

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS
REGARDING SOCIAL PROBLEM
OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Mr. FLETCHER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Education and the Workforce and the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 93) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the social problem of child abuse and neglect and supporting efforts to enhance public awareness of this problem, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

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

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 93

Whereas each year more than 3,000,000 children in the United States are reported as suspected victims of child abuse and neglect;

Whereas more than 500,000 American children are currently unable to live safely with their families and have been placed in foster homes and institutions;

Whereas it is estimated that more than 1,000 children in the United States, 78 percent of whom are less than 5 years of age and 38 percent of whom are less than 1 year of age, lose their lives each year as a direct result of abuse and neglect;

Whereas the tragic social problem of child abuse and neglect results in human and economic costs due to its relationship to crime and delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and welfare dependency; and

Whereas April has been designated by the President as Child Abuse Prevention Month to focus public awareness on this social ill: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) it is the sense of the Congress that—

(A) the faith community, nonprofit organizations, State and local officials involved in prevention of child abuse and neglect, and volunteers throughout the United States should recommit themselves and mobilize their resources to assist children in danger of abuse or neglect;

(B) Federal resources should be marshalled in a manner that maximizes their impact on the prevention of child abuse and neglect;

(C) because abuse and neglect of children increases the likelihood that they will later engage in criminal activity, State and local officials should be provided with increased flexibility that allows them to use Federal law enforcement resources in the fight to prevent child abuse and neglect if they consider that use appropriate; and

(D) child protective services agencies, law enforcement agencies, and the judicial system should coordinate their efforts to the maximum extent possible to prevent child abuse and neglect; and

(2) the Congress—

(A) supports efforts in the United States to—

(i) focus the attention of the Nation on the disturbing problem of child abuse;

(ii) demonstrate gratitude to the people in the United States who work to keep children safe; and

(iii) encourage individuals to take action in their own communities to make them healthier places in which children can grow and thrive; and

(B) commends the faith community, nonprofit organizations, State and local officials involved in prevention of child abuse and neglect, and volunteers throughout America for their efforts on behalf of abused and neglected children everywhere.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. FLETCHER. Madam Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. SCOTT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) be allowed to manage the time and yield debate time on this side.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. FLETCHER. Madam Speaker, I am here today to recognize the continued and very good efforts by the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) who has offered this resolution, and I stand honored to speak on this very important resolution.

This resolution calls for a greater commitment toward recognizing the problem of child abuse and neglect and encourages more to be done for its prevention. Specifically it promotes greater coordination between child protective services agencies, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system in working to prevent such abuse and neglect. Additionally, it commends the work of those who keep children safe, including those in the faith community, nonprofit organizations, State and local agencies and volunteer organizations.

Madam Speaker, as you know, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The estimated number of children seriously injured by all forms of maltreatment quadrupled between 1986 and 1997. The estimated number of sexually abused children increased by 83 percent, the number of physically neglected children rose 102 percent, there was a 333 percent increase in the estimated number of emotionally neglected children, and the estimated number of physically abused children rose 42 percent. Now 500,000 American children are currently unable to live safely with their families and have been placed in foster homes and institutions.

During Child Abuse Prevention Month, we should focus the Nation's attention on this national tragedy and demonstrate gratitude to the people in the United States who work to keep our children safe. Moreover, Congress should continue working to help State and local officials in their effort to prevent child abuse.

With my personal experience I have witnessed this firsthand, and in my practice in caring for patients, I am thinking back of one patient in particular, one small child that we cared for at the University of Kentucky Medical Center.

□ 1230

A child that was abused to the extent that they were comatose. I think, why should this happen in this great United States. I look at the impact that this has on the events that have occurred, and not only that, but we look at what has happened recently as to how much do we really care about our children.

Certainly I am honored to speak on this, the resolution of the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. JONES), and I certainly commend her on this. As we are addressing and focusing more attention on this issue, I hope that we can reduce the number of abused children in this tragedy in the United States and certainly continue to work.

This concurrent resolution will express the growing problem of child abuse and neglect. It also focuses on enhancing public awareness. We believe that the faith community, nonprofit organizations, State and local officials involved in abuse and neglect, and volunteers across America must recommit themselves to ending this alarming trend.

Federal dollars should be used in a constructive manner to maximize the prevention of child abuse in our local communities. It is time for this Nation to focus more attention and resources on the disturbing problem of child abuse. We need to encourage individuals to take actions in their communities to ensure a happy, healthy environment for our children.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It gives me great pause as I stand in this Chamber this afternoon to bring to the floor this resolution with regard to child abuse in America. The statistics are numbing. In 1997 over 3 million children were reported for child abuse and neglect to child protective agencies. Between 1988 and 1997, child abuse reporting levels increased by 41 percent. Currently, 47 out of every 1,000 children are reported as victims of child mistreatment. In 1997, 1,054,000 children were victims of child abuse, or in other numbers, 15 out of every 1,000 U.S. children.

A child in the United States is twice as likely to be reported as abused or neglected as to be enrolled in Head Start. Mr. Speaker, 37 percent of American parents reported insulting or swearing at their children within the last 12 months. One of three of all Americans have witnessed an adult physically abuse a child, and two out of three have seen an adult emotionally abuse a child.

In 1996, 1,185 child abuse fatalities were reported. Between 1995 and 1997, 78 percent of these children were less than 5 years old at the time of their death. Mr. Speaker, 38 percent were under the age of 1 year old.

It is time that we as a Congress and we as a Nation wake up and understand the impact that child abuse has not

only on the child, but the child who witnesses the abuse; not only on the child as a child, but when he or she becomes a juvenile or becomes an adult and again, on their own become a child abuser. It is time that we figure out how we can prevent child abuse in our country, and how we can marshal the necessary assets for it, in light of the fact that our dollars are innumerable, in order to deal with this issue.

We have all been numbed over the past week, week and a half about the events in Colorado. We are numb today about a similar event in Canada. We are numbed about the use of guns by our children, but contemplate acting out such as these children did with guns could, in fact, be a result of child abuse in their earlier life. Many of the statistics have shown that someone who was an abused child is likely to be an abuser later on in life, is likely to act out in some type of conduct that would be inappropriate.

I am pleased to stand on the floor of this House today to talk about solving the issue of child abuse and neglect in our country.

Prior to coming to Congress, I served for 8 years as the Cuyahoga County prosecutor in Cleveland, Ohio, and it was part of my responsibility to deal with the issue of child abuse and neglect. One of the things that we were able to do in that jurisdiction was to in fact train assistant prosecutors who, in fact, were specially trained to handle child abuse and neglect cases. We found that we had an overwhelming greater success in winning our prosecutions because they were specially trained. In addition, we were able to take the attorneys who represent Cuyahoga County as attorneys in court on the civil side on abuse and neglect, to give them an opportunity to call the shots; in other words, to make the legal determination with regard to when we would proceed with a case of abuse or neglect or when we would not proceed.

I take my hat off today to the workers in the child protection services. I take my hat off today to law enforcement in child protection services, and to the attorneys, because if one does that work day after day and one sees the young people who have been abused and neglected, not only at the hands of their parents or their loved ones but the hands of children in similar age groups, one will understand how it is a profession that causes high burnout.

I am pleased to be a sponsor of a piece of legislation called CAPE, in conjunction with my colleague from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE), and we have other sponsors as well. Under the CAPE Act we are proposing that dollars that are collected from forfeiture in drug cases be allocated to provide for dollars to train child protection workers.

Currently, under the law as it exists, only \$10 million is allocated for that purpose. Under the law that we have proposed, \$20 million would be allocated to provide additional dollars through the Byrne Grant proposal for training for child protection workers.

In addition, dollars could be allocated to provide for child protection workers to have access to various criminal records, so that when they are making a determination with regard to where young people are assigned or what families they are assigned to, they would take that information into consideration. As I said, it is important.

My colleagues see the blue ribbon that we are all wearing today, all of us throughout the House, all of us all over Capitol Hill. The blue ribbon stands for Child Abuse Prevention Month, but it also stands for the young people who were killed in Colorado. It is time, it is time, it is time that we as a Nation wake up.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE).

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the good doctor, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, for the past few weeks we have all been mourning the loss of the 12 innocent children who were so brutally slain in Littleton, Colorado. Today, we take this time to focus on other innocent children who lose their lives to other inconceivable acts of violence.

As many know, the President declared April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, and we bring this bipartisan resolution to the floor to help focus the Nation's attention on this national tragedy.

During the time which I stand before my colleagues for the next few minutes, at least one child will be reported abused or neglected in my home State of Ohio. By the time this hour of debate is over, 20 children will have been reported abused or neglected, 480 by day's end, and that is just one State, and those are just the reported cases. These statistics are staggering.

But sometimes statistics are too sterile to demonstrate the real tragedy, because child abuse cases are not just statistics. Each case involves an innocent, fragile, living, breathing child who has a name and a face. Each bruise, broken bone, cigarette burn or death not only hurts that child, but also hurts all of us, because it so often means one less bright light for our Nation's future.

A sad fact, Mr. Speaker, is that many child abusers are themselves victims of abuse or neglect, which suggests a vicious cycle of criminality. Aside from its relationship to crime and delinquency, child abuse and neglect is also closely linked to drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and welfare dependency. Therefore, in a very real sense child abuse prevention also is crime prevention, drug prevention and welfare dependency prevention.

If we only could have paid more attention up front to prevent the abuse of those who years later will fill our

jails or sleep on the streets strung out on drugs, or abuse their own spouse and children. We can make a difference if we stop the abuse now. We can reduce these problems in our future.

We must recognize that our children are our Nation's most precious resource and redouble our efforts to fight child abuse. This is why we are here today.

Throughout this month, a number of us have been wearing blue ribbons, as the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) referred to, as part of a campaign which is being waged across the Nation during Child Abuse Prevention Month. In fact, I received my blue ribbon from my constituent, Debbie Sendek, Executive Director of the Ohio Committee to Prevent Child Abuse. Debbie Sendek is but one of the thousands of unsung heroes across our Nation who are in our communities on the front lines in the fight to protect our children, and it is all of these unsung heroes that we recognize and commend today through this resolution.

However, I am sure that we would all agree that the most important goal of Child Abuse Prevention Month is to protect our children. With 3 million children in the United States reported as victims of child abuse and neglect every year, we have a lot to do. While April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, I believe Congress must rededicate itself to fighting this national tragedy 12 months a year, and we need to make sure that this resolution is only the beginning and not the end of our efforts.

Congress must continue seeking ways to help those on the State and local level to fight child abuse. To do this, I have joined with colleagues on both sides of the aisle in introducing the Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act, or the CAPE Act. In a nutshell, this bill will provide State and local officials greater flexibility to use existing Federal law enforcement resources for child abuse prevention. Also, the bill would double the earmark from \$10 million to \$20 million in the crime victims fund for child abuse victims. All of these funds come from forfeited bail bonds, forfeited assets and fines paid to the Federal Government, not from taxpayers' dollars.

The bill has the support of the National Child Abuse Coalition, Prevent Child Abuse America, and the Christian Coalition, just to name a few, and I urge all of my colleagues to sign on.

Mr. Speaker, abused children do not have a powerful voting block; they do not have high-paid lobbyists in Washington to champion their cause. That is why we must take this initiative and work it together in a bipartisan fashion to continue the fight to protect our Nation's children.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow original cosponsors of this resolution for their support: the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), without whose help we would not be here today; the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE); the gentleman from Florida

(Mr. McCOLLUM); the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING); the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON); the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING); the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GREENWOOD); the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT); and my good friend, the gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio (Mrs. JONES), who has had so much personal experience in this area.

To recognize all of those who work tirelessly in the field who see these tragedies up close, we dedicate this month, and set our sights to do what we can as the United States Congress to stem the tide of one of the saddest, most horrifying aspects of this great country, and that is child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me this time. Let me congratulate both the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) for their leadership, and simply to add my voice in support of H. Con. Res. 93, and particularly emphasizing the need for protecting our children in America.

□ 1245

This is Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Month, the month of April. I would simply like to say to my colleagues, let us look to the future when such a day will not be needed or such a month will not be needed.

As a cochair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, we have committed ourselves to promoting children as a national agenda. In the last session we were able to secure an additional \$11 million to support the Children's Mental Health Services Program under Health and Human Services.

What we find with respect to our children who are abused and neglected are the kinds of devastating numbers that suggest that more than 500,000 American children are currently unable to live safely with their families, and have been placed in foster homes and institutions.

We also find it estimated that more than 1,000 children in the United States, 78 percent of whom are less than 5 years of age and 38 percent of whom are less than 1 year of age, lose their lives each year as a direct result of abuse and neglect.

If any of us can express the priceless feeling of cuddling a 5-year-old, a 1-year-old, maybe a 13-year-old, we are obviously outraged at the thought of those children being abused physically or mentally, and not getting the fullness of what an adult can give, which is loving and nurturing.

This tragic social problem is an epidemic, so I join with my colleagues to ask for and to give encouragement to the faith community, the nonprofit or-

ganizations, State and local officials involved in prevention of child abuse and neglect, and volunteers throughout the United States. We ask them to recommit themselves. We also applaud the works that they have done.

In my own hometown in Houston, Harris County, I have had the pleasure of co-chairing a committee that promoted foster parents to encourage them, to recruit more of them, so that in instances of tragic circumstances where we find a child from an abused home, we can immediately transfer that child into a loving foster care circumstance.

How terrible it is to read in our newspapers that a foster care situation was not available, or that a child protection services worker could not find a place for that child, or who had visited that abusive home and had left that child in the abusive home with the hope that it would get better, only to find in the next morning's news, to read that the child is dead because it was left in a home that was abusive and had no support system.

I believe we must promote foster care, parenting and foster care systems, and we should support them, provide the resources for those foster care parents.

Then I think it is imperative, as I wear the ribbon in commemoration of this month, but as well, the tragic killing of those young people in Littleton, Colorado, along with all the other young people who have died at the hands of violence, to know that some of those who were the perpetrators suffered from child abuse and neglect, and we did not intervene at an early age.

I also say we should promote more funding for mental health services for our children, with more funding for school nurses, more funding for guidance counselors.

Most of all, let me say that we all should embrace this month with a recommitment in support of, one, the legislation, the CAPE Act, but as well, a recommitment that maybe in our lifetime we will not celebrate or commemorate, rather, the month that has to bring attention to child abuse and neglect; that we can say we have wiped it out, we have extinguished it, that we really do what this Nation should do, which is to love our children and to save our children.

I thank the gentlewoman for her courtesies for extending me this time.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 93.

As we have heard, April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. For any parent or adult who has witnessed the despair in a child's eyes after he or she has gone for so long without the love and nurturing that he or she so strongly craves and needs, it is heartwrenching.

Mr. Speaker, we know many of the results that come from child abuse.

The majority of juvenile offenders, teenage runaways and adult criminals in this country were abused as children.

In a home for young, unwed troubled mothers in my district in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, called Beth Shalom, I have visited many of these young ladies who have suffered through terrible childhoods full of abuse, and they are now struggling not to repeat the patterns with their own young children.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that the most harsh price of child abuse is death. As we have heard, more than 1,000 children in the United States, 78 percent under the age of 5, 38 percent under the age of 1, lose their lives every year as a direct result of abuse and neglect. This is a tragedy happening in America today.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot call attention to this issue just once a year. Our efforts require a year-round focus and a continuation of our work with State and local officials who are working so hard to prevent child abuse.

This must be a community effort. Our children deserve all of the love and energy we have to keep them safe and healthy. I strongly support this resolution, and urge the Members to vote in favor.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to my colleague from the great State of North Carolina (Mrs. EVA CLAYTON).

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio for yielding me the time, I thank her for her leadership, and I also appreciate the fact that this is a bipartisan effort led by the great State of Ohio and other Members who are joining with us.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time where we recognize child abuse, but hopefully, as the previous speaker said, this is not a one-time-a-year event, but this is a recognition that our children are our most precious gift. They represent our future. They are our hope. Therefore, we should be investing in their healthy existence. We should have been investing in their safe existence, as well.

Child abuse has many aspects to it. First, we do want to support this resolution, which gives public advocacy to it and recognizes the many individuals who are in there professionally doing it every day. It does take a lot for them to stay in that. It takes a continuous commitment to have that energy and not be burned out, so we want to commend those professionals who are in there.

We also want to commend a comprehensive approach. There is obviously a law enforcement part of this, there is a health enforcement part of this, there is a psychological and mental health part of this, there is a spiritual involvement with this, and the community as a whole should be involved. We need to see this as a community response, where all of us have an opportunity to play a part.

I am reminded of a poem that Edward Hale has said, and others have reminded us this week of that. It says, "I am only one, but I am one. What I can do, I ought to do. By God's grace, I will do it."

Here is an opportunity where individual actions with a parent who is having problems and struggling with overcoming his or her past of having been an abused child, now trying to struggling to be a decent and honorable parent, we need to engage ourselves as individuals with that.

Again, I commend all of our colleagues to support this resolution, but more than just support this resolution, to be engaged in this worthwhile activity, making sure that our children not only are healthy and safe, but making sure that their lives are the kinds of lives that will be productive and they will make a contribution.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the leadership of the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mrs. TUBBS JONES) in bringing this legislation to the floor.

As people honor April as Child Abuse Prevention Month by wearing blue ribbons, listening to speeches, mourning innocent lives lost or damaged, and celebrating the valiant efforts of those who have made a difference, my prayer is that we as a Nation would recommit ourselves to this issue.

We as parents and Americans must realize our collective responsibility for the well-being of our children. Their future is, indeed, our country's future, and therein lies a moral imperative that we cannot afford to ignore.

The numbers are daunting. In 1997, there were 3 million cases of child abuse and neglect. Today, at least 500,000 American children are in foster care and institutions because they cannot live safely with their own families.

Unfortunately, costs of government programs skyrocket, while there are more broken families, more abused children, more teenaged parents, and more foster children getting bumped around for years without being adopted.

This resolution expresses the sense of Congress that current statistics merit our commitment to intervene in the vicious cycle of child abuse. It says that we need to marshal Federal resources in order to maximize their impact on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Sometimes it is clear that the most effective reform by the Federal Government is to simply cut red tape and empower local communities.

As with most social problems, government can only do so much to solve them. Local communities, families, and individuals must join together with government agencies to fight and to address the needs of children in the system.

My wife, Christine, and I have two foster kids in our home, and have had

over the past 2 years. We have also been involved as volunteers for the Court-Appointed Special Advocates, CASA, and child advocates of Fort Bend County for almost 5 years. We have only recently talked publicly of our family life, in the hopes that others might be encouraged to become involved with the children at risk in their own communities.

The strength of America, the true greatness of America, is not only in the moral fiber of her people and in the integrity of her leaders, but also is revealed by how we treat those who are the most vulnerable.

There are none more vulnerable in our society, none heard less, than the children that suffer from abuse and neglect. We must be their voice. We must speak loudly and speak out with our time and our resources and our love. Get involved. No effort is too small and no child beyond our reach.

Let me just close by commending my colleague, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. DEBORAH PRYCE), one of the best mothers and legislators I know. I so appreciate her efforts on behalf of our Nation's children, and I am honored to join her as an original cosponsor of the child abuse prevention and awareness resolution, as well as the Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to review a few more facts with the Members. As I stated earlier, I served as the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, prosecuting child abuse in Cuyahoga County and being responsible for abuse and neglect cases.

I also have had the opportunity to serve for 10 years as a judge in Cuyahoga County, where in many instances I was required to listen to testimony and judge the credibility of a young person who was being presented for purposes of testifying with regard to some abuse that he or she had suffered.

To look into the eyes of a child, to require them to walk into a courtroom, to be required to tell the world about terrible incidents of what had occurred to them, I cannot even tell Members how my heart would bleed.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here this afternoon, as with my other colleagues, I look forward to the time wherein we will not have to celebrate Child Abuse Prevention Month. I look forward to the time where we will not have to celebrate Domestic Violence Month. I look forward to the time where we have created a society wherein people feel good about their relationships, wherein they care about one another, wherein they understand that what goes around comes around, where they understand that what you do to a child at an early age has an indeterminable impact as they go on later on in their lives.

It is important that we let the child protection workers who work in this area every day know how supportive

we are of them, how we understand that they are underpaid, overworked, and that many times their caseloads just continue to balloon without any support in sight.

□ 1300

It is important that we let them know that we care about them and that this issue is important to all Americans. It is important that we as a community stop watching child abuse occur and do what the law and morality requires us to do, which is to say something about it, report it, be willing to step forward and tell what we saw happen. It is important that we as a community, as we talk about what it is we can do about child prevention, that we are willing to give not only our personal dollars but be willing to be supportive of the government giving dollars to child abuse prevention. And finally it is important that all of us, those of us that are Members of Congress, sign on not only to the resolution celebrating or bringing to the floor the issues of child abuse, but to also sign on to the CAPE act that will give dollars to local communities to be able to combat child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON).

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in strong support of this resolution.

One of my colleagues earlier described as the inconceivable acts of violence some of the things we have witnessed in America's high schools recently, but that people like my colleague from Ohio witnessed day in and day out from adults in America toward children in America. And, indeed, what children in America, what some children in America are suffering at the hands of their own parents can only be described as inconceivable acts of violence.

It took this Nation a number of decades to understand the significance of domestic abuse and to actually change the laws so that beating one's wife was treated under the law exactly the same way as beating a neighbor's wife; that, in fact, assault and battery, whether it was against one's wife or anyone else was equally a crime. And as we came to understand that, we had to change many, many laws and we had to change the way emergency room personnel talked to women who came into emergency rooms and police responded to domestic abuse calls.

We have come a long way now in integrating into our understanding the early warning signs of domestic abuse and we are better at responding and better at early intervention, but we have not done this in the area of child abuse prevention. We have passed laws about mandated reporters, we have tried many things, but we do not integrate into our everyday lives a sensitivity to the needs of families where abuse is brewing or present.

And so this resolution that points to legislation that these leaders are going to bring to this floor and that our Committee on the Judiciary is going to consider and discharge will begin to look at every crime prevention program and assure that crime prevention includes child abuse prevention because, essentially, none of that money is being used for this very, very important purpose. And there are many other things we can do.

This Congress passed the Safe Homes and Adoption Act a year and a half ago. We just had an excellent hearing on that. And it has helped to focus on these families early on and helped the families either deal with their problems or infants to be discharged for adoption where there is no hope that the family can deal with its problems in such a way that abuse will not be recurring in a long-term part of a child's growing up. So we have made progress.

But there is so much more to do, not only in our criminal statutes and in our crime prevention statutes but also in those statutes that govern how this Nation funds child abuse and prevention. As chairman of the committee that has responsibility for those funds for our child protective services program, I can say we have a lot of work to do.

We have got to change the way we fund these services so that money does not follow placement into foster care, which represents failure to prevent, failure to restore, and failure to intervene when a family has an opportunity to become whole not only for that one abused child but for others who may be affected but maybe not as clearly and, therefore, not removed.

So we have to change the way we deal with this problem, to move to a far more holistic approach, and the opportunity is there for us. When we look at what we have done in welfare reform, it is really a model. We have provided more money for services to welfare women coming off welfare than ever in this Nation's history by providing much greater flexibility and a more responsive Federal program. And that is my goal in child protective services funding.

I look forward to working with women of experience and men of experience and deep concern in this body, and I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. TUBBS JONES) for her experience, interest and dedication to this matter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILLMOR). Does the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) wish to reclaim her time?

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I do, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) may reclaim her time.

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume only to thank my colleagues who have worked so hard with me on this

piece of legislation and this resolution. I am pleased as a brand new Member of Congress to be able to participate in some bipartisan legislation that will impact our entire Nation.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA).

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and, Mr. Speaker, I believe there is no greater responsibility that we have as public officials than to protect the innocent. And there is no greater group of innocent people than young children.

Sadly, there are those in this country who are compelled, for whatever reason, unbeknownst to any human being with common sense and decency, to abuse a child, physically and/or mentally scarring the child for life. We see it manifested in many different ways; yet for some reason, whether we are a Democrat or a Republican, when we see a young baby, it always brings a smile to our face. But to know that there are people who would willingly abuse a young innocent child walking the streets of our country is just beyond the bounds of human reasoning.

So I am happy and I compliment the sponsor of this legislation which will at least raise the level of consciousness one more notch. Because we need to stand united and to demonstrate that this great country, with its moral underpinnings, is concerned about every child that walks the face of the Earth, and that we, most importantly, can make a difference.

It is beyond just the abuse itself. We have been successful on Staten Island in developing a child advocacy center. In short, what that means is that the poor child who is abused, sexually, physically, sometimes as young as 6 months old, these poor children who would then have the trauma of repeating this story 8, 10, 15 different times to assistant district attorneys, to police officers, to child welfare workers, will no longer have to do so because what we did is consolidated our operations.

I compliment my predecessor, Susan Molinari, for spearheading this before she left Congress. It is a way of bringing a little reason and comfort to these poor children. I would encourage other communities across this country, if indeed they do not already have them, to explore this option. It minimizes an already tragic situation for a young child and, at the same time, sends a signal to child abusers that this is a zero tolerance policy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again compliment the sponsors of this legislation.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING).

(Mr. EWING asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, the acting chairman, for

yielding me this time. I am pleased to come here today and to talk about the resolution honoring child abuse prevention and awareness month and also to speak about a piece of legislation that works into the area of prevention of abuse and child awareness which is called the CAPE Act.

This is a piece of legislation which I originally sponsored with Susan Molinari, and now I am cosponsoring along with the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. DEBORAH PRYCE), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TOM DELAY), and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES). We are extremely pleased with the reception of this legislation, and we think that it has tremendous ability in a very small way to loosen the bonds or the restrictions that too often are put on local governments who are fighting this battle with the money we send them. That is really basically what we do here. We give breathing room to local governments to fight this problem.

I am not going to go into statistics today. They are pretty gruesome. They are very, very sobering when we think about what is happening in this country. And probably the one statistic that is most alarming is that those children who are abused children themselves become abusers and criminals and addicted to drugs and alcohol and all of the things that we think are bad in our society. They are more susceptible to those things than children that have a healthy environment in which to grow up in.

So I would just ask all of those in the Congress, Mr. Speaker, to join in this bipartisan effort. We can fight crisis around the world, but in child abuse we have a crisis right here in America. It is time to put our best efforts towards solving that problem and moving ahead with new solutions.

I believe that the CAPE Act will allow us just a small step in that direction, and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can count on strong support from the Members of this body so that we will send that legislation to the Senate as well as pass this resolution here today on child abuse and awareness month.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I am pleased to rise today in support of this concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 93, the sense of Congress regarding child abuse and neglect, and enhancing the public's awareness of this problem.

Child abuse, whether sexual, physical or emotional, is a growing problem in this Nation which we should view with a great deal of alarm. Every child has the right to grow up in a safe, well cared for environment. The most tragic thing about child abuse is it is often inflicted by someone close to the child

who should be concerned with that child's welfare rather than inflicting that kind of harm.

Regrettably, far too many families are simply incapable of raising children without resorting to abuse. The end result is that the child often learns violence as an acceptable way to convey one's feelings and release stress. Thus, the patterns of abuse usually continue with future generations.

In addition to the physical harm imparted on the child from sexual abuse, there is psychological damage which often lasts long into adulthood, affecting the child's future adult relationships.

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Even worse, sexual abuse robs a child of his or her innocence long before that innocence should be taken away. And whereas many adults who physically abuse their children can, with the help of extensive counseling, overcome their problems and the dangerous patterns of behavior, that same success does not usually occur with sexual abusers.

All too often, sexual predators of children repeat their acts of abuse even after being punished for earlier actions. Those individuals need to either be deterred from committing their acts or effectively punished for their behavior.

So I want to commend my colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES), for bringing this measure to the floor at this time.

I ask my colleagues to support this measure.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume only to say to all of my colleagues who have appeared here this afternoon that I thank them for coming out in support of our resolution. We look forward to the same support on the CAPE Act when it comes to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes to close and say certainly it has been a great pleasure to work with the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) and the other sponsors of this resolution.

Obviously, as this month is Child Abuse Prevention Month, we certainly are encouraged to see the increased effort that Congress will make, that we can make at this national level to work with local folks, work with law enforcement, with health care, with faith communities, as well as all parts of our local communities, to ensure that we provide a safer place for our children, that we continue to increase the awareness of this problem, that we can, as the future goes on, do a better job in making sure that our children are safe.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution calling for public and

private resources to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Children are our most precious gifts. We are responsible for their education, their safety, their health, and their lives. We should do everything we can to protect our children and ensure that their lives are safe from harm.

Yet, a sad truth remains that not all children are free from abuse and neglect. In 1997 alone, more than 1 million cases of child abuse and neglect were confirmed by child protective service agencies in the United States. One million children confirmed.

If that statistic wasn't disturbing enough, we know what the results of childhood abuse and neglect can be. We know that abused and neglected children do not perform as well in school. In some cases, physical abuse of children can result in brain damage, cerebral palsy, and learning disorders.

Perhaps most troubling of all, we know that there is a vicious cycle surrounding child abuse. Adults abused as children are at higher risk of arrest for sex crimes.

By recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, we alert communities all over our country to this tragic social illness that hurts our most precious and vulnerable resource. We recognize that child abuse is a complex problem. The solution requires action from everyone in each city and state. We need to support and expand local officials' efforts to prevent abuse. We need religious leaders to lend a supportive and understanding voice for families. We need to also support programs for families that prepare individuals for the job of parenting.

Most importantly, by recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month, we also tell victims of child abuse that they are not forgotten. We see you and we will help you. We must remember that truly effective prevention efforts must include treatment for children who have been abused or neglected.

The lingering anguish we feel toward the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado captures how we feel when our children are harmed. We need to break this cycle and prevent child abuse from ever occurring.

I urge my colleagues to support Representative PRYCE's resolution that calls on a collective effort to raise awareness and prevent child abuse and neglect in our communities. I want to thank Representative PRYCE for her work on this important issue.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Mrs. PRYCE's Resolution. This month is Child Abuse Prevention Month and I am pleased to be able to support this resolution which commemorates those who are helping to alleviate the evils of child abuse and neglect.

Together, we can make a difference, one child at a time.

I recently learned about the life of one child and the difference she felt in her life. Three years ago, Shannon was a 16-year-old girl suffering from neglect and despair. She never knew her father. Her sister had been taken away by the state and placed in foster care. Her brother was in state prison for attempted murder. And her mother couldn't seem to help her.

Shannon wasn't interested in life. She was depressed, in and out of psychiatric care between suicide attempts. She was failing in school.

Shannon needed a home. And thanks to the dedication of some very special people at Our

Children's Homestead in my Congressional District, that's exactly what Shannon was given.

And what difference did it make? Today Shannon attends College. She plans to go into hotel management.

When she looks back to high school, Shannon sees A's and B's on her report cards; she looks at photos of herself in the sports section of the yearbook; she sees herself on stage at the prom—a member of the prom court.

Shannon is blessed.

But we must also remember how much more we need to do.

In 1992, less than 30,000 children in Illinois were removed from their homes and placed into the child welfare system because they were victims of severe abuse and neglect. Just last year, that number had increased to over 50,000. That's more than a 66 percent increase in only six years. Each one of those numbers may be another Shannon. A child who needs our help—literally needs our help—to survive.

As the numbers of children in need comes close to doubling, we must redouble our efforts to help them. I rise to commemorate the work of those who have done so much. As Shannon's story tells us, we can make a difference for children—one at a time.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the concurrent resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 93.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kentucky?

There was no objection.

NATIONAL HOSPITAL WEEK

(Mr. GOODE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, the week of May 9 is National Hospital Week, when communities across the country celebrate the health care workers, volunteers, and other health professionals. This year's theme for National Hospital Week is "People Care, Miracles Happen."

A great example of this theme is an event called Martha's Market at Martha Jefferson Hospital in Charlottesville, Virginia. Martha's Market is a weekend event that transforms an indoor tennis facility into a shopping plaza with 40 unique boutique vendors. The event began as a fund-raiser by a group of enthusiastic volunteers who wanted to raise awareness of breast cancer, and it won the American Hospital Association's prestigious Hospital Award for Volunteer Excellence.