

## CBC HOUR: A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE -- House of Representatives

Statement of Representative Danny K. Davis - January 14, 2013

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus for not only anchoring this hour, but also providing an opportunity for the rest of us.

In America, an average of 30,000 lives are lost to gun violence each year. This, and all we have said before it, explicitly demonstrates how dangerous guns can be, yet it can be easier to obtain a gun than it is to vote. 4 out of 10 guns are sold by unlicensed sellers with no background check conducted. Because of the Gun Show Loophole, anyone can walk up to a private set at a gun show, purchase a gun, and carry it out of the event. Domestic violence abusers, convicted felons, people with mental illnesses, and terrorists can purchase guns because of this loophole. 30% of illegally trafficked guns are connected to gun shows. Actions must be taken to prevent guns from falling into the hands of people who would not pass a background check, but can obtain a firearm because of this loophole. The Fix Gun Checks Act (H.R. 137) would eliminate this loophole by requiring background checks for any gun sales event that provides a venue for the sale or transaction of firearms. We thank you for cosponsoring this bill, and hope you will continue to support it in the future.

I had decided to develop a statement, but then I had 16 young students visit me this afternoon from Oak Park, Illinois, and they presented to me their statement. Their statement was so similar to my statement that I told them that their statement was better than mine and I would use it. So I'm going to read it as they presented it to me. They said:

Hello, my name is Joey Cofsky, and my name is Sebastian Torero, and we are here on behalf of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism to talk about gun violence prevention. We hope that you will offer support for the Fix Gun Checks Act when it is introduced.

Unfortunately, it took an inconceivable amount of gun-related tragedies, and a recent catastrophic elementary school massacre, to once again raise awareness of the need for stricter gun laws. Nearly every day, I hear on the news that a common child has been shot to death in my very own city. Statistics furthermore illuminate this occurrence as eight young Americans die each day under the age of 19 from gun violence. By June of 2012, 228 people were killed in the city of Chicago. In that same period of time, 144 United States soldiers had been killed in Afghanistan. Instead of continuously cringing at these statistics in disbelief every time we read them, it is time to curb the pattern of violence that has made the inner-city streets more violent than our very own battlefields.

Today marks the month anniversary of one of the most horrific mass shootings in our Nation's history. On this day, I personally think about the innocent 20 children whose lives were prematurely taken at a peaceful elementary school. I wonder about the difference in the world those 20 children could have made. That day, we all seemed to realize we had seen this too many times before. Mass shootings grab our Nation by surprise, and after every one, we feel a sense of *deja vu*. At first, people's passion for change is re-ignited, and the driving force of action is full throttle; but as the weeks go by, the clamor dies down. The memory of the victims fades from our consciousness, that is, until another shooting occurs. I, and the people of this country, have grieved over too many caskets. It is time to match our words with actions.

In the Talmud, a collection of Jewish laws and lessons, we are taught that he who takes one life, it is as though he has destroyed a universe. And he who saves a life, it is as though he has saved a universe. As a Jew, and as a person, this quotation resonates strongly with me. It tells me that it is not only important to save lives in immediate danger, but to prevent the loss of life in general. It has become clear to many of us, and for some it has been clear for quite some time, that an effective way to prevent death in our country and in essence save a universe is to enact a policy that would stem the flow of gun violence. Gun violence in our country takes 12 times the amount of lives that it does in the other 25 wealthiest nations combined. It is clear that in our Nation, guns are a major problem.

We are told to save lives, and we can do that. So I would urge every American to know that lives saved is like saving a universe.