

other rare childhood disorders. The urgency grows everyday when mothers and fathers watch their children's health rapidly deteriorate.

Jasper Duinstras friends and family have formed a nonprofit organization called Jasper Against Batten, and children from 20 elementary schools have mobilized one of the largest kids helping kids initiatives on behalf of this group. The money these students are raising will go toward research for a treatment and maybe one day, a cure.

Jasper Duinstra is just one of the thousands of children who need our support in the fight against Batten disease and other fatal orphan diseases. In addition to private efforts to raise money through groups like Jasper Against Batten, the National Institutes of Health is funding research in Batten disease and other rare diseases.

While the number of Americans affected by any particular rare disease may be very small, over 6,000 rare diseases have been identified. Taken together, these diseases affect about 25 million Americans. The burden of these diseases is great, not only because of the number of people affected but because too often there are few or no treatments available for people suffering from them.

The Orphan Drug Act provides some incentives for drug companies to develop drugs for rare diseases. This has been a successful effort, and more than 200 drugs and biological products for rare diseases have been brought to the U.S. market. However, despite the success in finding treatments for some rare diseases, others such as Batten disease have seen relatively little progress over the last several decades. Today, there are promising experimental treatments, but they need to find their way more quickly to these children who are rapidly deteriorating.

In addition to searching for new and more readily available treatments, some scientists are also searching for ways to use existing drugs to treat rare diseases that have few options for treatment. A Chicago-based research foundation called Partnership for Cures has teamed with Jasper Against Batten and is now doing just that. In partnership with the National Institutes of Health, they are currently screening thousands of drugs that have already been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to see whether there are beneficial side effects that could slow down the progression of rare orphan diseases, starting with Batten.

I know Jasper's family is heartbroken, and I commend his family, friends, and the Chicago community for responding to tragedy with action. With biomedical researchers, clinicians, and community partners, Jasper's family is leading the fight to find a cure for Batten disease and for quicker access to treatments for children with many fatal orphan diseases.

INSIDE THE GUN SHOW

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California, Davis, released an important report earlier this month detailing many of the potential dangers at gun shows. The report, "Inside Gun Shows: What Goes on When Everybody Thinks Nobody's Watching," was composed from an analysis of existing research as well as direct observation and photographic evidence. During a 3-year period, data was collected from 78 gun shows in 19 States. The report provides a clear illustration of a largely unregulated gun market that is "an important source of guns used in criminal violence."

Under the Federal Brady Act, before an individual can purchase a handgun from a licensed dealer, they must pass a background check to insure they are not legally prohibited from purchasing or possessing a firearm. In 2008, 9.9 million background checks were conducted for firearm purchases, 147,000 of which were rejected. The majority of these denials were the consequence of a prior conviction or indictment. However, when an individual purchases a handgun from a private citizen, who is not a licensed gun dealer, there are no requirements to ensure that the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. Because private party transactions account for approximately 40 percent of all gun sales, current Federal background check requirements have limited affect over the overall rates of gun-related violent crime.

Based on promoter listing, the report estimates that there were nearly 2,800 gun shows in the United States during 2007. Generally open to the public, they can vary in size from fewer than 100 display tables to a few thousand. Accounting for approximately one-third of sales at these shows, unlicensed vendors often seek to exploit their unregulated status. At one show, a vender advertised with a sign that read "No background checks required; we only need to know where you live and how old you are."

The report details that while a wide range of guns can be found at most gun shows, assault weapons, particularly civilian versions AR and AK rifles, are much more prominent than one might generally see at a licensed gun store. Semiautomatic pistols that accept the same high-capacity magazines and fire the same ammunition as AR and AK rifles are also heavily present. Even .50 caliber rifles, notorious for their extraordinary destructive capabilities, are available from some private parties.

According to the report, there were more than 360,000 violent crimes involving guns, including an estimated 11,512 homicides, committed in the United States in 2007 alone. While America accounts for less than 5 percent of the world's population, we account for somewhere between 35 to 50 percent of all firearms in civilian hands. Gun shows present an ideal op-

portunity for gun traffickers to make unregulated purchases. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass sensible gun legislation that will help prevent such acts and help protect the safety of our communities.

ZIMBABWE

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I held a hearing last week of the Subcommittee on African Affairs to explore U.S. policy options toward Zimbabwe's transition. The hearing confirmed that far too little progress has been made in implementing the Global Political Agreement signed last year and that abuses continue at an alarming rate. The transition remains incomplete and far from irreversible. Yet at the same time, the hearing made clear to me the great potential that this transition holds and the great opportunity for the United States and those who care about Zimbabwe to help advance real reform and recovery. We need to seize this opportunity and look for ways that we can proactively engage and help strengthen the hands of reformers in Zimbabwe's transitional government.

Just over a year ago, Zimbabwe was in the throes of intense violence carried out by Robert Mugabe and his allies against the opposition MDC's members, supporters, and families. This was a deliberate campaign to hold on to power and subvert the will of the people expressed in the March 29 elections. Once considered a liberator of his people, Mugabe had become one of the most despotic and brutal leaders of the day. And under his watch, the Zimbabwean economy had gone from one of Africa's most prosperous to one of Africa's most desperate. By the end of last year, millions of Zimbabweans were at risk of starvation and official estimates put inflation at 231 million percent.

The situation today in Zimbabwe looks quite different, at least on the surface. Last September, with South Africa's mediation, the parties signed the Global Political Agreement and committed to form a transitional government. Then, after 5 months of delays, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was sworn in as Prime Minister and the MDC assumed control of several key ministries. A year before, this would have been inconceivable for most Zimbabweans. Yet, it happened and has brought forth a sense of possibility that has not been there in years. That optimism has been furthered by the success of the new Minister of Finance from MDC, Tendai Biti, in stopping the economic decline and taking initial steps to promote economic growth.

These changes are quite significant, though there is still a long way to go toward restoring the rule of law. Mugabe continues to refuse to implement important aspects of the Global Political Agreement, for example the appointment of new provincial governors and the replacement of the Reserve Bank Governor and Attorney