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Reducing Gun Violence in America

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Consensus Recommendations for Reforms to Federal Gun Policies

On January 14 and 15, 2013, the Johns Hopkins University brought together more than 20 global leaders in gun policy and violence—representing the fields of law, medicine, public health, advocacy and public safety—for the Summit on Reducing Gun Violence in America.

The purpose was to distill the best research, analysis, and experience from these experts into a set of clear and comprehensive policy recommendations to prevent gun violence. By summarizing both new and prior research relevant to a number of policies, and issuing policy recommendations, the outcomes of the Summit can contribute to the prevention of gun violence through more informed legislative and regulatory proposals.

The researchers identified the policy recommendations described below as the most likely to reduce gun violence in the United States.*

*These recommendations represent the consensus of the experts presenting at the Johns Hopkins Summit on Reducing Gun Violence in America. However, it may not be the case that every expert endorsed every specific recommendation.

Background Checks

Fix the background check system by doing the following:

- Establish a universal background check system, which would require a background check for all persons purchasing a firearm (with an exception for inheritance transfers).
- Facilitate all sales through a federally licensed gun dealer. This would have the effect of mandating the same record keeping for all firearm transfers.
- Increase the maximum amount of time for the FBI to complete a background check from 3 to 10 business days.
- Require all firearm owners to report the theft or loss of their firearm within 72 hours of becoming aware of its loss.
- Subject even those persons who have a license to carry a firearm, permit to purchase, or other firearm permit to a background check when purchasing a firearm.

Prohibiting High-Risk Individuals from Purchasing Guns

Expand the conditions for firearm purchase:

- Persons convicted of a violent misdemeanor would be prohibited from firearm purchase for a period of 15 years.
- Persons who committed a violent crime as a juvenile would be prohibited from firearm purchase until 30 years of age.
- Persons convicted of two or more crimes involving drugs or alcohol within a three-year period would be prohibited from firearm purchase for a period of 10 years.
- Persons convicted of a single drug-trafficking offense would be prohibited from gun purchase.
- Persons determined by a judge to be a gang member would be prohibited from gun purchase.
- Establish a minimum of 21 years of age for handgun purchase or possession.
- Persons who have violated a restraining order issued due to the threat of violence (including permanent, temporary and emergency) would be prohibited from purchasing firearms.

- Persons with temporary restraining orders filed against them for violence or threats of violence would be prohibited from purchasing firearms.
- Persons who have been convicted of misdemeanor stalking would be prohibited from purchasing firearms.

Mental Health

- Focus federal restrictions on gun purchases by persons with serious mental illness on the dangerousness of the individual.
- Fully fund federal incentives for states to provide information about disqualifying mental health conditions to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System for gun buyers.

Trafficking and Dealer Licensing

- A permanent director for ATF should be appointed and confirmed.
- ATF should be required to provide adequate resources to inspect and otherwise engage in oversight of federally licensed gun dealers.
- Restrictions imposed under the Firearm Owners' Protection Act limiting ATF to one routine inspection of gun dealers per year should be repealed.
- The provisions of the Firearm Owners' Protection Act which raise the evidentiary standard for prosecuting dealers who make unlawful sales should be repealed.
- ATF should be granted authority to develop a range of sanctions for gun dealers who violate gun sales or other laws.
- The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, providing gun dealers and manufacturers protection from tort liability, should be repealed.
- Federal restrictions on access to firearms trace data, other than those associated with ongoing criminal investigations, should be repealed.
- Federal law mandating reporting of multiple sales of handguns should be expanded to include long guns.
- Adequate penalties are needed for violations of the above provisions.

Personalized Guns

- Congress should provide financial incentives to states to mandate childproof or personalized guns.
- The Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission should be granted authority to regulate the safety of firearms and ammunition as consumer products.

Assault Weapons

- Ban the future sale of assault weapons, incorporating a more carefully crafted definition to reduce the risk—compared with the 1994 ban—that the law would be easily evaded.

High-Capacity Magazines

- Ban the future sale and possession of large-capacity (greater than 10 rounds) ammunition magazines.

Research Funding

- The federal government should provide funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Institute of Justice adequate to understand the causes and solutions of gun violence, commensurate with its impact on the public's health and safety.
- The Surgeon General of the United States should produce a regular report on the state of the problem of gun violence in America and progress toward solutions.