

In closing, as I always do, I have signed over 10,000 letters to families who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq because I was not strong enough to vote my conscience on the request by the Bush administration to go into Iraq. I have asked God to forgive me by signing these letters, and I think He has forgiven me.

God, please continue to bless our men and women in uniform. God, continue to bless the families of our men and women in uniform. God, in Your loving arms hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. God, please bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right in Your eyes for this country. God, please continue to bless the leader of our country. Let him know that he is doing what is right in Your eyes. Three times I ask God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

FAST AND FURIOUS AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENT STONEWALLING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when most people think of smuggling, they envision outlaws recklessly sneaking guns, contraband, and money to other outlaws.

Most people would never imagine that the government of the greatest Nation in the world would be engaged in helping a criminal smuggling operation by sending guns and money to narcoterrorists south of our border.

No, this isn't a Hollywood movie. Unfortunately, this has become a reality in Washington, D.C.

□ 1030

The Justice Department, with the aid of the ATF, facilitated the smuggling of over 2,000 weapons to the drug cartels south of the border—the national enemy in Mexico. Reports indicate those weapons were used to kill at least 200 Mexican nationals and two U.S. law enforcement agents.

The Justice Department appears to have gone wild. Instead of enforcing the law, rogue operatives in the Department of Justice seemed to be recklessly encouraging violations of law. Who's responsible for this conduct?

Over a year has gone by since the murder of Brian Terry, border agent, and we still don't know who was in charge. Brian Terry was murdered by one of those Fast and Furious guns. The Attorney General said he was unaware of Fast and Furious. He claims that he either didn't get the memo, or maybe he didn't read the memo.

Well, according to the latest of group of emails sent over to Congress, he did get the email. According to emails sent to Congress Friday night, Arizona U.S. Attorney Dennis Burke notified Eric Holder's deputy chief of staff—via email—about Brian Terry's murder hours after it happened. Later that

day, he notified the Department of Justice that the murder weapon was from Fast and Furious. Imagine that. Holder's staff member implied that he alerted the Attorney General.

So who knew what and when? The Attorney General apparently knew not days or months but hours after that murder occurred. Did he, the Attorney General, know about this operation? Did he approve it? In any event, the Attorney General should resign because it all happened under his watch. He is the one in charge of the Justice Department.

When he appeared before the House Judiciary Committee in December, the Attorney General also told me that he did not know who in his department was responsible for making the decision of Operation Fast and Furious. So is the Attorney General now claiming there is a rogue operation of moles in the Department of Justice that authorized and carried out these smuggling missions? We want to find out.

To coin a phrase from then Senator Hillary Clinton on another subject, the fact that he did not know about this massive operation requires a "willing suspension of disbelief."

The Attorney General is the chief lawyer and law enforcement officer in the country. Whoever did know about this and approved it may have violated U.S. or international law. They need to be held accountable even if it means somebody goes to jail. But that is not the case.

The rogue criminals responsible for carrying out Fast and Furious still work in the Justice Department. These individuals have not been fired or criminally prosecuted for their reckless actions. Some have actually been promoted or transferred. It all looks like an organized, deceitful attempt to hide the stench of Fast and Furious from the American people.

Apparently, the Department of Justice believes in order to catch a criminal, you have to be like a criminal. We need an independent special counsel appointed by the President to investigate the Justice Department and the ATF.

The Department of Justice cannot be trusted to investigate themselves because the agency has lost credibility on this issue. The DOJ has stonewalled providing information to Congress. If the DOJ has nothing to hide, why do they keep hiding information from us? The Justice Department has to be removed from investigating Fast and Furious. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, this would look like a bunch of burglars sitting on a jury trying a burglary case. That would sort of look bad; wouldn't it?

People died in this reckless, misguided operation. We owe it to the American people and the people of Mexico to get to the bottom of this.

In many States when a person commits an offense, if he recklessly causes the death of an individual, the definition of that offense is called man-

slaughter. Even Washington insiders responsible for Fast and Furious cannot hide from the long arm of American justice because, Mr. Speaker, justice is what we do in this country.

And that's just the way it is.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS UNDER ATTACK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHILLING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHILLING. As we all know, Mr. Speaker, last week was the March for Life here in Washington. Now, as a father of 10, life is a big issue in my house. It's a big issue in other homes and businesses throughout the United States. Thousands of Americans, including some residents of my district, traveled from all corners of the country last week to express their support for the right to life for each human being, to express the desire and passion they have for the born and the unborn.

Just a couple of days later, on Sunday morning, once we had all returned to Illinois, my family and I headed off to church, as we normally do. We sat in the pew and listened to the priest's homily. He read us a letter written by the Bishop of the Diocese of Peoria:

"In the history of the United States, Friday, January 20, 2012, will certainly stand out as a moment of enormous peril for religious liberty," the letter reads, referring to the date the Department of Health and Human Services announced that religious organizations will be forced to provide employees with insurance programs that provide abortifacients, contraceptive services, and sterilization.

The letter continues:

"If these regulations are put into effect, they could close down every Catholic school, hospital, and other public ministries of our church, which is perhaps their underlying intention. What is perfectly clear is that this is a bigoted and blatant attack on the First Amendment rights of every Catholic believer. Under no circumstances, however, will our church ever abandon our unshakable commitment to the gospel of life."

I later learned that this was one of more than 120 letters that bishops had read from the pulpit at masses across the United States.

The letter written by the Bishop of Marquette reads:

"The Federal Government, which claims to be 'of, by, and for the people,' has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful."

It later says:

"Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores to help build America's cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture only to have their posterity stripped of their God-given rights."