

checks. This is a reform that the members of the Newtown community have asked our elected leaders to support. It is a reform supported by over 90 percent of the American people, and it is shameful that we have not yet had a chance to vote.

Yet, in spite of that obstruction and misinformation, these families and this community have refused to give up. On Tuesday, I was honored to again meet with several of the Newtown families as they traveled here to continue to lead the push for commonsense gun laws, and I'm honored that several members of that community of the Newtown Alliance are with us here in the gallery today.

In meeting with the families, I was given pictures of their loved ones that they've been handing out to elected officials from across the country.

This photo of school psychologist Mary Sherlach reads:

One of six educators who, on December 14, became first responders equipped with just their lives. Can you show the same courage with your vote?

On this card, we have a picture of Dylan Hockley, with these words:

Honor his life. Stand with us for change. Now is the time.

Here's the picture of precious Dylan Hockley.

With this card, we have the photo of 6-year-old Benjamin Wheeler, who asks:

What is worth doing?

Mr. Speaker, these words, these faces, these lives mark the call to action for Newtown. They mark the call to action in Hartford and Aurora, Chicago, Santa Monica, and every community torn apart by gun violence.

The sad truth is that this Congress has not met this call to action. This Congress has not shown the courage to pass commonsense gun reforms. But the good news is that it is not too late for this Congress to do better, and now is the time.

We must do better for Mary. We must do better for Dylan. We must do better for Benjamin and for Charlotte, for Daniel and Olivia, for Josephine, for Ana and for Madeleine, for Catherine, for Chase and for Jesse, for James, for Grace and for Emilie, for Jack, for Noah and for Caroline, for Jessica, for Avielle and for Allison, for Rachel, Dawn, and Anne Marie, for Lauren and Victoria.

We can and we must do better.

These families cannot forget and will not give up. Neither can we.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McHENRY). Members are reminded that it is not in order to refer to occupants of the gallery.

EXTEND TAMP COVERAGE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for those serving our

country in uniform, transitioning to civilian life can be a stressful process, especially when the transition is involuntary or unexpected.

Currently, the Transitional Assistance Management Program, or TAMP, offers 180 days of health care coverage to certain servicemembers transitioning from military service to help bridge the insurance gap until coverage can be secured through employment or outside the service.

In many instances, traumatic brain injury symptoms do not appear until 8 to 10 months after deployment, and it is important that these individuals have mental health care access during that time.

This week, during the debate over the National Defense Authorization Act, I've offered two amendments, one of which would extend the TAMP coverage for servicemembers by an additional 180 days for any treatment provided through telemedicine.

Through the expansion of telemedicine, we can offer greater access to health care while lowering the cost. It's time we fully utilize these new technologies, which is why I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment. This commonsense, zero-cost reform will help those who serve our country transition to civilian life without unnecessary burden or undue delay.

□ 1050

TIME FOR CONGRESS TO ACT IS LONG OVERDUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise to associate myself with the remarks of my dear colleague from Connecticut, ELIZABETH ESTY, who has done such a remarkable job in representing that district and especially the families of Newtown, Connecticut, in the aftermath of this horrific tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, the time for us to act is long overdue. The hard truth for the United States Congress is, as Congressman MIKE THOMPSON pointed out, since Newtown, 5,000 Americans have lost their lives at the point of a gun; 5,000 Americans since Newtown.

The United States Congress has a responsibility to act and do its constitutionally obligated desire to get this bill passed. Now, whether you believe this is the correct course of action or not, as the President said in his State of the Union message, you still have a responsibility to vote. This is a democracy. Every day that we delay a vote on this bipartisan bill, Congress is complicit—Congress is complicit—in the deaths of those American citizens who wait for action as Congress sits by as 5,000 more victims die at the point of a gun.

I commend the families of Newtown, and the whole world was heartened

when Mark Barton stepped out into the Rose Garden with the President of the United States and reiterated a phrase that has held them all together: that their hearts are broken, along with those of the entire world as we look down at this tragedy, but their spirit is not. And they are undaunted in their determination, driven by the memories of those teachers and administrators and students who died so tragically. They—both students and teachers—were willing to stand in the way of violence, and the United States Congress can't do its constitutional responsibility and stand up and vote?

All of us in America watched as the United States Senate, with families in the gallery, voted on background checks that 91 percent of the American people agree with, voted it down. No teacher in America could explain the next day how the vote was 54-46, and it lost. Citizens all across this country take heed: do not give up. Continue to fight this fight. Fight what's wrong with Congress about not taking votes when they should and about a system in the Senate where a majority prevails and a vote goes down because of the cloture rule, an arbitrary rule in the United States Senate.

The outrage has to start outside of this building because here in this building, people remain complicit in the acts that will only continue to take place if Congress does not take action.

PREVENTING FUTURE SHOOTING TRAGEDIES

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

Mr. BARBER. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we observe the sixth-month anniversary of the senseless and tragic murders at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We will never forget what happened in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012, just as we will never forget what happened in Tucson, in Oak Creek, Virginia Tech, Portland, Milwaukee, and Columbine. As we remember the precious lives lost, we must also renew our determination to work together to make sure that such a tragedy never happens again.

As a survivor of the Tucson shooting that took place on January 8, 2011, as a grandfather of children the same age as those who were slaughtered in Newtown, and as a Member of Congress, I am committed to taking the reasonable action to make sure that we prevent future deaths and injuries from such mass shootings.

After the awful shooting and deaths in Newtown, the Sunday following I was reading the newspaper about the tragedy, and I saw a photograph of one of the children that was killed. As I looked at that photograph of this little 6-year-old girl, looking back at me from that page was my granddaughter that was the same age. I have to tell you that I sobbed, along with my wife. I think no grandparent and no parent

in this country could have had any other reaction. We must take action here to make sure these mass shootings never occur again.

While there is no single answer to preventing mass shootings, we do know some things. We know, for example, that untreated or undiagnosed serious mental illness has been a factor in many of these tragedies. It's important to note as we say this that more than 95 percent of people with a mental illness never will commit a violent act. They are far more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators.

The young man who killed six people in Tucson and wounded 13 of us had displayed symptoms of mental illness for many, many months before the tragedy. He never received either a diagnosis or treatment. He ended up getting a diagnosis and treatment when he was in prison. I believe this and other such mass shootings could have been averted if the public was more aware of the indications of symptoms of mental illness and how to get help.

We must do more to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. We must invest in the early identification of mental illness and treatment programs. Sixty percent of people living in this country with mental illness are not receiving the care they need. We must do better. It is clear that we must expand mental health services and awareness for 100 percent of the individuals with mental illness in the country.

That's one of the reasons I introduced the Mental Health First Aid Act earlier this year with strong bipartisan support. This legislation would provide training to help first responders, educators, students, and the general public identify and respond to signs of mental illness.

This is just one of many actions we can take. You've heard of others from speakers before me today. There are many things we can and must do. Congress must act. I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand with me and the families of Newtown and of Tucson and all the other places where there have been mass shooting tragedies in the last 2 years and take action. We must act. We must do it now. The families of Newtown, Oak Creek, Aurora, Tucson, and across this Nation, are waiting for our answer. Will we answer? I hope we will do it, and do it soon.

MORE VALUE FROM DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 4 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Budget Committee hearing, we had Secretary Hagel and Joint Chief of Staff Dempsey walk us through the impossible position that the Department of Defense has been placed in.

Now, I'll be the first to admit—as I think they would; in fact, they said as much in the hearing—that there are areas of opportunity for additional savings, and that the Department of Defense can itself do a better job.

When you have almost half of the world's military spending by the United States, even though we are only 5 percent of the world's population and less than a quarter of the world's economic might, we can and should be able to squeeze more value. But the problem is not so much that the Department of Defense isn't willing to come forward with changes that need to be made; a great part of this problem is Congress itself.

□ 1100

I have proposed, from the Department of Defense, that we actually close bases, that we reform compensation and health care, that we don't force weapons systems on the Department of Defense that the military doesn't want or need. These are things that gets Congress weak in the knees. It's time for us to step up to make sure that we are having the world's most powerful military, but that we are squeezing more value out of it.

One critical area that needs greater attention is our nuclear deterrent. We have far more nuclear weapons than we'd ever want, need, or could use. It's been 68 years since the United States used a nuclear weapon in war; and no matter what you do in terms of deterrence, there's no question that we don't have to blow the world up hundreds of times over to have that deterrent work. Yet, sadly, we are poised to spend almost three-quarters of a trillion dollars over the next 10 years.

The administration was forced by former Senator Kyl, as a concession for the START Treaty, to invest even more in weapons modernization. We need to step up and change that.

There are other details that need attention. When the military looked at a proposal to streamline the PX operation, where military families shop, there was a proposal by major retailers to provide exactly the same service, in many cases, equally convenient, saving a billion dollars; and yet the political pushback was such that the Pentagon turned away.

Now, dealing with things like military bands and the PX and NASCAR sponsorship are appropriate, but that's rounding error. Those are small items.

We need to deal with reforming the military, to deal with the new threats and challenges that are more serious and immediate and largely impervious to the major military footprint we've got. We need to start now, in partnership with the Department of Defense, to reduce the footprint, to restructure the force, and reform pay and benefits.

We were told yesterday that we can either reform TRICARE over the next 5 years, or we'll have 25,000 more troops to lay off. These proposals are stark, but they are immediate and they are

real; and we should take advantage of them.

THE REALITIES OF THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Chairman, I come before the House today to talk a little bit about the food stamp program. I want to talk about it because it is proposed in the farm bill that we'll be talking about soon that there will be a \$20 billion cut from the program.

Now, I just thought that I would come before the House today, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the realistic implications for regular people, and maybe even to try to stand against some of the misconceptions that people may have about the food stamp program.

Last Monday, I was in my district and nearby there in St. Paul, and I and BETTY MCCOLLUM sat down with a number of our neighbors and friends and colleagues to talk about the food stamp program. And we had three groups of people who were talking to us.

One was a group of people who are using the food stamp program. One of them was a senior citizen, and she was working, she was in her early sixties, got sick, couldn't work anymore, and was hoping to get to the age where she could retire and get her Social Security, get other benefits, but she wasn't quite there yet. She got sick before she did, and she needed the food stamp program.

Now, personally, as a taxpaying American, I've got no problem helping this wonderful lady meet her food needs.

Another was a young mom. Actually, she didn't have any money for child care, so she brought her baby to the meeting, who was across her shoulder in a sort of a wrap. And this young mom explained how she tried to get the best options for her baby, wanted to get back to work, but, while she was in the middle of trying to find work, needed to have good nutrition for her child.

We also talked with a person who was a young adult, 19-year-old guy, didn't get any food stamps until he passed out one day because he hadn't been eating.

And then we talked to a person who was not a food stamp recipient, but who was a health care professional in Hennepin County. She explained that the food stamp program was essential for good health because she had had a number of people, she talked about one woman in particular named Mary, who was complaining, was not taking her medication. And her doctor said, Mary, you're not compliant on your medication. Mary said, well, it hurts my stomach.

And so when the doctor talked to her more, he found out she wasn't eating, so the medication was sitting on her empty stomach. When she got some