

My proposal represents the first step towards this important goal—the next step is health coverage for all children.●

KIDS, GUNS, AND DEATH

● Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, last summer the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence asked kids how their lives had been affected by guns and gun violence. Over 200 school-age children wrote and submitted essays. Last Sunday, the Chicago Sun Times printed the three winning essays. The expression, out of the mouths of babes, has never been more true than when reading the three winning essays. These three winners, a second-grader, a seventh-grader, and an eleventh grader, get what far too many of their elders do not: bullets, guns, and violent death should not be an increasingly routine part of these children's lives. I ask that the three winning essays printed in the Chicago Sun Times be printed in the RECORD.

[From the Chicago Sun-Times, Sept. 29, 1996]

KIDS, GUNS, AND DEATH

It is a sad fact of life: Children today are profoundly aware of the threat of gun violence. Last summer, the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence asked school-children how this omnipresent danger touches their lives, and what they thought should be done to end it. Asked to speak for themselves, more than 100 children from nearly two dozen schools submitted essays. It is powerful testimony. Many wrote of their personal brushes with gun violence; far too many told of losing family members and friends, and a few of actually witnessing fatal shootings. Here are the winning essays from three age categories. These young authors will read their entries Oct. 5, when the 14th Annual Walk Against Handgun Violence steps off from the Daley Center Plaza at 11 a.m.

ZACHERY JEFFERSON

Last week, when I layed down to rest for the night. I couldn't sleep because I heard the sound of gunshots in the air. My heart just pound and pound, until I heard the lock turn and the door slam. After I heard my mommy's voice. I was able to sleep.

I was worried about my mother walking to our building. I live in a tall building called Stateway Gardens. My mother Ms. Jefferson's work day begins in the afternoon and ends late night about 12:30 midnight. I know it isn't safe for my mom to walk the street in my neighborhood at night alone. She has to work to take care of my sister and I.

When I grow up I want to be a policeman, not just a policeman but the Chief of Police. I want to change things. It should be against the law for people to just shoot. Those bad people who are shooting guns like crazy mustn't realize how it feels to worry, or maybe they don't have a mother who works to take care of a family.

Well, my heart pounds and beats like a drum when I am upset or worried. For those who don't know what it feels like, I'll tell you. It's like losing something very special and that moment when you realize it's gone, your heart races real fast and sweat pops on your face and your knees shakes.

Please stop now. If you don't, watch out for me later! I will be coming with my badge on.

RHEA JACKSON

Guns are something very serious. Many people think that a gun is the answer to

solving their problems that won't go away. This isn't true. There are many other ways to solve your problems. People today don't care if a younger child gets injured, shot, killed or even paralyzed because all that really matters to them is to kill their problem that won't go away.

Today many boys are killing each other over some crazy things like money, drugs, shoes, name-brand clothes and even girls. That affects me a whole lot because that might be me one day. Instead of the boy getting shot I might get shot in his place.

I come from a very overprotective household with a father who is on me like white on rice. Sometimes I feel that he needs to give me a break and let me go to a friend's house. However, when I go I see people who don't have fathers they can turn to and I realize why my father is like that. He doesn't want me to get caught between gangs cross-firing at each other. Then I begin to see how lucky I am to have him around.

I feel that it must stop because many youngsters, like myself, want to live long, be able to live to see over the age of 21. I think that the gangs should come to a truce and live together in peace. If that doesn't work, then the police should be more aware of the gang activity going on. I'm saying these things because my cousin almost got in a crossfire between two gangs. They don't realize that bullets don't have names like they think. I think that the reason why kids join gangs is because of peer pressure, for attention and because they don't have anyone to turn to.

As you can see there are many things that scare me and other kids. The gangs have little kids, even kids at the age of 5, planning their funerals instead of dreaming about their weddings or Sweet 16 birthday parties.

If my essay gets published in a popular magazine or newspaper, please remember: "Bullets Don't Have Names."

CLAUDIA RUIZ

I personally experienced gun violence with the death of my cousin. I grew up with him and when he died from seven bullet wounds. I lost part of myself. Anyone who loves someone close to them knows that the pain is incurable, except with the dulling that time brings. It changes the lives of all those who knew the victim because part of their life is gone and there are no second chances.

Nothing is worth dying for, especially when the decision is not yours. No one has the right to make that decision for anyone. The anger that accompanies the pain is also destructive. Often when a gang member is killed, his brothers seek revenge. This brings further violence and loss of life. No one gains, and the cycle of violence keeps turning.

The cause of gun violence is that teenagers are joining gangs at an early age. Some of them join gangs because of the lure of money from selling drugs. Perhaps their family is poor and they need the money to support themselves and their family. Selling drugs offers them an easy solution. More often gang members come from families where they were neglected. They are looking for somewhere to belong, somewhere safe.

I believe in each case that the blame lies largely on the parents who do not give their children the support they needed while they were young. However, that is not to say that the parents are not facing tremendous odds trying to raise their children in an environment where gun violence and gang membership is prevalent. In large families, the older children are neglected as the parents are busy looking after the young. Unfortunately, the older children still need their guidance. Often, elder children become lonely and depressed. For these reasons, they may join a

gang to find friendship and belonging. Although the gang may feel like their salvation, their only salvation is to be able to talk to their parents instead of fighting against them. These youth need someone to show them that their families are where they may find safety. They need counseling so that they may talk about their fears and the problems in their family and on the street.

In addition, violence prevention counseling would educate the youth to find other solutions to violence in resolving their anger. They need someone to point them in the right direction and to show them they have choices in the future if they make the right decisions now. They need guidance to learn how to be themselves.●

THE VANCOUVER NATIONAL HISTORIC RESERVE

● Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to express my sincere pleasure that the Vancouver National Historic Reserve will be established as a result of the enactment of legislation by this Congress.

We have worked for several years in a bipartisan fashion to establish this important historic site in Vancouver, WA. This vision for cooperative management of the historic resources at Fort Vancouver began with the city of Vancouver and former Congresswoman Jolene Unsoeld. Congresswoman Unsoeld had the vision, leadership, and determination to develop a broadly supported plan to preserve and promote several chapters in the colorful history of the Pacific Northwest.

This proposal has been 10 years in the making. Throughout these years, the vision has been for a collaborative effort between the city of Vancouver, the Army, and the National Park Service. In recognition of the opportunity to coordinate the management and interpretation of the historic areas around Fort Vancouver, Congress in 1990 established the Vancouver Historic Study Commission to develop a plan for the area and make a recommendation to Congress. In 1993, the five members of the commission—representing the National Park Service, City of Vancouver, Army, State Historic Preservation Office, and the public-at-large—unanimously approved a strategy for the area. The commission's report called for the establishment of a Vancouver National Historic Reserve. The reserve would be cooperatively managed by the various public owners of the area through the Vancouver partnership. Key controversies such as the continued operation of Pearson Airpark were addressed and thoughtfully resolved.

Legislation to implement the commission's recommendations was introduced in 1994 by former Congresswoman Unsoeld but was unable to pass in the closing days of the 103d Congress. In an effort to maintain progress on the historic area, the city entered into a memorandum of agreement with the National Park Service regarding the operation of the area on November 4, 1995. Nevertheless, legislation was still needed to implement the MOA and the commission's recommendations.