

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to offer my deepest sympathies to the victims and their families who suffered the horrific shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech on Monday morning. My thoughts and prayers go out to them, the students, faculty and staff of the university.

Virginia Tech is one of the largest schools in Virginia, providing higher education to more than 28,000 students. The effects of this tragedy can be felt all across the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the Halls of Congress and in every corner of this Nation. I represent hundreds of Virginia Tech families, perhaps thousands of alumni, and members of my staff have friends and family who currently attend Virginia Tech.

Schools are meant to be sanctuaries of learning and, most importantly, sanctuaries of safety. Parents who send their children off to college with all the potential that a college education represents should be content that their children will be safe.

As we mourn with the Virginia Tech community, this Congress must explore every possible avenue towards determining what can be done to prevent this kind of tragedy in the future, whether in high schools or college campuses or on business premises or other places where people may congregate. Yet we must be realistic. From what we are hearing regarding this tragic incident, it is not clear that any law would have been effective in deterring the kind of senseless acts that occurred. Anyone willing to indiscriminately shoot down innocent people and then kill themselves afterwards would not likely be deterred by any law. Nonetheless, we must work

with our colleges and universities in developing ways to anticipate, identify and prevent any such threats that we can. Some evidence is emerging that indicates that there may have been signs of mental disturbances in the alleged shooter, and this may suggest information which could lead to things to look at to avoid these tragedies in the future.

But, Mr. Speaker, today we stand together to wish a speedy recovery for the injured and to mourn with the families of the victims who died in this horrific tragedy. Virginia Tech is and will remain one of the Commonwealth of Virginia's finest institutions of higher learning, and its proud traditions will carry on beyond this darkest hour. This event will be with the students, faculty and staff of Virginia Tech for the rest of their lives, but we must not let tragedies like this stop people from living their dreams. I hope that some day all members of the Virginia Tech community will be able to celebrate life and learning on the campus again.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce into the *Record* the powerful statement presented at the service yesterday at Virginia Tech by Nikki Giovanni. That service was attended by nine of the eleven members of the Virginia delegation to Congress and both of our U.S. Senators. So I will insert that statement into the *Record*

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Transcription of Nikki Giovanni's Convocation address

Delivered April 17, 2007

"We are Virginia Tech.

We are sad today, and we will be sad for quite a while. We are not moving on, we are embracing our mourning.

We are Virginia Tech.

We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly, we are brave enough to bend to cry, and we are sad enough to know that we must laugh again.

We are Virginia Tech.

We do not understand this tragedy. We know we did nothing to deserve it, but neither does a child in Africa dying of AIDS, neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by the rogue army, neither does the baby elephant watching his community being devastated for ivory, neither does

the Mexican child looking for fresh water, neither does the Appalachian infant killed in the middle of the night in his crib in the home his father built with his own hands being run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized. No one deserves a tragedy.

We are Virginia Tech.

The Hokie Nation embraces our own and reaches out with open heart and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds. We are strong, and brave, and innocent, and unafraid. We are better than we think and not quite what we want to be. We are alive to the imaginations and the possibilities. We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.

We are the Hokies.

We will prevail.

We will prevail.

We will prevail.

We are Virginia Tech."

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.