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## URGENT ACTION

**DATE:** October 7, 2020  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau

### **NAACP STRONGLY URGES THE U.S. SENATE TO PASS COMPREHENSIVE GUN BACKGROUND CHECK LEGISLATION AND THE BILL TO CLOSE THE “CHARLESTON LOOPHOLE” IMMEDIATELY AFTER PASSING THE HOUSE IN FEBRUARY 2019 BOTH H.R. 8 AND H.R. 1112 SIT BEHIND SENATOR MITCH McCONNELL’S DESK AWAITING FLOOR ACTION**

#### **THE ISSUE:**

From mass shootings most recently in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio to street killings throughout our country, dangerously easy access to guns in the U.S. are a major and deadly problem, and one that disproportionately impacts communities of color. Meanwhile, some of our elected officials in “leadership” do nothing. As of August 6, 2019, there had been 251 mass shootings in the US this year; that’s more than 1 per day. Enough is enough!

At the end of February, 2019 the U.S. House, with bipartisan support, passed H.R. 8, the *Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019* and H.R. 1112 the *Extend Background Check Length*. Together, these bills would have a definite impact on reducing gun violence and saving lives; they would help keep firearms out of the hands of those who clearly should not have them. Specifically, H.R. 8 would bar direct firearms sales between unlicensed people, including at gun shows or online, without a background check. Firearms could be sold only by licensed dealers, manufacturers, or importers, who are required to conduct comprehensive background checks. H.R. 1112 would mandate that no sale of a firearm may be conducted without a completed background check.

Gun violence killed almost 40,000 people in the U.S. in 2017, according to the most recent data we have, with experts predicting that it will continue to increase if nothing is done. Furthermore, gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color in the United States. Gun violence is the number one killer of African Americans aged 15 to 34. Despite the fact that African Americans make up only 13% of the U.S. population, we represent nearly 50% of all gun homicide victims. 49% of deaths of African-American males between ages 15 and 19 are gun-related homicides — more than the next nine leading causes of death combined. Their white counterparts report gun-related homicides less than 8% of deaths. In 2016, the number of African Americans who died from firearms was almost twice the number of White Americans. In 2017, guns became the third leading cause of death for all children and teens in the U.S. Being African American increases a child’s likelihood of dying from gun violence tenfold. Moreover, the “survivors” of gun violence often suffer from untold damages, both physical and mental.

H. R. 1112 would close what is known as the “Charleston Loophole,” in which licensed gun dealers may proceed with a firearm transfer three business days after initiating a background check, even if the check hasn’t been completed. This phenomenon is known as the “Charleston Loophole” after the Charleston Church massacre at the historically African American Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (“Mother Emmanuel”) in Charleston, S.C., in June 2015. This mass killing was perpetrated with a gun legally sold without a completed background check after the three-day period. Requiring a completed background check for every gun sale, including those at gun shows and through the internet, is a common-sense policy that will help save lives. We should enact H.R. 1112 and H.R. 8, and their Senate counterpart, S. 42 (by Senator Murphy, CT) and make it the law of the land before one more life is needlessly lost.

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO CO-SPONSOR AND SUPPORT H.R. 8 / S. 42 AND H.R. 1112 AND TO ACT NOW!!** To contact your Senators you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators' offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:  
The Honorable (name of Senator)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and click on "**Contact**" under "**Senators.**" You can look up your Senators by name or state; go to their web sites to send an e-mail.

**REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!**

## **THE MESSAGE**

- Gun violence killed almost 40,000 people in the U.S. in 2017, and disproportionately impacts communities of color;
- Enough is enough! We are tired of seeing our communities decimated while our elected officials do nothing;
- Requiring completed and increased background checks will close dangerous gaps 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;
- Currently, as many as a quarter of all gun sales occur without a background check.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!**

If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

**MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.**

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

(date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**RE: STRONG SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR GUN PURCHASES**

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_;

As your constituent, I urge you to strongly support H.R. 8 / S. 42, the *Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019* and H. R. 1112, the *Extend Background Check Length*. Both bills passed the House of Representatives by bipartisan margins in February, 2019. While increased background checks will not solve all our nation's gun violence problems, the enactment of H.R. 8 and H.R. 1112 would be a huge step forward, and would help keep firearms out of the hands of those who clearly should not have them. They will close the dangerous gaps in federal law that make 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. These are common sense pieces of legislation, sadly both born from tragedies, 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 are not licensed dealers (including people who sell firearms at gun shows or online) are free to sell guns under federal law without conducting a background check and with no questions asked. Furthermore, under what is now known as the "Charleston Loophole," licensed gun dealers may proceed with a firearm transfer three business days after initiating a background check, even if the check hasn't been completed. This phenomenon is known as the "Charleston Loophole" after the Charleston Church massacre at the historically African American Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church ("Mother Emmanuel") in Charleston, S.C., in June 2015. This mass killing was perpetrated with a gun legally sold without a completed background check after the three-day period. Together, H.R. 8 and H.R. 1112 represent measured, reasonable responses to significant gaps in the law. These gaps allow individuals who are prohibited for good reasons from gun possession to circumvent the law.

To date, over 3 million firearm sales to prohibited persons were blocked when federally licensed gun dealers ran and completed background checks. These bills would update current law and ensure that individuals who are barred from gun possession are not able to buy them through private sales, and that the background checks are completed. States that require a background check or permit to purchase a hand gun have seen reduced rates of gun homicides, suicides by firearm, and gun trafficking.

Requiring a completed background check for every gun sale is a common-sense policy that will help save lives. Gun violence killed almost 40,000 people in the US in 2017, with experts predicting that it will continue to increase if nothing is done. It is a public health crisis that devastates our communities every day. Congress should act quickly to pass H.R. 8 / S. 42 and H.R. 1112. In doing so, you will be taking critical steps in addressing the scourge of gun violence and making our homes, communities, and country safer. Requiring a background check for every gun sale is a common-sense policy that will help save lives. Please contact me in the near future and let me know what you are doing to stop this scourge and what more I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and  
remember to include your address)

*Remember to contact  
both your U.S.  
Senators*