

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

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NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS ISSUE CALL FOR STRONGER FEDERAL GUN LAWS IN WAKE OF AURORA THEATER SHOOTING

Police Groups Highlight Ongoing Campaign for Action to Expand Background Checks for Gun Purchasers and Limit High-Capacity Ammunition Magazines

(WASHINGTON, DC) – The National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, an alliance of nine major national police leadership organizations, announced its call for background checks for all firearms purchasers and a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines today at a news conference in Washington, DC. The group has been working with state law enforcement associations and leaders this summer in key states, pressing for expanded background checks for firearms purchasers and other public safety measures. But the Aurora theater shooting has intensified their calls for timely action.

“The nation is waiting for lawmakers to move beyond hand-wringing and shoulder-shrugging in response to these mass catastrophes,” said Hubert Williams, Chair of the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence and President of the Police Foundation. “These mass murders are neither acceptable, nor inevitable. There are numerous public safety initiatives – that are backed by the public and law enforcement – that will reduce the frequency and severity of this type of carnage. Our nation must establish as a top priority addressing this horrific gun violence that shatters our safety and security.”

The Partnership’s policy agenda includes background checks for all firearms purchasers and a limit on large-capacity ammunition magazines. The background check measure would complement the existing Brady Law, enacted in 1994, which established background checks for gun purchases at federally licensed gun dealers. But an estimated 40% of firearm transactions occur through non-dealers sales – leaving nearly half the firearm sales in the United States unregulated.

“Knowingly permitting four out of ten firearm sales to occur completely unregulated is irresponsible and counterproductive to public safety,” said James Johnson, incoming Chair, National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, and Chief of Police in Baltimore County, MD. “Police do our jobs everyday patrolling the streets and protecting the public while putting their own lives on the line. Law enforcement needs the support of our lawmakers to enact policies that will keep officers and the public safer.”

While the Aurora shooting suspect reportedly passed background checks in obtaining his firearms, Williams emphasized the importance and effectiveness of background checks in keeping guns from other dangerous people, stressing that nearly 2 million prohibited

purchases were stopped between 1994 and 2009. He noted that background checks will help reduce gun violence that touches dozens of Americans every day.

“Gun violence is impacting us all,” Williams said. “In 2011, gunfire was the leading cause of death for police killed in the line of duty, surpassing motor vehicles for the first time in 14 years. Gun violence occurs day in and day out, claiming 34 Americans every single day.”

Background checks are overwhelmingly supported by the public – and gun owners themselves: 86% nationally, including 81% of gun owners, support background checks for all firearms purchasers, regardless of seller or venue.

The Partnership has been collaborating with law enforcement leadership organizations in key states to educate U.S. Senate candidates and the public, building bipartisan support to expand background checks to gun sales beyond licensed dealers. In Virginia and Wisconsin law enforcement leaders recently met with U.S. Senate candidates in private sessions specifically focused on gun violence, emphasizing the need for strengthened background checks. The meetings were strictly educational in nature and candidates participated despite being told that there would be no endorsements made. The police leaders also held major press conferences in each state to publicize their calls for action.

Williams dismissed those saying action is impossible on gun issues, noting, that there were naysayers in the 80s and 90s when, “Law enforcement was pivotal in passing a string of federal gun laws: the ban on cop-killer bullets; the ban on undetectable plastic guns; and the Brady Law requiring background checks for guns purchased through licensed dealers. We know that common sense can prevail.”

The National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence is comprised of:

- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.
- Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Major Cities Chiefs Association
- National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
- Police Executive Research Forum
- Police Foundation