



Members of the 117th Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to cosponsor and quickly pass H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Check Act, and S.529, the Background Check Expansion Act, to expand Brady Background Checks to cover all firearm transactions, as well as H.R. 1446, the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021, to close a dangerous gap in law that allows thousands of prohibited individuals to purchase firearms every year.

Since the Brady Law was enacted in 1994, more than 3.5 million prohibited firearm transactions have been prevented. In 2015 alone, an average of 619 individuals per day were deemed by law to be too dangerous to possess a firearm and were blocked by the system.

Background checks are conclusively effective and have saved countless lives. However, because only federally licensed firearms dealers are required to conduct these checks, an estimated one in five gun sales or transfers — those conducted by private sellers, including sales online and at gun shows — are completed without a background check. Without background checks it is almost impossible to keep guns out of the hands of prohibited individuals or to hold illegal gun dealers accountable.

H.R. 8 and S.529 will make us all safer by requiring a background check for virtually every firearm sale and transfer. The bills include narrow, reasonable exceptions like transfers among close family members and short-term gun loans among hunters and sport shooters. The legislation does nothing to impede lawful gun purchases, while closing off a wide and well-known avenue for illegal transactions by prohibited, and often dangerous, buyers. It is past time to expand lifesaving background checks to every gun sale, and the public agrees: more than 90 percent of Americans, including large majorities of gun owners, support universal background checks.

Likewise, it has been over five years since a prohibited person massacred nine parishioners at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, with a gun purchased at a licensed firearms dealer and it is far past time for Congress to take action to fix this gap in law.

Under current law, a licensed dealer may transfer a gun to a buyer after three business days even if the background check has yet to determine whether that buyer is legally eligible to purchase a gun, now known commonly as the “Charleston Loophole.” According to FBI data, thousands of guns are sold each year through this loophole to individuals who are prohibited from possessing firearms —

over 43,000 since 2008. In the last decade an average of 10 prohibited individuals have been able to purchase guns at licensed firearms dealers through the Charleston Loophole every single day.

H.R. 1446 will prevent the sale of firearms to prohibited individuals by providing the FBI with additional time to complete background checks — allowing the system to better focus its resources and efforts, and provide accurate dispositions to federally licensed firearms dealers. This legislation will have a tremendous impact on public safety while ensuring that lawful gun owners are not subject to indefinite bureaucratic delay.

We urge you to act quickly to pass these life-saving pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Medical Student Association (AMSA)
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Amnesty International
Bishops United Against Gun Violence
Brady
Children's Defense Fund (CDF)
Docs Demand Action
Doctors for America (DFA)
End Citizens United (ECU)
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA)
MomsRising
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI)
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
National PTA
Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)
Public Citizen
Team Enough
The King Center
This Is Our Lane
Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)
U.S. Conference of Mayors
VoteVets