

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 24, 2012**

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STATEMENT BY BALTIMORE COUNTY POLICE CHIEF JAMES W. JOHNSON, CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

Our thoughts are with the victims of the senseless tragedy that occurred on Sunday, October 21st in Brookfield, Wisconsin. As law enforcement professionals who deal with violent crime day in and day out, we know all too well the devastation caused by gun violence. It is especially disturbing knowing that tragedies like the one that occurred in Brookfield are preventable.

It is unlawful for someone under a domestic violence restraining order, as the suspect reportedly was in Brookfield, to possess firearms. Other categories of prohibited purchasers include convicted felons, fugitives from justice, those under indictment, and those who have been adjudicated mentally ill. To ensure that the purchase is legal, federal law requires those seeking to buy guns from federally licensed gun dealers to undergo background checks. But there is no such required background check if a purchaser buys a gun from an individual, as the suspect reportedly did in Wisconsin.

An estimated 40 percent of firearm transactions occur through private individuals, not through licensed gun dealers. Allowing 40 percent of firearm purchasers to bypass background checks is just as irrational as it would be if we allowed 40 percent of airline passengers to bypass airport security.

It is unconscionable that we allow dangerous people to buy guns from any source without taking simple steps to ensure the sale is legal. We already have a national background check system in place, and extending sales to all firearm purchasers is a simple but lifesaving measure that can and must be implemented without delay.

In the interest of public safety and common sense, it is time for our elected officials to step up and support this vital law enforcement measure.

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