NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS, STRESSING DANGEROUS INCREASE IN GUN VIOLENCE, SAY IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED TO KEEP GUNS OUT OF THE WRONG HANDS

92 AMERICANS KILLED EVERY DAY BY GUNS, SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN GUN CRIMES, MORE FREQUENT MASS SHOOTINGS SHAKING COMMUNITIES TO THE CORE

CHICAGO — Leaders of the nation’s major national law enforcement leadership organizations today highlighted the dangerous rise in gun violence plaguing all corners of the U.S., and stressed the urgency of keeping guns out of the wrong hands by enhancing and expanding background checks for all gun sales.

Members of the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence (the Partnership), comprised of nine national law enforcement leadership organizations, spoke at a press conference during the annual conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy led off the press conference, in his role as Host Chief of IACP’s 2015 conference. He spoke of the uptick in gun violence reported by major city chiefs across the country, saying, “the common denominator from Chicago to Charlotte is that guns are getting in the hands of the wrong people and lives are being erased, all because of easy access to guns by people intent on doing harm to themselves or others.”

“America is in crisis because of gun violence. The longer we wait, the more people die,” said Jim Johnson, the Chief of Police of Baltimore County, MD, and the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) representative to the Partnership. “We’ve been rocked coast-to-coast from Charleston, South Carolina to Roseburg, Oregon. We keep seeing incident after incident unfold – from mass shootings to those that occur daily in our communities. This madness cannot continue. Enough is enough!”

Johnson cited numerous statistics that he and others said were cause for alarm:

• 466,113 people were victims of crime involving guns in 2014 – up 40% over the year before, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

• Firearm deaths are up over the last decade. According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on average 92
Americans were killed by guns every day in 2013 – up from 82 a day in 2003. This number reflects a marked increase in suicides.

- Mass shootings are occurring with greater frequency. A September 2014 FBI report found a 56% increase in mass shootings in the period between 2007 and 2013 compared to the earlier time period of 2000 and 2006.

- Two-thirds of the 8,124 murders committed in the U.S. in 2014 involved firearms, according to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report.

- 2,000 children age 18 and under die from firearm-related deaths each year, according to CDC data.

The Partnership outlined three background check proposals that the organizations say will save lives:

- Expand background checks to cover all gun purchases – not just those made through licensed dealers. In far too many states individuals can transfer guns to others without any questions asked and no check required. Guns used in crime in cities like Chicago and New York are predominantly originating from places with weaker gun purchase laws.

The Brady Law requires background checks for firearms purchased through federally licensed dealers. However, no check is required for private sales, such as those transacted at a gun show or through an online or print ad.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, federal and state background checks blocked more than 2.4 million prohibited purchases from federally licensed dealers between 1994, when the Brady Law took effect, and December 31, 2012. Background check laws screen out those prohibited by law from possessing firearms and do not impact law-abiding citizens’ ability to buy guns.

- Strengthen the background check system by ensuring that states and federal agencies share all disqualifying records with the NICS system. Dangerous people have been able to pass background checks because their criminal and mental health disqualifying records barring them from gun possession were never shared with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).

- Allow the FBI sufficient time to adequately conduct background checks when further investigation is needed before a firearm is transferred, as it was in the case of the shooting that took nine lives at the AME Church in Charleston. NICS background checks are generally completed in just a few minutes. But in some cases, more investigation is required to determine whether a flagged record disqualifies a prospective purchase from firearm possession. Under
current federal law, the sale can proceed in three business days even if the FBI has not completed the check.

“Last year, the FBI reported that more than 2,500 guns were sold to people who should have been barred but sales proceeded nevertheless,” Johnson said. “As the Charleston shooting rampage painfully shows, there are some cases where more time to investigate before a firearm is transferred would mean more lives saved.”

Emphasizing the interstate gun trafficking problem, Gregory A. Thomas, President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives said, “Guns know no borders. Dangerous criminals are buying guns in states where they can evade background checks and transporting them to states with tougher background check laws. We need states to do more and we need national policies that tighten up gun purchasing requirements.”

Thomas added, “In my hometown of New York City, just last week Randolph Holder, another brave police officer was shot and killed. I say another, because we are still mourning the loss of three other officers shot and killed in the last eleven months, including in ambush shootings.” Thomas said the guns used to kill those three officers all originated in Georgia, a state with weaker gun purchase laws.

Chuck Wexler, Executive Director, Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) discussed its just released report in which it found overwhelming support among law enforcement for universal background checks during a series of regional conferences and in a subsequent survey of more than 250 police executives. Of the police executives surveyed, 95 percent of respondents said they support comprehensive background checks, 94 percent support temporary bans on gun possession for those under a restraining order for domestic violence, and 96 percent support prohibiting gun possession by persons who have had an involuntary hospitalization with a clinical finding of being a danger to oneself or others.

“Our report was based on a two-year project and involved police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and mayors. It shows that police chiefs, along with their mayors and prosecutors, strongly support measures to protect communities by preventing serious criminal offenders and dangerous persons from harming community members with firearms,” Wexler concluded. PERF is a police research organization that develops best practices and policies on critical issues in policing,

The National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence (www.lepartnership.org) is an alliance of the nation’s law enforcement leadership organizations concerned about the unacceptable level of gun violence in the
United States. The Partnership is working to address the pervasive nature of gun violence and its horrific impact on community and officer safety.

The Partnership includes:

- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA)
- Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA)
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA)
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA)
- National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE)
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)
- Police Foundation (PF)

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