

*Today, Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05) called on his colleagues in the House of Representatives to find the courage to stop listening to the gun lobby and start listening to the American people in order to address the growing problem of gun violence in America.*

*Below is video and a transcription of this speech.*

Albert Einstein once said “the world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

Madame Speaker, we have looked on and done nothing. We in this body, we in this Congress, we in this government, have done nothing.

Nothing to protect the innocent lives of 20 defenseless children gunned down in Connecticut last Friday.

Nothing to protect the 87 people killed each day from guns across America.

Nothing to stop the epidemic of senseless gun violence that plagues not only our major cities like New York and Chicago, but countless small towns throughout our nation - towns with names like Newtown, Aurora, Tuscon, Dekalb, Blacksburg, and Littleton.

In the nearly four years I have been a member of this body, this House has not held a single hearing, not one, to address gun violence, while over 30,000 Americans die each year from gun violence, while over 400 lives have been lost to gun violence in my hometown of Chicago. People are dying every day, and we in this body have been afraid to even talk about it.

This crisis demands our action. The time has come for us to stop listening to the gun lobby and start listening to the American people.

The fact is a majority of Americans, gun owning and not, desire common sense, reasonable gun regulations. Congress must no longer stand in the way of reasonable regulation. Instead, we must champion it.

The American people want to see background checks required on all firearm purchases instead of the fraction of sales that get them today. Forty percent of U.S. gun sales are by private sellers who are not required to perform background checks. You could be a three time convicted felon, a serial domestic abuser, severely mentally ill, or even on the terrorist watch list and still go to a gun show or go on the internet and buy whatever gun you want.

The American people want to strengthen databases to prevent the mentally ill from buying guns, but over a million disqualifying mental health records are still missing from the national background check database. Ten states have failed to flag a single person as mentally ill in their database, and 17 other states list fewer than 100 people.

Many Americans want to see the assault weapons ban reinstated to keep military weapons off our streets and large capacity ammunition clips banned to keep dangerous ammunition out of the hands of madmen. Let's face it. When you put a 30 round clip in an assault weapon, you're not protecting your home. You're not hunting deer. You are hunting people.

We have hid from this fight for too long. For too long we have used politics and the Second Amendment to cover up our lack of action. Yes, the Supreme Court affirmed that we have a right to bear arms, but in that same ruling the Court made clear that the right is not unlimited.

"We do not," as Justice Scalia put it, "have an unlimited right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose."

Our individual right to bear arms is limited by our right, among others, to keep our children safe. Any of those children could have been one of our children. And for 20 parents, it was.

We may not be able to stop every crime. We know that no single law or set of laws can prevent every act of senseless violence in our society. But we have the ability and the know-how to prevent many of them.

We must simply find the courage. We can no longer be bystanders to injustice. We cannot continue to look on and do nothing.

As Shakespeare said, "the fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves."

We must act.

