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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (MR. JODY B. HICE of Georgia).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 28, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JODY B. HICE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

FIX OUR BROKEN IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

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

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my guest for tonight's joint session of Congress. Roque Pech is a constituent of mine from California's 44th District. He lives in Wilmington. He came to this country at the age of 3 years old. His parents were from Mexico, coming here for a better life for their kids. His parents were hardworking, getting odd jobs,

blue-collar workers, really trying to make it.

Now, Roque is a beneficiary of DACA. He is a DREAMer; somebody who was looking forward to going to college, was able to go to undergrad and even go to graduate school, where he studied education. He is one of the many faces of DREAMers whom our country has benefited from DACA. As a teacher, he helps other students who are struggling in math. He is a sixth grade teacher who looks into the eyes of kids who dream big, who want to make it, and he instills in them some hope.

Tonight, Roque will be up in this gallery for the first time, looking down on a President who has been demeaning immigrants, who hasn't seen the value of what immigrants provide to this country.

Now, this is very personal for me. My parents are also immigrants from Mexico. They came here because they wanted a better life for their kids. And I beat the odds. I got a piece of the American Dream, and now I fight for those to make sure that others have the same opportunity.

Roque has been spared from the deportations. He is an example of immigrants that continue to contribute to our country. He also sits on the Wilmington Neighborhood Council, where he provides input and is active in the community. Because of DACA, hundreds of kids are benefiting from him being a teacher.

I believe we continue to need comprehensive immigration reform to fix our broken immigration system. It is the best answer. Until then, I am going to continue to fight to protect hardworking families and immigrants who continue to provide value, DREAMers like Roque, who only know the United States as their home. He is American in every way.

A STRONGER STANCE ON RUSSIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, Vladimir Putin's regime has long sought to undermine U.S. interests and shape a world more compliant with its corruption. I have argued for a stronger stance against Russia for years. I opposed the Obama administration's failed reset of relations.

I helped lead the push for greater sanctions on Russia's human rights violators, helping secure passage of the Sergei Magnitsky Act.

I have called for sanctions against those who poisoned my friend, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and against all those involved in the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, the 2-year anniversary of which occurred just yesterday.

I also support the efforts to codify sanctions against Russia and to limit the lifting of executive waivers. But we should be limiting the ability to waive sanctions not just on Russia, but also on Iran, on the Palestinian Authority, and on so many others because, in order for sanctions to be effective, they must be fully implemented and fully enforced.

LET'S HELP OUR GREAT NATION STAY GREAT

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

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, tonight at the President's address, I will be joined by a young man, Eliel Aguillon, a new American, in the great tradition of this great country.

Eliel grew up surrounded by poverty, yet he found his path to the American Dream through hard work and education. Eliel is my neighbor. He attended the same public high school

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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that my daughter attends. He is the first person in his family to attend college, and his goal is to earn a Ph.D. in engineering and to address our Nation's affordable housing crisis. Today, Eliel encourages young students to pursue careers in science and math.

Eliel is a DACA student. Let me repeat. Eliel is a DACA student. He and his family left Mexico when he was 7 years old to pursue the American Dream through hard work and dedication.

We must ensure that Eliel and hundreds of other hardworking DACA students stay in America, the only home they have known, so that they can also contribute to the greatness of our great country. DACA students are our new Americans.

Let us help our great Nation stay great. Let us do the right thing. Let's give our DACA students and other hardworking taxpayers in our Nation a pathway to citizenship.

VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING DO NOT BELONG IN SHACKLES

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in her formative years, Lena wore turtle-necks and baggy clothes to school every day.

Why did she do so?

To hide the bruises that covered her entire body.

Soon, Lena's abusive foster mother lost custody of her. And when her foster mother lost custody, Lena just ran away. She was 13.

After bolting from the front lawn at the Houston middle school, she ran into a friendly-looking stranger, and that is when she discovered a false sense of comfort in the hands of a dastardly human trafficker. He offered to look after her, protect her, and love her; that was if she made him a little money. And he offered her the one thing she was missing in her 13 years, someone who said they loved her.

Mr. Speaker, love doesn't come with black eyes and bruises, however. The trafficker even promised Lena drugs so she could focus on something else while she was having sex with the buyers of children.

For the next 3 months, Lena would have many different traffickers and many different buyers. She would spend a few months or weeks with them, moving from motel to motel, then she would get scared and try to go back to foster care, and then just disappear again.

Finally, she was arrested after police responded to an internet post advertising sex with children. They arrested her trafficker in the hotel next door. With her help, the police ultimately charged two individuals with forcing a child into prostitution, or human trafficking, as we call it.

Upon her arrest, it was revealed that not only did she have three sexually

transmitted diseases, she was also pregnant.

The problem then, Mr. Speaker, is that Lena had nowhere to go. Authorities found themselves with an abused, traumatized, demoralized trafficking victim, a child, on their hands. Remember, Lena was a victim of crime. She was not a criminal. Children cannot be willing prostitutes under the law.

But there were no resources to put her anywhere, no resources to get her help and the support that she needed. The very limited number of nearby trafficking shelters were all full and there was no place to send her, so she was locked up in the county jail.

Victims of trafficking, Mr. Speaker, do not belong in shackles and orange jumpsuits. They belong in safe, nurturing environments. They deserve to have access to resources and help to get their stolen lives back for them.

How can a victim begin to recover, while a child, languishing in jail?

The justice system failed Lena and many others just like her, but it doesn't have to be this way. Lena deserves justice.

Sitting here in Washington, D.C., there is a victims' fund totaling over \$12 billion. Money in this fund comes from fines and fees imposed on convicted felons, people like deviants who trafficked Lena. Unfortunately, year after year, only a small amount of this money is actually taken out of the fund to help victims. Most of it stays in the fund and is used by appropriators to offset the costs of their pet projects that have nothing to do with victims of crime.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. The money, remember, is not taxpayer money. It is money that comes from criminals when they are convicted in Federal court, and we should give this money to victims of crime.

Money in the fund should be spent only on what victims like Lena desperately need so that they can get their lives back together and recover from the trafficking abuse they suffered.

Lena and other trafficking victims deserve justice. They deserve the money that is in the fund, and bureaucrats need to quit using that money as an offset for other projects. The victim fund is partially the answer.

Mr. Speaker, this should be spent on victims of crime because no trafficking victim belongs in the shackles of a county jail.

And that is just the way it is.

SENSELESS ACTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Jonah Min Hwang, another victim of a senseless act of gun violence. Jonah was only 8 years old when he was killed last

week in a drive-by shooting in my home city of Pomona.

Jonah, his parents, and his brother were enjoying dinner hosted by friends of his parents, two schoolteachers, when a bullet ripped through the house and hit Jonah. Crimes like this are heartbreaking.

A talented soccer player, an avid reader who loved superheroes, Jonah was an adopted child from a Taiwanese orphanage just 3 years ago. It eats at your soul to think that such a young child with his whole life ahead of him could be taken so ruthlessly. Perhaps most frustrating is that Jonah's killer is still at large.

When I first heard of Jonah's death, it brought me back to a similar tragedy when I served as mayor of my home city of Pomona. In 2006, little Ethan Esparza was shot and killed while he was playing in his front yard during his birthday party. He would have turned 4 years old.

Ethan's murder shocked our community and was a stark reminder of the violence that plagues our city. Sadly, over 10 years later, we are still fighting those same battles.

The murders of Jonah and Ethan were completely senseless, but they are not rare. In fact, Pomona was recently ranked California's eighth most dangerous city, which doesn't surprise those of us who have seen gangs take hold of our city.

Our local police department puts their lives on the line every single day to try to keep us safe, and our local officials have made significant investments in law enforcement. During my time as mayor, we implemented gang injunctions to try to get hold of the problem.

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But as the number of guns on the streets continues to rise and ruthless gang members get their hands on these deadly weapons, it often feels like a losing battle. We are alone fighting these battles.

As a matter of fact, today marks the 23rd anniversary of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, better known as the Brady bill, which has blocked more than 3 million people who had no business owning a gun from buying a gun from a federally licensed dealer.

As the new President makes his first address to Congress today, it is especially infuriating that, despite the countless gun-related tragedies occurring across our country, this Congress and this new administration have not taken one single step to reduce gun violence. I have come to this floor before demanding action, and I stand here before you yet again today, Mr. Speaker, to demand action on behalf of Jonah, of Ethan, and of the millions of innocent lives lost.

There are steps that we can take immediately to expand the Brady bill to save lives and make our communities safer:

First, we should close the loophole that allows guns to be sold online or at gun shows without background checks.