A CALL FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. FOLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, let me commend the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. GRANGER] for that very important presentation.

Let me also talk about a problem that occurs to our young people after they are born. A high school janitor accused in the death of a student had a history of violence, but school officials waited until after he was on the job before seeking background information from the State.

The slaying of Michelle Montoya, 18-year-old popular Rio Linda High School student whose body was found in the school wood shop Friday, has focused attention on the school district's hiring policies and the State's handling of fingerprint checks and requests for background information.

The janitor, 34-year-old Alex Del Thomas, has a four-page rap sheet that includes violent felonies. The Grant Joint Union High School District hired Thomas in April, but the district did not submit a request to the State justice department for information about Thomas's fingerprints and potential criminal history until weeks later.

Thomas, a parolee, served nearly 12 years in Folsom prison for voluntary manslaughter. He pleaded guilty to the charge which stemmed from a 1984 Los Angeles robbery. Sheriff's investigators described him as a former member of the 107th Street Hoover Crips, a Los Angeles street gang.

My colleagues, a child has died once again in our community because of a lack of checking the backgrounds of those that work around our children.

Last week in Saint Lucie County, FL, a 2-year-old baby boy was raped by a 49-year-old individual and the baby died from a heart attack. Day after day you wake up to the TV shows describing another violent crime against our children, a violent crime of abuse, sexual perpetration, denying them their youth. And they are dying on our streets, or they are being convinced, through the Internet, to leave home and run off with someone else or being subjected to pornography and violence every day of their lives.

In 1993, we passed the National Child Protection Act, amid lots of cheers and whistles. States may do background checks, if they choose, if they choose. In Florida, you need a background check and a fingerprint card to get a real estate license. In about 38 States you need background checks and fingerprints to cut hair, to be a cosmetologist.

But if you are entrusted with the care of our children, if you are working in a day care center or school system or taking them out on field trips, we do not need to check the backgrounds. We will just let them go off merrily on their way and hope and pray that the children come back alive.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children today celebrated several heroes in our Nation's capital from around the country who have helped recover our children alive and healthy and brought them back to their homes after they had been abducted. I commend their hard work in seeking to solve the problem of abuse in our society.

We will be formulating legislation and several of us will be back on the floor tomorrow talking about the missing and exploited children's programs that we are launching across the Nation. But it is really high time that we focus on how to protect our children.

When you read a story like this, you have to ask yourself, how does a school district find it more important to have clean windows and clean hallways than protecting the lives of our children. They found it inconvenient to do a background check on this individual who just served time in prison for a felony murder. Had to rush and hire him. She was left to die inside her school's wood shop last week after she was beaten and her throat slashed.

Michelle's parents do not get a second chance, but a small investment of tax dollars to make certain that that person was fit for the job could have been done and they could have held off hiring them and saved a life.

But let us not let legislation get in the way. Let us not let protection of our children stand in the way of getting our jobs done. Let us not worry about another Michelle Montoya, because we are all much too busy. We pass laws in this Chamber and then we go on our way and think what a great job we have done. Let us pat each other on the back.

And another child dies, and another child is molested, and two girls are stolen from their home, found in a canal, their naked and beaten bodies found in a canal.

There are sick people running around our communities. They need to be caught. They need to be apprehended. They need to be sentenced to the most severe penalty.

But what would be better is if we apply the laws now, protect the children first, and then not have to suffer the consequences. My heart goes out to the Montoya family and every other parent who has suffered the devastation of the loss of a child.

BUDGET AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to address the House regarding the recently passed budget agreement. I would like to begin tonight by talking about what that agreement really means to the people in this great Nation we live in because it means an awful lot for virtually every generation of Americans in this country. Whether we look at our senior citizens by passing this balanced budget plan that contains a direction and a plan for paying off the Federal debt, when we pay off the Federal debt it really means that what we are going to do is put money back into the Social Security trust fund that has been taken out.

That is very good news for our senior citizens because that means Social Security is solvent for the foreseeable future. It also contains language that is going to allow us to take care of Medicare so that Medicare is once again solvent. For our working families, there are two real important things as we pay off the debt and restore the Social Security trust fund. It also means that we are in a position where we are not going to have to raise taxes on working families to make good on promises to seniors. But it also provides tax relief for the working families in America today through the $500 per child tax credit, a college tax tuition credit, capital gains tax reduction, and of course the death tax is being changed so we do not have to see the tax man on the same day that we pass away. I think it is a very important change in this great Nation of ours.

It seems ridiculous that we would find ourselves in that particular situation. For the younger generation it is great news because this budget contains a plan to literally pay off the Federal debt by the year 2023. And in paying off the Federal debt it means that we can pass this Nation on to our children debt-free. Instead of our children looking forward to having families that are required to pay $500 a month to Washington to do nothing but pay interest on the huge debt, instead of being in the situation we are in today, where we literally pay that $500 a month to do nothing but pay the interest on the Federal debt, this budget contains a plan to literally pay off the Federal debt so our Nation can inherit this country debt-free and keep that money in their own homes and in their own families.

To put it in perspective, just how far we have come with this budget, I think it is important we go back to something that many people in America remember hearing about; it is called the Gramm–Rudman-Hollings Act. It was first introduced in 1985. It laid out this blue line that we can see here as a plan for deficit reduction to get to a balanced budget. The red line shows what actually happened with deficits, and we will notice that we never actually got to the blue line. We never actually hit the targets for balancing the budget.

As a result of course the deficits exploded. In 1987, they realized that their 1985 plan was not working so they fixed it and they passed Gramm–Rudman-Hollings 2, and again the blue line shows the direction to get to a balanced budget. The red line again shows exactly what happened. And as we can see, they never hit their targets for a second time straight.