

the spread of this epidemic. By 2004, practically the whole Nation was blanketed by small meth labs. The only exception would be in the New England States in the Northeast, and that is rapidly being taken over as well.

So this is something that is spreading rapidly. However, it is important to realize that 70 to 80 percent of the methamphetamine in the United States is now coming from super labs, mostly in Mexico, in the form of crystal meth. So these small, clandestine meth labs are no longer quite so relevant because almost all of the meth coming into the United States is coming out of Mexico.

This legislation does something that is really critical. It seeks to cripple the super lab meth production by tracking large international shipments of pseudoephedrine. As I mentioned earlier you have to have pseudoephedrine to make methamphetamine.

It requires the five largest exporting countries of pseudoephedrine and the five largest importing countries of pseudoephedrine to report and track shipments of pseudoephedrine and report to the United States. Failure to comply would lead to a reduction in U.S. foreign aid to that country by as much as 50 percent.

We think this is the best regulation we have been able to come up with yet to track the international sale of pseudoephedrine and superlab production.

Additional provisions toughen penalties against meth producers and traffickers, improves and authorizes new funding for the drug courts program, provides help to States to protect drug-endangered children.

In Nebraska in 2005, nearly 6,000 children were living in foster care situations. This is a State with only 1.7 million people. An estimated 50 percent of foster care children in Nebraska, roughly 3,000, are in the foster care system because their parents are meth users or abusers.

An Arkansas study indicates that the average meth addict costs the State and local agencies \$47,500 per year because of crimes, child and spouse abuse, incarcerations, et cetera.

One recent study indicated that a prenatal child exposed to meth can cost as much as \$250,000 in health care just for the first year alone and can cost up to \$1.7 million to get that child to age 18.

It is a hugely important problem and very stressful. I believe this legislation is a critical first step to ridding our communities of this plague, and I urge support of the conference agreement.

I would like to just show one last picture. This is a young woman who was photographed each year from 1979 until her death in January of 1989, and as you see these pictures, you see her steady deterioration and what looks like an aging process of maybe 50 years in a period of 10 years, and it culminated in her death. This is something we have to get rid of.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2320. An act to make available funds included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate agree to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3199) entitled "An Act to extend and modify authorities needed to combat terrorism, and for other purposes."

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NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, once again we are threatened budget cuts that affect our local law enforcement agencies' effectiveness. Not only is the COPS program facing cuts and the criminal background check system for firearm purchases underfunded, but now the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network program is also in jeopardy.

The NIBIN is used by forensic experts to analyze the unique marks made on bullets and cartridge cases when guns are fired. The images of these markings can be compared with other images in more than 200 Federal, State, and local law enforcement laboratories. By tracing and comparing these markings, police can track the history of a gun used in a crime. They can determine which crimes are related and make sure the appropriate law enforcement agencies are working together to find the criminals responsible for these crimes.

NIBIN makes law enforcement agencies more efficient by making sure that two agencies are not duplicating their work. In large part, NIBIN has been a success. Last year, the Los Angeles Police Department arrested a man for vandalism and possession of a firearm. The gun was tested and identified as being used in an attempted murder only a month before. If not for ballistics testing, this individual would have gone free and the attempted murder case would still be unsolved.

In my own State of New York, an individual was arrested for unlawful possession of a weapon. The gun was entered into the NIBIN database and was discovered to have been used in an unsolved assault with a deadly weapon incident that occurred in a different jurisdiction. Again, a violent criminal was taken off the streets because of ballistics testing. This is happening on a daily basis.

There are countless other success stories throughout our Nation; but, unfortunately, NIBIN's future is in doubt. Budget cuts are jeopardizing the future of this program. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms administers NIBIN and may be forced to cut spending unless Congress acts. Cutting funding of this great program would be a tragedy resulting in more criminals getting away with horrendous acts of violence. ATF needs more, not less, funding for this particular program.

A Department of Justice report last year said the ATF needs to better promote and improve NIBIN. Many law enforcement agencies do not participate in NIBIN simply because they do not have the resources to enter the information into the database. The Justice Department report suggests purchasing equipment for high-crime areas and developing a plan for lower-incidence areas to share ballistics technology.

The report also states it is imperative that we deal with the backlog of ballistic evidence not yet entered into the database. A similar problem exists in the National Instant Background Check system, and I have introduced legislation to give States grants to make sure that data is entered.

We must also fund new ballistic technologies that can provide matches on portions or fragments of bullets found at crime scenes. Mr. Speaker, since 9/11 our law enforcement officers have accepted new responsibilities in the war on terror. But this current budget wants to cut programs that staff local police forces and provides them with bullet-proof vests. Let us work together to make their jobs easier, not more difficult. Let us fully fund the ATF's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network. This will catch repeated offenders before they commit another crime and make sure our law enforcement agencies are on the same page when it comes to investigating crimes that have been related.

A VISIT TO AREAS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment or two to talk about the trip that we had with Speaker HASTERT and Leader PELOSI on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. With grateful thanks to Speaker HASTERT, he took us down to Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, mainly to see the disaster areas 6 months later and what is happening in those States.

The American people, I know, tend to forget what is going on; but when you go to these States, they need our help desperately. I have been watching CNN and certainly have followed what is going on down there; but when you see it with your own eyes, it is more than anyone can ever imagine: to see whole trailer trucks just thrown into the wetlands due to force of this hurricane; to see the housing just collapsing on a daily basis; and to see our local government officials trying to make ends meet but without a budget because there are no businesses that provide a