

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL WELCOME AND CONVERSATIONS

CHELLIE PINGREE

Aspen

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHELLIE PINGREE  
US Representative (D-ME)

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CHELLIE PINGREE

MS. PINGREE: My name is Chellie Pingree. I'm a member of Congress from Maine, birthplace of Louis Rice (phonetic). At about 11:30 on Wednesday morning along with Congressman John Lewis of Georgia and a handful of my colleagues, I sat down on the floor of the House of Representatives.

(Applause)

MS. PINGREE: You're cutting into my time.

(Laughter)

MS. PINGREE: My big idea is that no one should fear being shot just because that day they happened to be in a movie theatre, a church, a nightclub, or god forbid, an elementary school.

On Wednesday our small group grew to include nearly all of the Democrats in the House. Members took turn sitting, speaking, listening and eating a lot of cold pizza, Chinese food and doughnuts.

The Republicans chose to leave the floor, turned off the C-SPAN cameras and the microphones. But then something kind of magical happened (Technical difficulty) sometimes is a way of standing up. And then some of the newer members taught John Lewis what periscope was.

(Laughter)

MS. PINGREE: That you could broadcast video from your iPhone and suddenly the world was watching. My colleagues told very personal stories of gun violence taking a good friend, their brother, their sister. In the early morning hours one member brought in the five bullets that had once been extracted from her body and she described the physical scars that she now carried. Over and over I heard my normally staid colleague say: "I have never spoken about this in public." There were tears and pain and raw emotions.

No one believes that there is just one solution that could cure the rampage of gun violence in our country. All we were asking for in those 24 hours was the chance to do our jobs, to debate and discuss, to take some votes on the floor.

So my big idea is really a simple idea: that we don't fix the problem until we can at least name it. And the problem is that it's all too common for a normal day to be shattered by the sound of an assault rifle and we've given up thinking we can do something about it.

So sometimes sitting down is the best idea you've got. Sometimes sitting down and stopping the action is the only way to give Americans a chance to share their big ideas. Thank you.

(Applause)

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