

After they were through eating their pancakes, they came back and buried her in a shallow grave. They went home and slept off the night's atrocity, while her family had nightmares of where Ashton was.

When Ashton's body was located by police, the outlaws decided to run in the darkness of the night. They fled north to Canada, but they did not run fast enough or hard enough. They were caught at the U.S.-Canadian border after police typed their names into the national criminal database.

This tragic and unspeakable crime hits close to my heart. As a father of four and grandfather of five, no father wants to lose a child in the fullness of youth. As a former prosecutor and judge, I believe in justice. And there must be justice, Mr. Speaker.

Justice for a young girl who had a full and rewarding life ahead of her, who was murdered just so a couple of cowardly cunning criminals could see what it looked like to kill somebody, when a young girl took her last gasping breath. There must be justice for her family and her friends who must now endure life without her.

These two killers must also get some justice, Mr. Speaker. Justice is getting what one deserves. These teens will no doubt cry and whine for mercy, but justice must rule the day. Justice for these two demons who brutally executed a young Ashton and extinguished a bright light in this world.

Some individuals will now argue that these two 18-year-olds should be treated with compassion because of their age. Mr. Speaker, these two killers were macho enough to violently end the life of a young girl just to see the results. They should be macho enough to accept the punishment in the penitentiary, where they belong.

Victims should not be discriminated against based upon the age of the offender. As King Solomon was once quoted as saying, "Justice will only be achieved when those who are not injured by crime feel as indignant as those who are."

And, Mr. Speaker, that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### MILITARY READINESS

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Missouri is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to contrast two statements for you to set the stage on what we are dealing

with regarding the United States Army.

"Help is on the way." That is what President Bush said to our military during the 2000 campaign when they were in pretty good shape.

And "No." That is what General Schoomaker, the chief of staff of the Army, answered when I asked him if he was comfortable with the readiness levels of the nondeployed Army units here in the United States.

Let me put it in very clear terms. Our Army is in a crisis. Our forces are fighting valiantly in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the strain of that continued effort has put our preparedness to deter or to fight somewhere else, if we must, at strategic risk. The crises in North Korea, Iran, the Middle East, show how quickly things can change and how they can go wrong. We must be prepared. And right now the Army is not.

President Bush, during the 2000 campaign, strongly criticized the Clinton administration because two divisions were below their appropriate readiness ratings. He said, "If called upon by the Commander in Chief today, two entire divisions of the Army would have to report 'not ready for duty, sir.'"

Today nearly every combat brigade located within the United States would report that they are not ready for duty. They are at the lowest levels of readiness.

Most nondeployed units in the active Army are reporting that they are not able to complete the expected wartime missions. The exact numbers, of course, are classified. Army readiness for units not in Iraq has steadily declined and has fallen to levels that will limit our ability to project ground forces.

Every nondeployed National Guard combat brigade in the Army is reported at the lowest level of readiness. Forty percent of the Army's ground equipment is deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. The army has depleted its prepositioned overseas war stocks of equipment. The Army is so strapped for equipment, they are planning on downloading prepositioned ships loaded with combat equipment to help fill shortages.

Mr. Speaker, the Army has lost over 1,000 wheeled vehicles, over 100 armored vehicles, and 100 helicopters since the start of the war in Iraq.

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Guard units in the U.S. are suffering severe equipment shortages which will affect their ability to respond to emergencies in their home States, such as Katrina.

Equipment readiness is suffering as the priority for repair, parts and equipment is only toward the combat theater. The Army is now having a crisis funding its installations at home because of poor planning and the lack of support from the administration. The recent supplemental funding resolution increased the installation budgets by \$722 million, but the Army is still short

\$530 million to meet minimum support levels through the remainder of the fiscal year.

Each installation is being forced to find ways to cut their operating budgets. These cuts are affecting vital training and family support, which further degrades the Army's readiness posture.

Over \$290 billion has been spent in Iraq, with no end in sight. The Army requested more money in the recent supplemental, but the President's Office of Management and Budget cut \$4.9 billion from the Army's request for the 2006 war supplemental before sending it over here to Congress.

During the 2000 election, the current administration told our military, help is on the way. That is clearly not the case. The administration has failed to request the funds needed for the defense of this Nation. We must give the Army what it needs. The Army will need sustained funds, \$17.5 billion this year alone, to start getting well. We cannot shortchange them. We must provide a new direction for the Army, with sustained equipment and manpower, so that we can project power to protect America, wherever and whenever necessary. That is exactly what we must be prepared to do.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE SCOURGE OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I request to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Without objection, the gentleman from Nebraska is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, underage drinking flies under the radar screen most of the time, and I guess the reason for that is that alcohol is legal and is widely accepted. The average age 12- to 17-year-olds begin drinking is 12.7 years of age.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimated the number of underage deaths due to excessive alcohol use is roughly 4,554 a year. In other words, in one year we lose more young people to underage drinking than we have lost in Iraq in 3 years. The death rate is six times higher for underage drinking.

Another death rate that is six times higher is alcohol kills six times more young people than all other drugs combined: heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana. Six times more die from underage drinking.

Teens who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to