



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 151

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2005

No. 42

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

THE SPEAKER'S ROOMS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Washington, DC, April 12, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable J. GRESHAM BARRETT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, 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 Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

EXPRESSING DEEP SADNESS AT THE TRAGIC DEATH OF MEGHAN AGNES BECK AND THANKING THE BECK FAMILY FOR THEIR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with deep sadness at the tragic death of Meghan Agnes Beck of Sterling, Massachusetts. Meghan died on December 18, 2004, at the young age of 3 years old. She died from injuries sustained as a result of her dresser falling

on top of her in the early morning while the rest of her family was sleeping.

Meghan was a beautiful young girl full of confidence and life. She leaves behind her twin brother Ryan, older brother Kyle, and her parents Ralph and Kimberly. Despite their sadness and pain, Meghan's parents are moving forward, spreading a message to other parents around the country. They are raising awareness about the importance of preventing furniture tip-overs that can result in injury or death to children.

Sadly, Meghan is not the first child to die from falling furniture, but the Becks hope that they can help prevent this tragedy from happening to another child. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 8,000 to 10,000 children are injured each year from furniture that falls or tips or from items on top of furniture or shelves that fall off onto the child. An average of six children tragically die each year, as Meghan did.

Through a Web site titled Meghan's Hope, her parents are bringing together fellow American families who have suffered pain from the loss or injury of a child to spread the word about furniture safety. The mission of Meghan's Hope is to make available resources and information regarding furniture safety.

Via the Web site, parents from around the country have a place to share stories, thoughts and ideas with one another. Thanks to Ralph and Kimberly Beck's efforts, awareness is rising; and more parents are taking note of the importance of securing furniture around the house.

The Web site offers several helpful suggestions for families. These include:

Securing furniture to the walls to prevent tip-overs. This includes dressers, bookcases, entertainment cabinets, TVs, toy boxes, large appliances, or any piece of furniture with shelves or drawers that can be climbed on;

Purchasing furniture ties or brackets. These should be screwed into both the wall, into a beam, and the furniture itself. If a wood beam is not accessible, use mollies or toggle bolts to give added strength;

Placing TVs on low, stable units with large bases and as far back as possible in the shelf. Secure all TV sets to the wall. Devices are sold for this purpose;

Anchoring freestanding bookcases, no matter how large or small, to the walls;

Not placing heavy or other items of interest to a child on top of the furniture or higher than a comfortable reach for the smallest child so as not to entice them to climb for it;

Putting heavy items on the lowest shelf or drawer;

And sharing this information with everyone you know.

In addition, there are things the furniture and retail industries can do, and the Becks have developed some excellent ideas. They include:

Encouraging all stores that sell furniture to also provide literature on furniture safety and to sell the safety straps;

Encouraging all furniture manufacturers to voluntarily include warning labels on furniture and information on the dangers of furniture tip-overs, recommending that the buyer secure the piece to the wall with the proper restraining devices. Ideally, the manufacturer would provide this information with the furniture until safety standard legislation is developed;

Encouraging stores that sell child safety products to also sell furniture safety straps. Many do not carry them, including large department stores and home improvement stores;

And encouraging physicians and child safety instructors to discuss furniture safety with parents.

Mr. Speaker, through this terrible loss, the Beck family has shown great strength and determination to spread

□ 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.



Printed on recycled paper.

H1853

their message. As parents we have an awesome responsibility to protect our children, and we must not take this responsibility lightly. While I am deeply saddened by the loss of Meghan Beck, I commend the entire family for their efforts in spreading their message.

I urge my colleagues to visit the Becks' Web site at www.meghanshope.org. There they can learn more about the important issue of furniture safety and what can be done to prevent more tragedies from occurring.

I know that our colleague, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ), is also concerned about this issue; and I look forward to working with her closely to see what Congress can do to help.

I am certain that the entire House of Representatives joins me in sending their deepest condolences to the Beck family and in thanking them for their effort on behalf of our children's safety.

FIGHTING CARGO THEFT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell my colleagues and the country about a problem that has plagued our country for some 30 years, but continues unabated today. It is a problem that travels our highways and threatens our interstate commerce. It is a problem that affects our entire country and demands a Federal response. The problem is the crime of cargo theft.

Every year, tens of billions of dollars are lost due to cargo theft, by one estimate, up to \$60 billion a year in losses. But there are indirect costs as well. This huge amount of business and profit translates into the loss of at least 300,000 mid-level manufacturing jobs. Prices are increasing due to higher insurance premiums. People are losing their jobs and consumers are paying higher prices because of cargo theft. Making matters worse, law enforcement officials estimate 60 percent of cargo theft incidents go unreported, so these costs could be even greater.

Typical targets for cargo theft often include shipments of clothing, prescription drugs, computers, and jewelry. A truckload of computer microprocessors can be worth millions of dollars. A truckload of cigarettes, just another common target, can be worth up to \$2 million.

Cargo thieves employ creative and highly efficient means to prey on cargo carriers and have managed to stay one step ahead of our authorities. Thieves know what they want, where they can find it, and how they can get it.

And let us not forget that cargo theft is a national security issue. We know that terrorists can make a lot of money stealing and selling cargo, not

to mention the fact that terrorists have a proven record of using trucks to either smuggle weapons of mass destruction or as an instrument of delivery.

Make no mistake about it, cargo theft is a big business, and business is booming.

But despite the incredible costs and high stakes involved, we still have not been able to come up with an effective way to fight cargo theft. The trouble is, cargo theft is not well-known or a high-profile issue. And one of the reasons that cargo theft does not receive the attention it deserves is because very little information exists concerning the problem. For example, there currently is no all-inclusive database that collects, contains, or processes distinct information and data regarding cargo theft.

In order to combat the growing problem of cargo theft, I have introduced legislation, the Cargo Theft Prevention Act, which proposes commonsense solutions to this widespread crime. My legislation would require the creation of just such a database, providing a valuable source of information that would allow State and local law enforcement officials to coordinate reports of cargo theft. This information could then be used to help fight this theft in everyday law enforcement and estimating, and very importantly, estimating the exact cost of this crime.

My act, the Cargo Theft Prevention Act, proposes that cargo theft reports be reflected as a separate category in the Uniform Crime Reporting System, or the UCR, the data collection system that is used by the FBI today. Currently, no such category exists in the UCR, resulting in ambiguous data and the inability to track and monitor trends.

The last thing my bill does is have the United States Sentencing Commission take a look at whether criminals who commit cargo theft deserve stiffer penalties. This needs to be done because the high value-to-volume ratio of hi-tech and high-profit goods cargo theft has encouraged criminals previously involved in drug dealing to move into this area of activity, where they run less risk of detection and suffer less penalties if they are caught.

As it now stands, Mr. Speaker, punishment for cargo theft is a relative slap on the wrist. Throw in the fact that cargo thieves are tough to catch, and what we have here is a low-risk, high-reward crime that easily entices potential criminals. We need to determine what sentencing enhancements and increases must be made, if at all.

Members in this Chamber need to be made aware of this problem, a problem not only specific to the large port cities of this country, but a problem specific to all of our congressional districts. Billions of dollars are being sapped from our economy and this body is doing little to stop it. It is time that we get aggressive and make our highways again safe for commerce.

The Cargo Theft Prevention Act proposes to finally give law enforcement officials and lawmakers the commonsense tools they need to combat the costly and growing crime of cargo theft. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

THE WASHINGTON LOBBYISTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is springtime, and Major League Baseball is coming to Washington. The thing is, though, I am not sure they got the name right. They are calling the team the Washington Nationals. Not a bad name, but I always thought the name should reflect the true character of a city. The right choice is obvious: the new team's name should be the Washington Lobbyists.

The Washington Lobbyists and their Republican allies would play under new rules of the game.

Rule number one: pay to play. You cannot step on the field unless you ante up. But in the land where cash is king, that is just the start. For a modest added contribution, a batter can shrink the strike zone, replace the traditional hardball with a more responsive tennis ball, or move the pitcher back 10 feet.

Rule number two: no errors. Missed the ball, say, by \$800 billion on your Medicare cost estimate? No worries. With enough money, enough spin and enough citizen education, the Lobbyists can make those errors vanish overnight, or at least until election day.

Rule number three: it ain't over until its over, unless we are losing. Soccer ends after a set period of time. But do you know who plays soccer? Old Europe, that is who. Well, none of that in "reformed" baseball. At home games, the Lobbyists can hold the game open, adding extra innings if they are losing at the end of an arbitrary nine innings.

And the Washington Lobbyists would create a whole new fan experience too. Instead of the oh-so-boring Ball Day Or Bat Day, the Lobbyists and their corporate partners could offer U.S. Chamber of Commerce Blanket Day: Fans get blanket product-liability waivers.

Or the Washington Lobbyists baseball team could offer Golf Junket Getaway Giveaways: one lucky fan gets an all-expense sweet golf trip to Scotland, all expenses paid by the Indian gaming industry.

Or the Washington Lobbyists could give away at the ball park Timber Industry Bat Night: every bat is made from 100 percent old-growth forest.

Or Pressroom Sweepstakes: the winning fan gets White House press credentials for a day, but only if he is affiliated with an on-line escort service.

Or maybe Burger Night: free burgers for the first 5,000 fans, made with 100 percent caribou from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.