



IT'S TIME TO STOP GUN VIOLENCE

We have already lost too many Americans to senseless killings and mass shootings - it's time to stop gun violence. Democrats are proposing action to deal with the plague of gun violence by fixing background checks so we can respect the rights of law-abiding gun owners and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, gang-members, domestic abusers, and dangerous people. The American people are speaking with a loud and clear voice on this issue, and Democrats will make sure their voices are heard with a vote in the Senate.

Closing Background Check Loopholes: Senate Democrats are calling for ending the loopholes that allow people to buy guns online or at a gun show without having to pass a background check.

- Under current law, guns can be sold on the internet and at gun shows without any background checks at all.
- Millions of guns are sold through these loopholes every year, and according to one study, nearly 70 percent of prison inmates obtained the guns used in crimes through transactions that did not require a background check. [CAP, [2/15](#)]
- Senate Democrats would close those loopholes by requiring a background check before a gun can be sold online or at gun shows.

Making Background Checks Better: Even for gun sales that are subject to a background check, there are still too many holes in the background check database. Senate Democrats are calling for making sure that all domestic abusers are prohibited from purchasing guns, that states submit all prohibitive records to the federal database, and that people are not allowed to buy guns without a completed background check.

- Today, convicted domestic abusers are not submitted to the NICS system unless they are married to or living with their victims; stalkers and other abusers can still legally purchase a gun to harm a dating partner. In 2008, nearly half of all domestic violence murders were committed by a dating partner. [CAP, [6/14](#)]
- Under current law, stores are allowed to sell a gun after 3 days even if the buyer's background check isn't completed, regardless if more time would have uncovered the fact that the purchaser was legally prohibited from buying the gun. This is what allowed the Charleston shooter to purchase a weapon even though a completed background check

would have uncovered that his criminal record should have prohibited him from buying. [New York Times, [7/10/15](#)]

- Senate Democrats are proposing tightening up the background check system by eliminating these gaps, ensuring that when a background check is done, it will effectively uncover dangerous individuals that should not get weapons.

Shutting Down the Illegal Pipeline of Guns: Senate Democrats are calling for making “straw purchasing” (where one person buys a gun for someone else who is not legally allowed to have one) and gun trafficking federal crimes to give law enforcement the tools it needs to stop the flood of illegal weapons across state lines.

- Today, straw purchasing and gun trafficking are not federal crimes, violators are prosecuted under arcane laws such as “lying on the federal form.”
- In 2009, just 10 states supplied 49% of the guns that crossed state lines before being recovered in crimes. Together, these states accounted for nearly 21,000 recovered crime guns. [Everytown, [9/12/10](#)]
- Nine of 10 crime guns are wielded by someone other than the original purchaser, and 1 in 3 have crossed state lines. [Third Way, [3/19/13](#)]
- Senate Democrats are proposing to clearly define the crimes of straw purchasing and gun trafficking – giving law enforcement the tools they need to punish violent criminals and deter these dangerous practices.

FACTS ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence is a serious problem in the United States. Nearly 12,000 Americans are murdered with guns every year and Americans are 20 times as likely to be murdered with guns in the United States as are people in other developed countries. [Everytown, [9/28/15](#)]

- Each day, an average of 88 Americans are killed by a gun, including 7 children and teens. [Everytown, [9/28/15](#)]
- Every 36 hours in this country, unintentional shootings involving children are reported in the press. [Everytown, [9/28/15](#)]
- Every month in the U.S., an average of 52 women are shot and killed by their intimate partners. [Everytown, [9/28/15](#)]

Background checks keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. Since 1998, background checks have prevented about 2.4 million gun sales to prohibited purchasers. [CAP, [2/15](#); Mayors Against Illegal Guns, [9/28/15](#)]

- 17 states and the District of Columbia require background checks for the sale of all handguns. [CAP, [2/15](#)]

- State background check requirements for all handgun sales have prevented 46 percent more women from being shot and killed by their intimate partners; 48 percent more law enforcement officer deaths by firearms; and 48 percent more gun suicides. [CAP, [2/15](#)]

An overwhelming majority of Americans, including gun owners, support requiring background checks for all gun buyers.

- A recent Quinnipiac poll found that 93% of those surveyed support “requiring background checks for all gun buyers”. [Quinnipiac, [9/28/15](#)]
- Recent surveys by Pew and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health found that approximately 85 percent of gun owners support universal background checks. [Washington Post, [10/8/15](#); Johns Hopkins, [6/3/15](#)]
- A recent Pew poll also found that 85% percent of those surveyed support background checks for gun show and private sales. [Pew, [8/12/15](#)]
 - 79% of Republicans support background checks for gun show and private sales.
- A recent CBS News poll found that 81% of Republicans, 93% of Democrats, and 89% of Independents support background checks for all buyers. [CBS News, [8/4/15](#)]

A large majority of Americans support strong gun laws that include universal background checks to prevent the mentally ill from buying firearms. In a recent Pew Poll, 79% of those surveyed, including 81% of Republicans and 84% of those with guns in their households, support laws to prevent the mentally ill from buying firearms. [Pew, [8/12/15](#)]

FACTS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Millions of Americans need treatment for mental illness. Most Americans with a mental illness will never commit a violent crime, but sometimes people fall through the cracks. Nearly 44 million adults experience mental illness in a given year; approximately 1 in 5 adult Americans. Nearly 13.6 million American adults live with a severe mental illness. [NIH, [11/14](#); NIH, [11/14](#)]

- Approximately 8.4 million adults have co-occurring mental health and addiction disorders. [HHS, [12/13](#)]
- Serious mental illness costs America more than \$193 billion in lost earnings every year. [NAMI]

Nearly 60 percent of adults and nearly half of youth who have a mental illness didn’t receive mental health services in the previous year. [HHS, [12/13](#); NIH]

Republicans in Congress have created barriers to accessing mental health care. Republicans have simultaneously closed off pathways to mental healthcare and are cutting funding for critical mental health programs.

- Funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration has been kept essentially flat since 2010 and has declined in inflation-adjusted dollars. This year, Senate

Republicans cut funding for SAMHSA programs by nearly \$160 million from last year's levels and by more than \$203 million from the President's budget request. [SAMHSA, [3/5/14](#); BLS, [10/7/15](#); Senate Appropriations Committee, [6/25/15](#)]

- States refusing to accept Medicaid expansion dollars under the Affordable Care Act are leaving millions of Americans with mental illness uninsured. If every state that is currently declining to expand Medicaid to its citizens did so, an additional 1.46 million Americans would have health insurance. Expanding Medicaid would help these individuals get mental health services before their symptoms get worse and result in costly – and sometimes tragic – outcomes. [NAMI, [4/30/13](#)]