

Senator Johnson offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 89.

A resolution to commemorate September 9, 2015, as Standing For Peace and Justice Day.

Whereas, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2010, killers used guns to murder 11,000 people in the United States, the latest year for which statistics are available. The same year, 20,000 others used guns to commit suicide, and 73,000 were rushed to hospital emergency rooms for gunshot wounds. Gun violence has claimed the lives of more than 30,000 men, women, and children in recent years. Doctors and public health specialists say gun violence is at epidemic levels, calling it a major public health threat; and

Whereas, The Doctors for America organization, headquartered in Washington, D.C., has stated that every day 87 people die, and over 180 are injured due to gunshot wounds; and

Whereas, The above statistics may not even capture the number of inner-city youth who are killed daily. While homicide is the leading cause of death among young African-American males between 14-34 years of age, such information is rarely included in the national debate about the epidemic of gun violence in America; and

Whereas, According to a 2013 report by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), in 2010, 2,694 children and teens died from guns in the United States--one child or teen every three hours and 15 minutes, seven every day, 51 every week for a year. In 2010, more than six times as many children and teens--18,270--suffered nonfatal gun injuries as gun deaths. This is equal to one child or teen every 30 minutes, 50 every day, and 351 children and teens every week; and

Whereas, State legislative bodies all across America have become stages for protest and wrenching testimony from families of people cut down by bullets, juxtaposed to lawmakers sparring over Second Amendment freedoms. All across this country, tens of thousands of voiceless parents have lost and are losing their children and loved ones to senseless violence, without our elected representatives proactively and responsibly addressing this issue; and

Whereas, In an effort to protect our citizens, including our children, from unnecessary harm and injury, in the 1970s, the federal government created the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Products of all types must meet standards set by the CPSC, except guns. In 1976, an amendment to the Consumer Product Safety Act specifically stated that the Commission shall make no ruling or order that restricts the manufacture or sale of guns or gun ammunition. As a result, the CPSC can regulate teddy bears and toy guns, but not real guns, despite the fact that they are one of the most lethal consumer products; and

Whereas, America has laws that protect our children from products, activities, or situations that may cause them harm or injury before they reach a certain level of maturity--called the age of majority--which is, in most cases, 18 or 21 years of age. We make it illegal for them to purchase substances such as alcohol and tobacco. We limit activities such as driving, serving in the military, and even marriage without parental consent, but we haven't done enough to protect children, teens, and young adults from access to illegal guns; and

Whereas, For over 30 years, homicide--primarily gun violence--has been the leading cause of death among African-American boys and young men between the ages of 14-34 years and is the second-leading cause of death among Latino youth in the same age group; and

Whereas, Urban communities of color overwhelmingly bear the brunt of day-to-day gun violence in America, yet the U.S. Department of Justice's final report titled "Vision 21," calling for reform to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), clearly identifies African-American boys and men and their families as among the victims of crime populations in America who are underserved, encounter barriers to accessing services, and are most frequently denied services; and

Whereas, In February of 2014, President Barack Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper Initiative in response to "America's mass numbness" to the plight of young black boys and young men; and

Whereas, Congress allowed the 1994 ban on assault weapons to sunset in 2004, due to a drop in gun deaths and despite broad public support for the ban--71 percent of responders to a survey favored the ban; and

Whereas, The U.S. Congress has willfully and consistently blocked the effectiveness of the CDC by cutting and blocking funding to this agency to support research into the behavioral, mental health, and social-economic issues that contribute to the homicide and gun violence crisis in America. As well, Congress has consistently underfunded and instituted structural restrictions that prevent the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from effectively and comprehensively carrying out its role of oversight of the firearms industry; and

Whereas, The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act was passed by Congress and signed into law on October 26, 2005, by President George W. Bush and became Public Law 109-92. This law effectively prevents victims of firearms violence in the United States from successfully suing manufacturers and dealers for negligence; thereby closing another avenue by which victims sought to get redress for suffering the senseless murders of their loved ones. The purpose of the act is to prevent firearms manufacturers and dealers from being held liable when crimes have been committed with their products; and

Whereas, For over 30 years, Congress has consistently blocked the passage of numerous bills that would constitute sensible gun laws to protect the American public--including our children--and significantly curtail the proliferation of and access to illegal guns in America. Such laws include:

- Requirement to report lost and stolen guns.
- Enactment of an assault weapons and high-capacity magazine ban.
- Closing the Gun Show Loophole by enacting S. 843 and H.R. 2324.
- Closing the Fire Sale Loophole by enacting H.R. 6664.
- Repeal of the Tiahrt Amendment which restricts access of state and local law enforcement to gun trace data.

; and

Whereas, In addition to the prevalence of individual murders, according to a report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2014, from December 2000 to 2013, there were 160 active-shooter incidents, i.e., mass murders, in which 1,043 people in the U.S. were wounded or killed by active shooters attempting to kill people in confined and populated areas. The most deadly were the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, in which 32 people were killed and 17 wounded; and the Aurora, Colorado, massacre in 2012, in which 12 people were killed and 58 wounded in a movie theater. These mass murder numbers include our national shame and anguish when 20 young children were massacred in 2012 at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut; as well as the 2011 tragedy near Tucson, Arizona, when then-U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head, 12 other people were seriously wounded, and six people were murdered by a deranged gunman. These four mass shootings are only a small percentage of the precious lives that have been tragically interrupted or lost due to mass murders by assault weapons; and

Whereas, The National League of Cities (NLC), which represents and advocates for 19,000 cities, towns, and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans, has called upon Congress and the Administration to rethink public safety in our country. The NLC has also crafted a National Municipal Policy on Public Safety; and

Whereas, Cities United, launched by Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, is the crime prevention arm of the National League of Cities and, as such, has launched a national effort to reduce violent deaths among African-American males. Its vision is that mayors and other municipal leaders across the country will form partnerships with other local officials, community leaders, families, youth, funders, and other stakeholders within their respective cities to champion strategies that reduce violence and violence-related deaths among African-American boys and men; and

Whereas, The United States Congress has failed to enact measures that would protect the First Amendment rights of all American citizens--the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we commemorate September 9, 2015, as Standing For Peace and Justice Day; and be it further

Resolved, That we declare homicide in America as a national health crisis and demand that our duly-elected members of Congress come together in a bipartisan manner to address this crisis--to enact legislation and promote policies that protect the rights of all Americans to live in safe environments, free from random and needless gun violence.