Both these professors confirm that law-abiding citizens, possessing a legal right to carry concealed hand guns, had a dramatic impact on multiple victim shootings.

□ 0945

Indeed, these laws, on average, decreased multiple-victim shootings by one-fifth.

Now, in my home State of Florida, they recognized this fact. In 1987, they passed a law to allow law-abiding citizens to carry a licensed, concealed weapon.

What were the results? Florida's homicide rate dropped from 37 percent above the national average to 3 percent below the national average. The decrease in violent offenses involving firearms in Florida continues to decline.

Now, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Uniform Crime Report, in 1989, firearms accounted for 30 percent of all violent offenses. Last year, firearms only accounted for 20 percent of all violent offenses.

Mr. Speaker, 31 States today now have right-to-carry laws and have experienced similar results like Florida.

Dr. Lott's article further highlights the need for individual Americans to be able to defend themselves outside their home.

To address this issue, I developed and introduced legislation, H.R. 492, which is identical to my bill in the 105th Congress which was debated in the House Committee on the Judiciary. My bill establishes a national standard providing for reciprocity in regard to the manner in which nonresidents of a State may carry certain concealed firearms into the State.

Now, in order to carry a concealed firearm across State lines, a person would have to be properly licensed for carrying a concealed weapon in his home State and would have to obey the concealed weapon laws of that State they are entering.

If the State they are entering does not have a concealed weapons law, the national standard provision in this legislation would dictate the rules in which a concealed weapon would have to be maintained. For instance, the national standard would disallow the carrying of a concealed weapon in a school, police station, or a bar serving alcoholic beverages.

My bill also exempts qualified former and current law enforcement officers from State laws prohibiting the carrying of concealed handguns. Now, this language was adopted during debate on the juvenile justice bill last year.

Mr. Speaker, right-to-carry laws are an effective deterrent to these mass killings and random murders. States which have adopted such laws, on the average, have 24 percent less violent crime, 19 percent less homicides, and 39 percent less robberies. These are precisely the type of statistics which gun control supporters refuse to acknowledge.

Yesterday, the President stated that he is "subdued, frustrated, and very saddened" as he reflected on the lack of pending gun control legislation in Congress.

Mr. President, we, too, are frustrated, frustrated that those who seek