

in history, House Republicans are trying to wrap things up and leave town, leaving critical work unfinished. Meanwhile, millions of Americans in New York, Florida, and throughout the United States are justifiably concerned about the dangers of the Zika virus.

Nowhere has this disease hit harder than in Puerto Rico, where Zika has become an epidemic. As of last week, more than 1,380 pregnant women in Puerto Rico have been diagnosed with Zika; and overall, there have been 16,000 laboratory cases of the virus found on the island.

□ 1015

It would be a tragic and heart-breaking mistake for this Congress to ignore the severity of this threat. Let us be clear: this is the first time we have identified a “mosquito-borne” form of birth defect. It is also the first new, major infectious cause of birth defects in five decades.

There are some things we do not know about the Zika virus. It is not clear what proportion of infants affected by the virus will suffer birth defects, but what we have seen so far is saddening, troubling, and horrifying. To look upon their helpless faces and do nothing is unconscionable. Yet, despite what we do not know, one thing is tragically clear: this House has failed to provide adequate resources to address this danger.

It has now been 7 months since President Obama’s administration requested adequate resources to help stem the threat of Zika, but House Republicans have taken zero—I repeat, zero—votes on adequate funding that will help tackle this problem.

Now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is telling us they are running out of money to deal with this potential catastrophe. There are critical public health steps we need to take but cannot because the CDC is essentially out of money. Already, NIH is drawing resources from other priorities, like HIV and AIDS and cancer research, because this body has failed to act.

Sometimes my colleagues on the other side like to talk about how we must “protect the unborn.” Well, let me ask you this: When we fail to tackle a disease that causes unborn babies to develop birth defects that will haunt them the rest of their lives, how are we protecting the unborn?

These are innocent children—American children in Puerto Rico and on the mainland—who are suffering enormously because this Congress has not done its job. We are learning that this disease is sexually transmitted, making contraception a key part of any solution. But Republicans are raising objections to adequate funding for contraception.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the safety and health of the American people is a solemn obligation for every Member of Congress. It is a responsibility that we are currently not living up to.

I call on my colleagues to do the right thing. Do your job. Pass a supplemental funding bill so the CDC can get to work and help stop this terrible virus from spreading.

DOL OVERTIME RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to represent the concerns of Kentucky’s Sixth Congressional District’s business, education, and nonprofit leaders who will be negatively impacted by the Department of Labor’s final rule on overtime pay. These new regulations will have a crippling effect on businesses’ ability to create jobs and even continue operations in our already tough economic climate.

Today I want to share some stories from my constituents, who are among the millions of Americans whose businesses and educational institutions and nonprofits will be significantly harmed by the Department of Labor’s final rule.

Darshana Patel, a first-generation American who emigrated to Kentucky from India, sat in my office with tears in her eyes, voicing concerns to me about the impact of the overtime rule on the three hotels that she worked hard to build and own.

As a result of the high cost of the rule, Mrs. Patel’s small business will be forced to demote a manager who has worked with her for 14 years to an hourly position on December 1. She also worries that she will have to let go some of her employees. She says she will be forced to take these drastic actions because, with this rule, she will have to come up with about \$25,000 per property—money that she did not budget for.

This hardworking, first-generation American entrepreneur was crying because she said she came to this country to achieve the American Dream, and the government of the United States is tearing that dream apart with over-regulation.

According to the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, more than half of hotel managers in the United States start in entry level positions. The Department of Labor rule will reduce employment opportunities for these workers just starting off and significantly limit upward mobility.

The Department of Labor’s overtime rule will also negatively impact educational employment opportunities at our colleges and universities. The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, which includes the University of Kentucky, in my district, has stated that the overtime rule will likely place upward pressure on tuition and adversely impact outreach missions of universities. Because of the rule, students who are already facing significant barriers to accessing higher education will be further burdened by increased tuition.

Caroline Ruschell, the executive director of the Kentucky Association of Children’s Advocacy Centers, also reached out to me about the negative impact of the overtime rule on her organization’s critical work with child victims of sexual abuse.

To avoid penalties under the overtime rule, many clinics that provide vital exams and treatment to sexually abused children will be forced to reduce the hours of salaried workers, while supplementing those lost hours by overworking other employees. This will result in lower quality care and longer wait times for children to receive the critical treatment they need after facing such horrific trauma.

While the Department of Labor bureaucrats claim that the overtime rule will improve economic conditions for middle-class employees, this onerous regulation on businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofits will have the exact opposite effect by reducing job opportunities and limiting hours for many workers. Nonprofit and universities doing critical work in our communities will be forced to reduce the reach of their efforts by these burdensome regulations.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015, regulations cost us \$1.89 trillion in lost productivity and growth. At a time when job creation and small business growth are critical to our recovering economy, the Department of Labor’s final regulation will be detrimental for millions of hard-working Americans.

This regulation, like so many other regulations in the avalanche of red tape coming out of the Obama administration, hurts the very people that they claim that they are trying to protect and that they are trying to help.

Nearly 8 years after the Great Recession, Americans are stuck in the slowest and weakest economic recovery of their lifetimes, and the reason is simple: this administration is burying the American economy in red tape.

Enough is enough. Leave the American people alone and let them do their work.

VOTE ON GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, on July 14, Republican leaders recessed the House for 7 weeks without taking a single vote on legislation to help keep Americans safe from gun violence.

Ignoring an issue that you don’t want to deal with doesn’t make it go away. House Republicans desperately need to learn that lesson. When Republican leaders in the House refuse to deal with gun violence, the American people pay the price.

During the 7 weeks that the House was in recess, 2,015 people were killed by someone using a gun. Thousands of families across our country have spent the last 7 weeks grieving.

While Republicans are putting their fingers in their ears and pretending that our country isn't in the grips of a gun violence epidemic, innocent people continue to die. What makes this inaction even harder to accept is the fact that, for over 3½ years, I have had bipartisan, pro-Second Amendment legislation that would help make these tragedies less common.

My bill would close a dangerous loophole in our background check system that allows criminals, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill to bypass a background check in 34 States when purchasing guns online, at a gun show, or through classified ads.

Background checks are our first line of defense when it comes to making sure that dangerous people don't purchase guns. We know that, when used, they work. Every day, background checks stop more than 170 felons, some 50 domestic abusers, and nearly 20 fugitives from buying a gun. But, sadly, this gaping hole allows those same felons, domestic abusers, and fugitives to easily bypass a background check when buying firearms.

H.R. 1217 has 187 bipartisan coauthors and 90 percent of the American people support strengthening and expanding our background check system.

Mr. Speaker, let us have a vote on this bill. Gun violence shouldn't be a partisan issue. When deranged gunmen open fire in a nightclub, movie theater, or school, they don't care if you are a Democrat or Republican. Together, we can build a country in which all Americans feel safe being who they are, having fun in a nightclub, going to school, seeing a movie, going to Bible study, an office party, or simply walking down the streets of their own neighborhood.

Mr. Speaker, let us do the work the American people sent us here to do. Let us vote on the legislation they want to see enacted. Let us vote to keep our fellow Americans safe.

Each day the Republican majority drags its feet and refuses to give us a vote on bipartisan, pro-Second Amendment bills to help keep guns out of dangerous hands, more innocent lives are lost.

Give us a vote. And give us a vote now, before you recess for another break.

CONSTITUTION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, September 17–23 is Constitution Week, where we celebrate the document and principles that are the foundation of this great Nation. Constitution Day on the 17th marks the ratification of this great document.

The Constitution is the basis of our Nation. It is the reason we are here today. It lays out the fundamental principles and structures of our Nation

and our government. And the Bill of Rights makes clear the rights we enjoy as Americans and the fact that the Federal Government cannot infringe on these rights. Every decision I make as a Member of Congress is informed by the words written in the pages of this Constitution.

All over the world, our Constitution stands as a pillar of justice, freedom, and good governance. Other countries look to our Constitution for guidance as they write their own constitutions and establish their own democracies.

As we celebrate Constitution Week, I also want to recognize the great work of the Daughters of the American Revolution, including the chapters in my district, for their efforts to educate America about this document and its history.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our Founding Fathers in crafting this great document, a Constitution that has stood the test of time.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, during two townhall meetings recently, I had the opportunity to hear from our veterans about the care they are receiving from VA hospitals. They want, they need—no, they deserve—a VA healthcare system that works for them, one that gives them timely care, one that treats our veterans with respect and one that holds VA bureaucrats accountable.

I am proud to support H.R. 5620, a necessary step to getting the VA working again for our veterans. I will not stand for a system that rewards Washington bureaucrats for failing to do their job. There are a lot of good, caring people at the VA and their employees at our hospitals, and we need to make sure they have an environment and system where they can serve our veterans.

□ 1030

I stand with our veterans, and for the commonsense reforms to the problems that they are facing. I will continue to work to make sure the VA is held accountable; that veterans receive the best health care in the country—no, in the world—and that a broken system is fixed. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and we must keep the promises we have made to them.

SILENCE EQUALS DEATH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. CLARK) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to demand a vote on commonsense gun safety legislation. It has been 26 years since our country has passed any meaningful gun safety legislation.

I have only been in the House for a little over 2½ years, and we have had 10 moments of silence to recognize victims of mass shootings during that time.

After Fort Hood in April of 2014, when 19 people were shot in a deadly rampage, Republican leaders brought us together for a moment of silence, but there was no discussion about honoring those lives with our action.

In May of 2014, the country came together after a massacre in Santa Barbara, and families looked to our Nation's leaders to see what they could do. What did they hear? More silence.

In June of 2015, nine parishioners were murdered by a hate-filled radical—who was able to get his gun because of a loophole—while they were at a Bible study at the Emanuel Church in South Carolina. While those lost inspired our country, the Members of Congress bowed their heads in silence and did nothing else.

Then there was Chattanooga, Roseburg, Colorado Springs, and San Bernardino. Dozens were murdered in senseless killing sprees. And while the country demanded a vote to finally do something about gun violence, this Congress responded with silence.

Three months ago, after the worst gun massacre in modern history took place at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, some of us had finally had enough. If our friends in the LGBT community have taught us anything, it is that silence equals death. And this is no time to be silent.

Our frustration, and the frustration of the American people, resulted in a sit-in that gave voice to the American families who are fed up with a Congress that is cowed into silence by the rich and powerful gun lobby.

Here we are, 3 months later, and House Republicans have spent more time thinking about how they can punish us for that sit-in than doing anything to address the gun violence devastating Americans.

In July, rather than allow debates and votes on keeping American children and families safe, Republican leaders adjourned this House. Since then, an additional 2,015 Americans were killed by guns. In Chicago alone, 3,000 people have been killed or injured by guns just this year.

This is a public health crisis, and this Republican Congress has returned to its routine silence instead of working to keep Americans safe. I am here to tell you, the American people will not forget and will not continue to stand for this silence and inaction.

Every single day, victims and survivors of gun violence come and tell their heart-wrenching stories to Members of Congress.

I have stood with Felicia Sanders as she gathered the courage to stand in front of our Nation's Capitol and tell the story that no mother should have to tell. At Emanuel Church in North Carolina, Felicia's son, Tywanza, ran toward the gunman while trying to shield others in his Bible study group. Tywanza was only 26 when Felicia said her final goodbye.

I have had the honor of thanking Catherine Bodine for coming and telling her story to the American people.