

health care equipment that they need. Furthermore, unqualified bids from firms that are unlicensed to service contracts create significant distortions of the bid prices in every bidding area nationwide.

I'm extremely concerned that mishandling of the bidding process is going to have a devastating impact on Medicare beneficiaries. This is a serious issue that warrants a full review of the process and a delay of round two until this fatally flawed program is fixed.

I encourage my colleague to join me and Congressman BRUCE BRALEY in co-signing a letter to the Medicare administrator requesting an administrative delay of the durable medical equipment competitive bidding program. This is absolutely necessary to ensure that older adults have access to the equipment that they require to live at home with independence and dignity. It also is about jobs as one of the unintended consequences, I believe, but it is still a devastating consequence regarding how the implementation of round two will continue to see the loss of small businesses all throughout this great Nation. And so I just encourage my colleagues to join Congressman BRALEY and I in signing this letter to the Medicare administrator.

HOW MANY MORE CHILDREN HAVE TO DIE?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, it has now been almost 6 months since the tragedy of Newtown. The American response to that tragedy was quick and overwhelming. And yet, we have done nothing to prevent such a tragedy from happening again.

In fact, many of my colleagues here in this institution seem all too ready to forget Newtown and the gun violence epidemic that is devastating families and communities across our country every single day.

According to Slate's gun-death tracker, an estimated 4,620 people have died as a result of gun violence in America since Newtown—4,620 people.

In 12 U.S. States, gun deaths now outpace auto deaths.

A new analysis from the Violence Policy Center found that in 2010, there were 31,672 firearm deaths and 35,498 motor vehicle deaths, compared with 1999, when there were 28,000 firearm deaths and 42,000 motor vehicle deaths, which is startling considering more than 90 percent of the American households own a car while less than one-third of American households own a gun.

We require auto manufacturers to include safety features like seatbelts and airbags, and to pass crash safety tests, and lives are being saved as a result.

By 2015, gun deaths will outnumber auto deaths on a national scale. Think about that. More gun deaths than auto deaths, and we require all these pre-

cautions and restrictions on manufacturers to make sure our cars are safe and we do nothing—nothing—when it comes to gun manufacturers. Think about that. Mandatory safety measures, and auto manufacturers can be held liable for defects in their products. We expect cars to be built safely, but when it comes to guns, a product designed to kill, manufacturers have been given a free pass. They can't be held liable for the deaths and destruction their products may cause. We don't even require gun manufacturers to make guns child-safe.

How many more children have to die as a result of senseless gun violence and avoidable gun accidents? New York Times columnist Joe Nocera is producing a weekly "Gun Report" that compiles gun deaths and injuries from around the country. I'm going to read a few of the recent posts since Newtown that deal specifically with children.

A 2-year-old boy is dead after an accidental self-inflicted gunshot wound. Trenton Mathis shot himself in the face with a 9-millimeter pistol in a house in Cherokee County, Texas, while at home with his great-grandmother.

A 6-year-old girl was shot in the leg by her father during a boisterous party in Federal Heights, Colorado.

Joshua Johnson, 4, was playing with a gun at a Memphis apartment complex when it went off. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

A Garland, Texas, toddler was fatally shot in his home in what police are calling a tragic accident. Three-year-old John O'Brien was shot in the head with a handgun in front of his mother, father, and two young sisters. He was taken to Children's Medical Center in Dallas, where he later died from his injuries.

The 4-year-old son of a Jackson County, Michigan, sheriff's deputy accidentally shot and killed himself. Authorities say it happened around 5 p.m. in the deputy's home.

Michael Easter, a 3-year-old boy in Liberty Township, Michigan, died after he accidentally shot himself in the head while alone in his parents' bedroom. Police are unsure how the boy gained access to the gun. Michael was home with his mother and two sisters at the time.

A 3-year-old toddler accidentally shot himself in the head with a relative's gun but was listed in stable condition at a Nashville, Tennessee, hospital.

A teen boy accidentally shot and killed his 12-year-old brother in Orlando, Florida. The shooting happened at home in the Lake Nona area. Investigators said they are working to determine what led to the shooting.

A dad accidentally shot his son dead as he cleaned his gun in the family's living room. Christopher Stanlane, 34, was wiping down a loaded weapon in his home in Fairmont, North Carolina, when it discharged. His 10-year-old son, Christopher Stanlane, Jr., was watch-

ing television, and was struck in the back of his head with a bullet. His 8-year-old daughter was also in the room. The boy was pronounced dead at the scene.

How many more children have to die before Congress acts?

□ 1040

MORE CAN BE DONE FOR VETERANS ACROSS THE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCNERNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about the veterans' disability backlog, but this time on a positive note.

First I want to thank Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Committee Chair JOHN CULBERSON and Ranking Member SANFORD BISHOP for their work on the fiscal year 2014 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill and for including report language that my California colleague, Representative PAUL COOK, and I recommended to address the backlog of claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our veterans are heroes, and they deserve the benefits they've earned. The VA has set a goal of processing all disability claims within 125 days by the year 2015. This is an ambitious goal that deserves our attention as the agency works to meet its self-imposed deadline.

Unfortunately, too many VA regional offices across the country are underperforming by failing to process benefits claims for veterans in a timely manner. Recent data indicates that it takes 552 days, on average, for a claim to be processed at the VA's Oakland regional office, which serves the veterans in my district. This is unacceptable. While I'm pleased that the VA has made a concerted effort to improve accuracy and timeliness at the Oakland RO, more can be done for veterans across the Nation.

The VA has made a genuine effort to help veterans suffering from Agent Orange, posttraumatic stress, and to recognize the special needs of women veterans, among others. In addition, the VA recently announced it would mandate overtime at its regional offices and place a priority on claims pending for more than 1 year.

However, we must hold the VA accountable for its results. Additional oversight and accountability will not only benefit our Nation's veterans and their families, but it will allow Congress to ensure the VA has the resources it needs to properly support our heroes.

In addition to these efforts, I was joined by a bipartisan group of colleagues in requesting that the VA submit quarterly reports for each regional office where disability claims are pending for an average of 200 days or more.