



May 8, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 2051

Re: A Common Sense Strategy to Fix America's Broken Background Check System

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid:

We write to you as members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a bipartisan coalition of more than 300 mayors from across the country who are committed to keeping illegal guns out of the hands of criminals. The coalition wishes to express our shared concern that the federal government is not doing enough to close gaps in America's background check system. These gaps continue to allow criminals and other prohibited purchasers easy access to guns.

Last year's tragedy at Virginia Tech exposed one such gap, and Congress stepped up and showed real leadership by passing a bill giving incentives to states to supply more mental health records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). The coalition applauds the passage of the NICS Improvement Act of 2007.

We should not wait for more mass shootings to close the other gaps that remain. The fact is that 34 Americans are murdered *every day* with guns, but because this daily tragedy doesn't happen in one place at the hands of one shooter, we too often fail to notice. In many cases, those killers have been able to purchase guns because our background check system is broken. Congress should move immediately to begin fixing it.

That's why Mayors Against Illegal Guns is proposing a common sense strategy to fix the most glaring remaining gaps in the background check system:

- **Close the gun show loophole:** Currently, licensed gun dealers are required to run criminal background checks on all buyers, but a loophole in the law enables criminals to avoid these checks if they buy from gun-sellers who don't have licenses. Often operating at gun shows, these unlicensed sellers give criminals the opportunity to sidestep the background check system and easily purchase guns. Congress should close the gun show loophole.
- **End the gun dealer fire sales:** When the federal government has shut down a gun dealer for selling illegally, it has nevertheless permitted that dealer to sell off

its inventory – *without* conducting background checks. It’s time for Congress to put a stop to this reckless end-run around background checks.

- **Require gun dealers to do background checks on employees:** Under the current law, if a person can’t buy guns – because he or she has a criminal record or a history of mental illness – that person cannot sell guns either. But the law fails to require dealers to conduct background checks on their employees, even though they already use the background check system in their stores every day. Congress should act so that people behind the counter at gun stores must pass the same background check as their customers.
- **Close the “Terror Gap”:** Six years after 9/11, the federal government can stop suspects on terror watch lists from getting on airplanes, but it can’t stop them from buying firearms. Last year, the Bush Administration endorsed a bill that will close the terror gap (S.1237/H.R.2074). Congress should make it law this year.

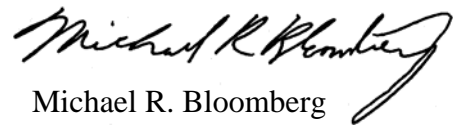
Closing these loopholes has nothing to do with the Second Amendment or the rights of responsible gun owners. It is about protecting the public by preventing guns from falling into the hands of criminals.

We urge you to stand with us to fix America’s broken background check system.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor of New York City

Cc: All other members of Congress

Members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns

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Mayor Thomas Henderson, Center Point, Alabama
Mayor Carroll L. Watson, Lincoln, Alabama
Mayor Samuel L. Jones, Mobile, Alabama
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