

1791. As a lifelong defender of Second Amendment freedoms, I am committed to ensuring that any new proposals considered in Washington do not infringe upon the constitutionally guaranteed rights of law-abiding citizens.

In the wake of devastating tragedies, well-meaning people feel compelled to do something, and the government, likewise, to intercede. But good intentions don't often make good or constitutional laws, and they certainly are no match for those set on being lawless.

The Second Amendment reads:

A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

If the text alone were not explicit, our Founding Fathers clarified the purpose of the Second Amendment. James Madison wrote, in *Federalist No. 46*, that Americans possess:

the advantage of being armed over the people of almost every other nation whose governments are afraid to trust the people with arms.

Even more applicable to our current situation is this excerpt referenced by Thomas Jefferson, which reads:

Laws that forbid the carrying of arms disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants.

The rush to action in the wake of tragedies sadly heaps the price of criminal wrongdoing onto law-abiding, responsible gun owners. When such is the case, government flirts with construing the desire to exercise Second Amendment rights as suspect behavior, it deems some Second Amendment utilities superior to others, and it ignores the root causes of mass violence, focusing instead on the means by which violence is accomplished. Those mistakes must never be made. Federal proposals must be well-thought, data-driven, and constitutionally sound.

The right to keep and bear arms is not one for hunters and sportsmen alone. For centuries, it has been a right for every American citizen to arm themselves to defend their property and the people they hold dear. And it is a right that cannot be infringed.

#### MEDICAID EXPANSION

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

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I can't resist saying the Second Amendment right does not preclude background checks to protect the very people we represent.

Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court ruling last summer on the Affordable Care Act was a victory for all American families—and small businesses especially—by ensuring that our constituents have access to affordable, quality health insurance.

The ruling preserved the integrity of Medicaid partnerships between the

States and the Federal Government, giving Governors the option of accepting the Federal Government's generous offer to pay the cost for expanding coverage of low-income residents who might otherwise not have access to health insurance.

Though some of my Republican colleagues remain opposed to the act, I'm pleased to see Republican Governors, including those from Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and now Governor Kasich in Ohio, putting policy ahead of politics to support this expansion of Medicaid. Those Governors have acknowledged that they were motivated not only by the desire to reduce the number of uninsured, but also by the compelling business case.

Medicaid expansion is part of the vision for a new continuum of coverage that will begin in 2014, when the major provisions from the Affordable Care Act take effect. This will fill the long-standing gap in Medicaid coverage for low-income adults by expanding eligibility for those earning up to 133 percent of the Federal poverty level.

As of 2011, there were 48 million non-elderly uninsured in America. As an incentive for States to expand coverage for those folks, the ACA commits the Federal Government to paying 100 percent of the additional costs of covering them, and after 2016, 90 percent thereafter.

I wrote the Republican Governor of my State and the General Assembly membership urging them to join us in extending this critical health care coverage. The Virginia General Assembly is currently divided on the matter, but I was encouraged last week by the announcement from our Republican Lieutenant Governor, who said:

There is no State better prepared to move forward with this reform and the coverage expansion of it than the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Like me, Lieutenant Governor Bolling understands the economic benefits for Virginia. Expanding Medicaid will help 300,000 Virginians get access to health care coverage who currently have none and invariably wind up accessing health care through the most expensive portal there is: the emergency room. The cost of that uncompensated care is, of course, borne today by hospitals and those who are insured through their premiums.

The Governor's Advisory Commission on Health Reform said expanding Medicaid, coupled with other reforms in the act, would reduce uncompensated care in Virginia by more than half. Under the Affordable Care Act, Virginia would receive more than \$9.2 billion in the first 5 years. A recent State analysis shows that during that same time period Virginia would actually save \$300 million by expanding coverage. And Virginia's costs for the first 10 years, now estimated at \$137 million, are considerably less than originally estimated and a great return on that investment.

Time is running out, and our residents cannot afford for States to miss

this opportunity. In fact, I believe they would be making such a historic mistake that I am proposing an additional incentive to help motivate those Governors who might not yet still be convinced.

This week I introduced the Medicaid Expansion Incentive Act. This simple bill adds a "use it or lose it" provision. If a State doesn't want to expand Medicaid coverage, then we will ship those dollars to other States who are willing to partner with us to help defray costs and expand their coverage.

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Just so the residents of a particular State are fully aware of how their Governor's decision is affecting them, my bill will require HHS to publicize the list of States that are not partnering with us and giving up this opportunity and the amount of money their Governor has left on the table and the number of uninsured people who will thereby not be covered.

The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, and residents of any State should not be penalized because of their Governor's ideological agenda. The choices we face are momentous. Will we move forward together to implement these historic reforms and reverse the unsustainable trajectory of spiraling prices, or will we let slip this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help those most in need, realize savings, and spur economic activity? I hope more Republican Governors, including my own, will follow the leader of their colleagues elsewhere and put their citizens' health ahead of partisan orthodoxy.

#### U VISA REFORM ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000, Congress created the U Visa program as a way to allow illegal immigrant crime victims a temporary—a temporary—legal status in order to assist law enforcement in the prosecution of their assailant, which has helped bring thousands of criminals to justice.

However, over time, the U Visa has become a pathway to citizenship for essentially everyone who applies. The rampant abuse of this program is detrimental to law-abiding individuals who seek to immigrate to our country through the proper legal channels.

We are a Nation of immigrants, and we are also a Nation built upon respect for the rule of law. Our heritage and our principles demand of us the courage to reform our broken immigration system so that those who follow the law and want to contribute to the betterment of our Nation will have the opportunity to do so.

That is why I have introduced the U Visa Reform Act of 2013 to stop abuses in the U Visa program. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this commonsense piece of legislation.