

MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Peter Ambler, Executive Director, Giffords
Date: **Update** - October 26, 2017
Re: Gillespie Ad Attempts to Mislead Virginians on Guns

Two misleading ads released this week by Republican gubernatorial candidate Ed Gillespie claim that Democrat candidate Ralph Northam made it easier for violent felons and sex offenders to get their hands on guns. Here are four observations regarding the Gillespie campaign's latest attempt to mislead voters about the important issue gun violence prevention, just weeks before the election:

1. **Ed Gillespie's most recent ad is both misleading and hypocritical.** Despite the ad's implication that the restoration of rights for felons includes immediate access to guns, the state of Virginia requires anyone who has had their rights restored to petition local authorities for the full restoration of gun rights.
2. **While Gillespie's ad levels false accusations against Northam, it's obvious that he is intentionally misdirecting attention away from his own record.** It is Gillespie's opposition to universal background checks that makes it easier for dangerous individuals - including violent felons - to get their hands on guns by purchasing guns at gun shows or online and puts Virginia communities at risk.
3. **This ad is the mark of a desperate campaign.** Gillespie has been trailing Northam for several weeks in public polling and in the waning days of the election has decided to take a play from the Trump playbook and fear-monger his way to Election Day.
4. **This is yet another sign of the strength of gun violence prevention as an electoral issue.** Although Gillespie accepted the support of the NRA, he recognizes that - despite the vast sums of money spent by the NRA - the gun lobby's message is losing the day. Rather than adopting the the NRA's message of "guns everywhere and for everyone," Gillespie is misleading voters about Northam's record in an attempt to turn the attacks he's been subject to on his opponent. Of course, imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. He knows voters that when it comes to gun safety, the voters are with Northam. Virginians do not want dangerous individuals to have access to guns and that they support background checks by wide margins, across the political spectrum. Gillespie hopes he can take the gun lobby's money and muddy the water concerning his and Northam's positions on gun violence prevention. What's most



remarkable is that even in the NRA's backyard, its chosen candidate is distancing himself from their toxic message.

The gun violence prevention community is united against Gillespie and has marshaled considerable resources to stop him. Gun violence prevention groups have committed over \$2 million to elections in Virginia and the issue continues to prove a political winner.

At a time when over 900 Virginians are dying from gun violence every year, Virginia voters are looking to support leaders who will keep guns out of dangerous hands and make Virginia communities safer from gun violence. While Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam is making gun violence prevention a central issue of his campaign, Ed Gillespie continues to tout his National Rifle Association endorsement, further showing he is outside the mainstream.

It remains unclear what Ed Gillespie had to promise in order to receive that endorsement. As governor, would he stand up for public safety, or serve as a rubber stamp for the gun lobby's dangerous agenda?

- **As governor, would Ed Gillespie protect the loopholes that let felons, domestic abusers and the dangerously mentally ill buy guns without a background check** — a loophole that 88 percent of Virginians favor closing? In 2014, the National Rifle Association stated that Ed Gillespie “opposes the so-called Obama-Bloomberg ‘universal’ background check system that would criminalize the private transfer of a firearm between life-long friends and many family members.”[Source: Since deleted NRA web page]
- **As governor, would Ed Gillespie oppose strengthening Virginia's gun trafficking laws?** Virginia has become known as a breeding ground for gun traffickers, largely fueled by individuals who legally purchase guns on behalf of those who cannot pass a background check. Efforts to repeal Governor Wilder's attempts at combatting the state's gun trafficking problem have made Virginia less safe. Earlier this year, two dozen people, many of whom were from Virginia, were arrested for trafficking over 200 firearms to New York.
- **As governor, would Ed Gillespie protect the loopholes that give domestic abusers easy access to firearms?** In 2012, over 100 women were killed in Virginia by a current or former domestic partner. Many of these domestic violence-related homicides involved firearms. Unlike federal law, existing Virginia law does not prohibit individuals convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from possessing firearms or ammunition.



- **As governor, would Ed Gillespie support allowing guns in schools?** Federal and state laws ensuring that schools are gun-free zones have helped make K–12 schools even safer, significantly reducing gun violence in these places. School-associated student homicide rates decreased after the federal laws restricting guns within 1,000 feet of schools were adopted in the early 1990s. Despite the evidence that gun-free zones make our schools safer, the gun lobby wants to arm visitors, teachers and faculty at elementary, middle and high schools and to allow college students to possess guns on campus, which will only lead to more gun deaths and injuries, not less.
- **As governor, would Ed Gillespie oppose legislation that empowers law enforcement and families to remove firearms from individuals in crisis?** Over the past three years, a growing list of states with strong traditions of gun ownership have passed Extreme Risk Protective Order (ERPO) laws that create a court-ordered mechanism for family members to work with law enforcement to temporarily prevent access to firearms for at-risk individuals. Research shows that people are more likely to die by suicide if they have easy access to firearms. ERPO laws can prevent suicidal individuals from accessing guns during a crisis, which can help prevent gun violence tragedies and save lives.

ABOUT GIFFORDS

*Giffords is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence.
Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Navy combat veteran and retired NASA astronaut Captain Mark Kelly, Giffords inspires the courage of people from all walks of life to make America safer.*

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