

I agree with President Obama's comments yesterday on the tragic epidemic of gun violence that all Americans face. Congress and through it, America has been paralyzed on this issue for far too long.

I strongly support the President taking action strengthening the current background check system for purchasing firearms, working with mental health professionals to help them know their rights about reporting credible threats of violence, and helping schools develop emergency preparedness plans. These are common sense reforms that can and should be acted on immediately.

Congress must also heed the President's call for legislative action, including implementing a universal gun purchasing background check, restoring a ban on military-style assault weapons, and a passing 10-round limit for magazines. Congress should also strengthen laws that punish people who buy guns with the express purpose of selling them to criminals. As a member of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, we are working to develop a number of these proposals as part of comprehensive policy recommendations to reduce gun violence.

It is important that the President framed the issue of gun violence as a public health crisis, which it is. Congress should move immediately to end the freeze on gun violence research as it relates to public health. For years, Congress has subjected the Center for Disease Control to restrictions ensuring it does not "advocate or promote gun control." This has been interpreted as a restriction on the CDC from conducting any research on the causes of gun violence. I applaud the President's interpretation that public health research on gun violence is not advocacy. I hope Congress will provide the necessary resources to the CDC to fund research on the cause and effects of gun violence, and permanently eliminate any language restricting research from our laws.

By treating the epidemic of gun violence as we would any other public health disaster, we will finally make progress in reversing America's shameful record as the deadliest nation in the world. I refuse to believe that so many more die in the United States because Americans as a people are more mentally unbalanced, reckless or violent than the rest of the world. Instead, I think our politicians are more cowardly and shortsighted and the power of special interests paralyzes the political system. The President's modest but important proposals are a step in breaking that paralysis.