

## The Cost of Gun Violence: Can We Stop It?

Written by Admin

Wednesday, 06 February 2013 00:00

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Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, a member of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force and a Senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee recently held one of the largest Field Briefings in Houston, Texas dealing with gun violence. The Field Briefing was entitled "THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE: CAN WE STOP IT?" The Congresswoman was joined by officials from the FBI, DEA, ATF and over 15 local police departments along with many other social groups involved in the issue of gun violence.

Over one million people have been killed with guns in the United States since 1968. U.S. homicide rates are 6.9 times higher than rates in 22 other populous high-income countries combined, despite similar non-lethal crime and violence rates. Most gun owners are responsible and law-abiding, and they use their guns safely. We must begin discussing common-sense steps we can take right now to combat gun violence. This vital briefing will be held to provide important perspectives on the federal discussion regarding solutions to gun violence and the appropriate methods for gun regulation. I have introduced HR 65, the Child Gun Safety and Gun Access Prevention Act and I have co-sponsored other gun safety legislation while in Congress. Many in the law enforcement community have expressed support for my legislation.

The community in Newtown, Connecticut – along with the rest of the country - is still reeling from the inconceivable tragedy that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012; our hearts still ache with sadness and disbelief for the families and loved ones of the children and women who lost their lives in this senseless act of violence. Before we could even convene hearings in this District, Lone Star College community was hit with recent gun violence and it is safe to say that America is sick and tired of being sick and tired of gun violence.

Although the shooting on the Lone Star campus was not as deadly and tragic as that which occurred in Colorado last summer or in Newtown last month—the brazenness of the attack was shocking to me and I'm sure to most of you. As a parent you ask yourself if I send my kid to

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college to learn, grow, and become a better person, and she is still subject to random violence—it must be a sad day at the Little Red School House.

Ironically, I learned of the shooting here in Houston while I was speaking in the Capitol to a packed audience about the effect of prevention programs on youth violence. As the founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus and a senior Member of the Judiciary Committee, I have listened far too often to the tragic testimony of individuals who have survived or lost loved ones as a result of gun violence.

In America there exists a pernicious culture of violence; a subculture that with today's technologically advanced weaponry is far more dangerous to public safety than ever before. At no point in our nation's history has a single human been more capable of inflicting massive death and misery, and our society is producing more individuals who wish to employ such means to carry out their ill intentions.

Far too often, the tool of choice for would-be killers is a firearm. Moreover, military-style assault weapons with high-capacity magazines are not just in the hands of our men and women in the armed services; they are on our streets. Many of them are in the wrong hands, and end up being the highly efficient tools of criminals and mass murderers.

Reversing the disturbing trends of youth violence is going to take the concerted, sustained effort, collaboration and leadership of Members of Congress, the President, school boards and officials, local governments and law enforcement, and parents across this nation. I commend the President for convening a Gun Violence Task Force, and Vice President Biden for his outstanding leadership. The President and Vice President have developed and issued policy recommendations, and as Members of Congress, we need to act upon

This Field Briefing was attended by over 300 people. It was decided that we must take on this challenge with the recognition that changing the pervasive culture of gun violence will not happen overnight. While we can act now and pass legislation to ameliorate some of causes of the youth violence epidemic, this problem is larger than our laws. That is why we must make an enduring commitment to our youth. We must work tirelessly to create an environment in this country that lifts the psychological burden of violence off the shoulders of our kids. {comments on}