

February 11, 2019

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

I am writing in strong support of H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019. This bipartisan legislation will close the dangerous gap in federal law that makes it possible for individuals who are prohibited from gun possession, like domestic abusers and persons with violent criminal histories, to have easy access to firearms. This is a moderate, common sense piece of legislation that would have a significant impact on reducing gun violence and saving lives.

Under current federal law, only licensed gun dealers are required to conduct a background check before completing a gun sale. However, individuals who not licensed dealers are free to sell guns under federal law without conducting a background check and with no questions asked. This is a significant gap in the law that allows individuals who are prohibited from gun possession to evade that law and buy guns through these private sales transactions at gun shows, online, or anywhere else.

The current background check system is working: over 3 million firearm sales to prohibited persons were blocked when federally licensed gun dealers ran background checks. This bill would update the current law and ensure that individuals who are barred from gun possession are not able to easily buy them through private sales. States that require a background check or permit to purchase a handgun have seen reduced rates of gun homicides, suicides by firearm, and gun trafficking. In fact, per research conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, Missouri has experienced a 25 percent increase in gun-related deaths and injuries since it repealed a permit-to-purchase law in 2007.

Requiring a background check for every gun sale is a common-sense policy that will help save lives. This policy is supported by 97 percent of Americans, including both Democrats and Republicans, law enforcement officials, and NRA members. As the President of a Missouri based gun violence prevention organization, I am particularly concerned, as Missouri has some of the weakest gun laws of any state, including lack of gun safety measures including universal background checks, risk protection orders, or domestic violence prevention

Gun violence kills an average of 35,000 people each year in the U.S. It is a public health crisis that devastates our communities every day. Congress should act quickly to pass this legislation and take a critical first step in addressing the scourge of gun violence and making our country safer.



Judy Sherry, President
Grandparents Against Gun Violence