

The gun industry must be subjected to the same laws that govern every other American business, and courthouse doors must remain open to those injured or who have lost loved ones because of the gun industry's negligence. This bill would allow gun dealers to knowingly sell large quantities of guns to a single customer intending to traffic the guns to criminals without any legal repercussions.

Stripping away the threat of legal action would seriously jeopardize any opportunity to make guns safer. Without the threat of lawsuits, the gun industry would have no incentive to incorporate gun locks, safety triggers, and smart gun technology into their products. Imagine if this bill had been passed 40 years ago to cover the auto industry. Today cars would not have seatbelts, airbags, or antilock brakes.

Instead of giving the gun industry never-before-seen levels of protection, I support giving the industry Federal research and development money. This money will be used to develop reasonable safety measures for their products.

Congress has not been responding to the threat that gun violence poses on our safety and homeland security. So I will speak in a language the congressional leadership understands: dollars and cents.

It is unfortunate Congress will not allow the Centers for Disease Control to study the economic impact of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources.

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Independent studies have shown gun violence costs our health care system over \$100 billion a year, \$100 billion a year. The \$100 billion-a-year cost includes premiums paid for private health insurance and tax dollars used to pay for Medicaid.

These costs often are not reimbursed and cost the States vital health care money. Victims who survive and suffer years of rehabilitation costs run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The average cost of each firearm fatality, including medical care, police services, and lost productivity is almost \$1 million per person.

Researchers found taxpayers finance 48 percent of health care costs resulting from gun violence through Medicaid and other government programs, which means the American taxpayers are footing the bill for the destruction gun violence causes.

Mr. Speaker, why are we spending time helping the gun dealers and manufacturers? We should be investigating technology that will make guns safer. Safer, smarter guns prevent lawsuits against the gun industry, but more importantly prevent the tragic, unnecessary loss of life that the gun industry's negligence provokes.

We should be giving them research and development money. We should be doing everything we can to prevent the injuries. People do not understand

when gun violence hits home, it is a whole disaster to the family and to the community. We can do a better job. We should be doing a better job.

But protecting the gun industry, or certainly the gun dealers from not being able to be sued, is wrong. We should not be closing the courts for anyone.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

LACK OF SUPPORT FOR CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor again tonight. I have been speaking against CAFTA. I have joined my friends on both the Republican side and the Democratic side who feel that CAFTA is not good for the American workers and not good for the American people and certainly does not help those in Central America.

And tonight I want to take just a few minutes and insert for the RECORD the entirety of a letter from seven members of the general assemblies down in five of the countries that are opposed to CAFTA.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman that I met recently is from El Salvador, and this was at a conference last week that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and I attended, Interfaith Council of Protestants, Catholics, and also one rabbi to speak in opposition to CAFTA.

Let me just give the first introductory statement. It says: "Dear Members of the United States Congress, the CAFTA market has fewer than 9.2 million people who can buy U.S. goods."

Now, this is a long letter. It is signed by seven members of the Central American assemblies, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go to the last paragraph of the letter from those members of the elected bodies of those countries. And this is what it says in the close of their letter, not mine, but their letter: "CAFTA is a bad trade deal because it puts the interests of international corporations ahead of the welfare of the working poor and the poor in Central America. If CAFTA is

approved, the social instability that CAFTA supporters like to use as a reason for approving the agreement will come not from outside forces, but from the pressures created by the millions of displaced workers who will fall further into poverty."

It is time to say "no" to CAFTA and begin negotiating a new trade agreement that takes into account the region's need for development and real opportunity for its citizens. We respectfully ask you for your support of our people and vote "no" on CAFTA.

Mr. Speaker, again this is from seven people from different countries who represent their people in Central America who are opposed to this agreement.

Let me now go, in the few minutes I have left, to a joint statement concerning the United States Central American Free Trade Agreement by the Bishops' Secretariat of Central America and the chairman of the Domestic and International Policy Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

And let me just make a few points that they make in their long letter of opposition. First it says: "In light of the values and principles that we have outlined as well as the situation of the people, we express some of our specific concerns about the potential impact of CAFTA on our countries, especially in Central America."

I am going to just read a few points: "There has not been sufficient information and debate in our countries about the various aspects of CAFTA and its impact on our societies." Another point: in the area of agriculture, there is insufficient attention given to such sensitive issues as the potential impact that U.S. farm supports on Central America farm products. It seems like that poor farming communities in Central America will suffer greatly when subsidized agricultural products from United States expand their reach into these markets.

Another point made by the bishops: while certain labor and environmental provisions are included in the agreement, it is not clear that the enforcement mechanisms within CAFTA will lead to stronger protections of fundamental worker rights and the environment.

Then there is one other point that I want to read, Mr. Speaker. This, again, was from the Catholic Bishops of Central America and the Catholic Bishops of America: the treaty will have effects on intellectual property rights. The proposed legal framework could jeopardize a right of Central American countries to exercise proper stewardship of their natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight because in my State of North Carolina, I was not here when NAFTA passed back in 1992, enacted in 1993, but we have lost over 200,000 jobs in North Carolina. In the country of America, we have lost better than 2.5 million jobs since NAFTA was enacted in 1993.

I did not vote for Trade Promotion Authority. I did not think President