

END THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS OF GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

SENATORS SHOULD CO-SPONSOR THE BACKGROUND CHECK EXPANSION ACT (S. 42). IF PASSED, THIS BILL WOULD REQUIRE A BACKGROUND CHECK PRIOR TO THE PURCHASE OF ANY FIREARM IN THE U.S., WITH LIMITED EXCEPTIONS.

Gun violence in the United States is a human rights crisis. The sheer volume of people killed or injured each year in the U.S. by gun violence is staggering. In 2017, firearms caused an average of 108 deaths every day, and over 133,000 more are injured. Per capita, this is significantly higher than in other industrialized countries. The disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, women and children is particularly troubling. African Americans are ten times more likely to be the victims of gun homicides than white Americans. Women are 16 times and children are 13 times more likely to be killed by a gun than their counterparts in other developed nations.

Even if we can't stop all gun violence, there are basic steps we can take to make a difference. Bipartisan congressional action can help protect the fundamental human rights – including the right to life, to security of person, and to be free from discrimination – of all people in the U.S. By mandating universal background checks, Congress can close deadly loopholes, prevent threats to public safety and ensure that guns do not fall into dangerous hands.

The problem is widespread. 31 states still do not require background checks on firearm sales between private parties and, as a result, almost one out of every four firearm acquisitions are conducted without any background check whatsoever. Background checks work. States with universal handgun background checks had lower levels of gun violence across the board, with almost half as many women killed in firearm-related violence by an intimate partner and half as many police officers killed on duty. Federally mandated background checks are also popular; upwards of 90% of Americans support them.

Despite the effectiveness and popularity of background checks, Congress has yet to pass legislation mandating them for all federal firearms purchases. Given the risk that a firearm may end up in the hands of a dangerous individual, the U.S. must require that all sales be subjected to a background check.

On February 2019, members of the House of Representatives took the first step in that direction, passing the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8). The bill requires that all sellers of firearms perform background checks through federal firearms licensees, so that a record of sale is made and a background check is conducted by an independent and licensed dealer. It is now up to the Senate to promptly pass Background Check Expansion Act (S.42), the companion legislation, and ensure that this vital measure becomes law.

Every person has the right to life, safety, and security, and the right to be free from discrimination. We urge you to act so as to ensure these human rights are not compromised.

AIUSA RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS:

- Senators should co-sponsor and swiftly pass S.42, the Background Check Expansion Act. If passed, this would be the first step in addressing significant and potentially deadly loopholes in the current background check system.

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