



LAW ENFORCEMENT COALITION

February 12, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy,

We write to you as members of the Giffords Law Enforcement Coalition in support of H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. As law enforcement officers, we know all too well the toll that gun violence takes on our communities. Several loopholes in federal law—and the background check system in particular—allow criminals and other dangerous people to legally purchase firearms. Congress must pass meaningful legislation to reduce gun violence. The Bipartisan Background Checks Act would enact universal background checks, closing these dangerous loopholes by ensuring that a background check is required for every firearms sale.

In 1993, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act made background checks a requirement for federally licensed gun dealers and created the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), databases maintained by the FBI. NICS accesses records of dangerous individuals, such as felons and convicted domestic abusers, who are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms. Federally licensed dealers must run a check through NICS to determine whether a potential buyer is prohibited from purchasing firearms. If information in NICS shows that a person is indeed prohibited, the dealer must deny the sale.

However, no background check is required for sales at gun shows, through online marketplaces, or between private individuals. Individuals who would otherwise be prohibited from purchasing or possessing a gun can easily buy guns through such unregulated sales. And the frequency of these unregulated sales is growing: a 2013 survey indicated that approximately [80% of all firearms acquired for criminal purposes](#) are obtained from sources who are not required to run a background check.

Universal background checks would require a background check on every sale, ensuring that people prohibited from purchasing firearms cannot exploit loopholes and purchase guns through an unregulated sale at a gun show, online, or from an unlicensed seller. Closing these background check loopholes is critical to making sure criminals and other dangerous people cannot easily access firearms.

Twenty states and the District of Columbia now require a background check for transfers or sales of at least some firearms. Background checks save lives: these laws [have been associated](#) with lower rates of gun homicides, suicides, and gun trafficking. If we want to reduce gun deaths and gun crimes nationwide, Congress must enact universal background checks at the federal level.

We joined the Giffords Law Enforcement Coalition out of a desire to use our experiences to advocate for commonsense gun laws that will save lives. We do not wish to limit the freedoms and rights of responsible gun owners. Our support for universal background checks stems from our dedication to maintaining public safety, protecting the citizens in our communities, and ensuring that firearms are purchased lawfully. We urge you to pass H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

The Giffords Law Enforcement Coalition

Commissioner John Barbieri - Springfield Police Department (MA)

Chief Andrew Bidou - Vallejo Police Department (CA)

Chief Jim Bueermann - President of the Police Foundation

Chief Ret. Robert Champagne - Peabody Police Department (MA)

Chief Louis Dekmar - LaGrange Police Department (GA)

Chief Ret. Ivan Fossen - Glenwood Police Department (MN)

Chief Michael Gahagan - Caribou Police Department (ME)

Chief Jeffery Hadley - Chatham County Police Department (GA)

B. Todd Jones - Former Director of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

Chief Scott Knight - Chaska Police Department (MN)

Chief Ret. Ron Louie - Hillsboro Police Department (OR)

Chief Chris Magnus - Tucson Police Department (AZ)

Chief Henry Stawinski - Prince George's County Police Department (MD)

Commissioner Ret. Charles Ramsey - Philadelphia Police Department (PA)

Sheriff Mike Reese - Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (OR)