

the majority has chosen to address a very serious problem with unrealistic and potentially damaging solutions.

Gang activity is a very real and dangerous problem. In my own district, gangs pose a severe threat to the youth in many communities. Just yesterday, I spoke at length with a constituent whose son has suffered permanent and irreversible brain injury from a beating at the hands of a local gang.

There is much that Congress can and should do to help keep our youth out of gangs and strengthen our law enforcement efforts against gangs. Gangs are tough and gang members often do not respond to mild measures. We should increase the resources available to gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs, such as the Juvenile Delinquency Protection Block Grant (JJDPBG). These programs have been very effective in helping youth make the correct decisions with regard to gang activity.

We should increase the resources available to our public schools. All too often, youth join gangs because they feel that it is the only option available to them. By helping our teachers, administrators, and school systems, we can show them other, more promising, options.

We should oppose the reduction or elimination of programs that put police officers on our streets. Since 1994, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program has funded 4,806 additional police officers and sheriffs deputies to prevent crime in New Jersey. It has allowed New Jersey to spend \$45 million on crime-fighting technologies. We should be having a serious discussion about why this successful program warrants an 80 percent cut in the Republican budget for Fiscal Year 2006.

Unfortunately, this legislation proposes ineffective and damaging solutions to this serious problem. Mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines discount mitigating factors in crimes and are discriminatory towards people of color. It is time to give up the Congressional fascination with mandatory sentencing. It does not work. It may make the legislator feel good, but it hinders the judicial process, and most important it does not stop crime or deter criminals.

Also, diverting youth to the adult criminal justice system does nothing to deter crimes. In fact, youth tried and sentenced as adults are much more likely to commit violent crime after being released. Further, I am concerned that H.R. 1279 provides no exception for youth who have mental health problems and may not be competent to stand trial as adults.

I am happy that Congress is addressing this issue, which has affected so many communities across New Jersey and the country. Serious crimes like murder, assault, and rape at the hands of gangs and criminal enterprises clearly deserve our attention. However, this bill proposes solutions that do nothing to deter youth from gang membership or strengthen the law enforcement presence in our communities.

I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 1279.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1279, GANG DETERRENCE AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

**HON. TOM DAVIS**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 11, 2005*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6) to ensure jobs for our future with secure, affordable, and reliable energy:

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1279, "The Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005."

Northern Virginia is home to large Central American and Asian populations. I believe these groups bring a diversity and work ethic that enhances and benefits our region. Our diversity is one of our strengths.

Unfortunately, we have become increasingly aware of the gang element that sometimes attends these communities, and we are now fighting the spread of violent gang activity here in our neighborhoods.

Accounts of machete attacks and other violent murders have awoken my constituents to the dangers gangs present to all communities in Northern Virginia. In fact, law enforcement officials say there is a gang presence in every high school in Fairfax County. In the past, I have worked with my colleagues Frank Wolf and Jim Moran to direct federal resources for anti-gang activity to Northern Virginia. I have also traveled on numerous occasions to those Central American countries that serve as the breeding ground for MS-13 and other such gangs.

The legislation we are voting on today addresses one aspect of gang control. As our neighbors in El Salvador have learned, you can make all the arrests you want, but if you don't have the ability to effectively prosecute you actually exacerbate the problem. This legislation will help ensure that we do not have the same issue here in the United States.

The tough penalties set out by the bill will send a clear message that we intend to stop the menace of gang violence, and that those who challenge us will be dealt with harshly. We are also bolstering our commitment to law enforcement by providing them the resources they need to penetrate gangs and successfully put members behind bars.

Of course, if we are to ultimately be successful and effectively stem the expansion of gang activity, we need to take a comprehensive look at all strategies including law enforcement, international engagement, educational programs, social services and prevention. Law enforcement is one key component; however, without adequate attention to these other aspects, we will have a great deal of difficulty eradicating this epidemic.

To that end, I plan to continue to work with my colleagues to provide adequate support for education and prevention efforts, outreach, and other proactive programs to deal with the problem at the source. In addition, as the chairman of the committee with jurisdiction over the Office of National Drug Control Policy, I intend to thoroughly investigate the tie between narcotrafficking and gang activity. I

plan to travel again to both Colombia and El Salvador this month as part of this effort.

I also intend to meet with leaders of those countries to determine how the United States can better assist their efforts to stem the flow of gang members to the United States.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to address this serious challenge, and I again want to thank my friend Randy Forbes for taking the lead on this critical aspect of our fight.

PROVIDE GREATER JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES THROUGH CAR OWNERSHIP

**HON. GWEN MOORE**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 12, 2005*

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, for many low-income families, getting to a job can be even harder than getting hired in the first place. Research shows that lack of affordable and reliable transportation is a significant barrier to employment. If we want more people to work, we need to help make sure that they can get to work. Unfortunately, travel to and from a specific workplace on our cities' public transportation systems can be time-consuming and even practically impossible—especially for those struggling to leave welfare.

Public transit is designed to accommodate 9-to-5 commuters who need to get from one city destination to another during the normal workweek. But the entry level jobs of low-income workers are increasingly found in the faraway plants, warehouses, strip malls, and office parks of suburbia. The work schedules of these new hires may include "off-hour" shifts when public transit is unavailable or too unreliable. Low-income parents also need to go to job training classes, the supermarket, the doctor's office, or to day care to drop off their children. These destinations may not be located along public bus or train lines.

Studies show that people are more likely to find steady employment and earn a decent wage when they have access to a car. But all too often, buying and maintaining a reliable automobile is too expensive for families struggling to make ends meet. A recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that one-fourth of families earning \$25,000 or less have no cars.

In recent years, a number of states and non-profit organizations have developed programs to assist the working poor with the purchase of a car. Most of these programs receive vehicles donated by the public or purchase them wholesale from dealerships. The used cars are repaired to good working order and then leased or sold to low-income workers and job seekers, usually at a subsidized purchase price. In many cases, program operators work with local lending institutions to obtain loans for the car purchase while also providing financial education to the new owner. In addition to improving access to jobs in far reaching suburbs or rural areas, some low-income car ownership initiatives can bolster the family's credit for future purchases, such as a home, as well as connect these families to a savings institution.

In order to help develop and expand these low-income car ownership efforts, I am introducing the Creating Access to Rides (CAR)