

Opinion: Was Saturday's rampage really unimaginable?

By Laurie Roberts

On Saturday, Gov. Jan Brewer stepped before the podium outside the old state Capitol to speak to a nation looking at us, and perhaps to us, for answers. Like every Arizonan, she was shaken. Like all of us, she was shocked and straining to understand how such horror could happen in our beloved state.

“(It is) an unbelievable tragedy that the people of Arizona experienced today,” she said. “One of which, of course, in our worst nightmares we ... never could have imagined would have taken place.”

Couldn't we?

On Monday, Brewer will step before the podium and open the 2011 session of the Arizona Legislature. A Legislature that has slashed funding for the seriously mentally ill. A Legislature that has loosened gun laws to the point that any nutball can legally walk around with a pistol in his pants.

We don't yet know what role, if any, the actions of the Legislature played in what happened on Saturday. But if ever there was a time to re-examine the cliff we are headed toward, this tragedy certainly provides it.

“We're the Tombstone of the United States of America,” Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik said on Sunday and really, who could disagree.

The first bill filed for the legislative session that gets underway Monday is Senate Bill 2001, which would allow faculty members to pack heat on Arizona's college campuses and to heck with what the police think about the idea. The bill's sponsor,

Sen. Jack Harper, R-Glendale, didn't return a call to talk about it in light of this weekend's events.

Laurie Roberts is a columnist for the Arizona Republic.

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