

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. CON. RES. 15

Calling on the media to engage in responsible and voluntary journalistic practices to deny mass public murderers the attention they desire and minimize any possible “media contagion effect” of irresponsible and sensationalistic reporting practices.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 18, 2023

Mr. LEE submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Calling on the media to engage in responsible and voluntary journalistic practices to deny mass public murderers the attention they desire and minimize any possible “media contagion effect” of irresponsible and sensationalistic reporting practices.

Whereas all acts of mass public murder are shameful, cowardly, sickening, and hereby condemned;

Whereas many mass public murderers have openly stated their intention to commit mass murder to gain notoriety, infamy, and affect changes in public policy;

Whereas the United States media widely publicizes these murderers’ names, photographs, life stories, motivations,

social media posts, and manifestos, giving criminals the notoriety and infamy they desire;

Whereas media coverage of a mass public murderer routinely outweighs the coverage of the victims;

Whereas many mass public murderers have researched, studied, and idolized past acts of violence using the sensationalistic coverage provided by many media outlets;

Whereas peer reviewed research adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that current media coverage practices concerning mass public shootings demonstrably increase the likelihood of future mass public murders, including—

(1) a 2016 study entitled “Mass Shootings and the Media Contagion Effect” published by the American Psychological Association, which suggests a media contagion effect;

(2) a 2017 study entitled “Mass Shootings: The Role of the Media in Promoting Generalized Imitation” published in the American Journal of Public Health, which suggests a generalized imitation effect; and

(3) a 2022 study entitled “News coverage and mass shootings in the U.S.” published in the European Economic Review, which suggests a behavioral contagion mechanism;

Whereas research by the Violence Project suggests that mass public shootings are linked to and may be a form of suicide; and

Whereas the media has found ways to responsibly and voluntarily limit coverage of other sensitive topics such as suicide, kidnapping, and national security for the common good: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
2 *concurring)*, That Congress calls upon the media to volun-
3 tarily and responsibly—

4 (1) cover mass public murderers with the simi-
5 lar sensitivity as other forms of suicide completion,
6 with the understanding that a media contagion ef-
7 fect may encourage additional tragedies;

8 (2) prioritize memorialization and coverage of
9 the names, faces, and life stories of innocent victims
10 killed or injured in a mass public murder;

11 (3) prioritize coverage of the heroism of any law
12 enforcement, first responders, or bystanders that in-
13 tervene, interrupt the attack, kill or subdue the mass
14 public murderer, or otherwise assist the victims with
15 critical medical assistance;

16 (4) minimize harm by implementing policies
17 and procedures to deny mass public murderers the
18 infamy, notoriety, and public platform they desire;

19 (5) deny mass public murderers their publicity-
20 related motives and intended goals, such as the pro-
21 motion of a particular ideology or public policy
22 change;

23 (6) not name suspected public murderers, ex-
24 cept when the alleged assailant is still at large and
25 it would aid in the suspect's capture;

1 (7) not publish photos of a suspected public
2 murderer, except when the alleged assailant is still
3 at large and it would aid in the suspect's capture;

4 (8) avoid utilizing flattering social media profile
5 pictures and other imagery the mass public mur-
6 derer proudly took of themselves, shared with others,
7 or posted on social media;

8 (9) refrain from naming mass public murderers
9 in headlines and from displaying photos of mass
10 public murderers above the fold of any print copy or
11 at the top of any website's home page; and

12 (10) promote data and analysis in mental
13 health, criminology, public safety, self-defense, secu-
14 rity, and other relevant professions to support fur-
15 ther steps to help eliminate the motivations behind
16 mass public murder and deter future attacks.

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