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Gun Violence, revised, Panetta

Every day, more than one hundred Americans lose their lives in occurrences of gun violence across our country. This impacts survivors, families, schools, and communities in every corner of our nation and costs our country \$280 billion each year. Additionally, gun violence is now the leading cause of death in children.

I believe in a law-abiding individual's right to responsibly own a firearm under the Second Amendment to our United States Constitution. However, with that ownership comes certain responsibilities. Unfortunately, and tragically, there are those who are not just irresponsible, but also a danger to society. I believe that we must ensure responsibility for those dangerous few with common sense laws that, although they may not stop every shooting, can slow the spread of violence, and help keep our schools, streets, and communities safe.

In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Democratic majority of the U.S. House of Representatives worked hard to pass common sense legislation that protects the Second Amendment and helps prevent gun violence, but many of our efforts were stalled in the U.S. Senate. However, after the devastating shooting in Uvalde, Texas, the Senate reached a bipartisan agreement on a gun violence prevention bill for the first time in three decades. While more is needed, I am proud that I voted for the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), which was signed into law by President Biden on June 25, 2022.

The BSCA is a common sense, bipartisan bill to protect America's children, keep our schools safe, increase mental health services, and reduce the threat of violence across our country, including:

- **Support for State Crisis Intervention Orders:** Creates \$750 million for states to create and administer laws that will ensure deadly weapons are kept out of the hands of individuals determined by a court to be a significant danger to themselves or others, and for extreme risk protection orders that have sufficient due process.
- **Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence by Closing the Boyfriend Loophole:** Adds convicted domestic violence abusers in dating relationships to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).

- **Banning Gun Trafficking & Cracking Down on Straw Purchases:** Cracks down on criminals who illegally evade licensing requirements and clarifies which sellers need to register, conduct background checks, and keep appropriate records, and creates federal straw purchasing and trafficking criminal offenses for the first time, allowing prosecutors to target dangerous illegal gunrunners.
- **Enhanced Background Checks for People Under 21:** Requires an investigative period to review juvenile and mental health records, including checks with state databases and local law enforcement, for buyers under 21 years of age, creating an enhanced, longer background check of up to ten days.
- **Anti-Violence Community Initiatives:** Provides \$250 million in funding for community-based violence prevention initiatives.
- **Investing in Children & Family Mental Health Services:** Supports the national expansion of community behavioral health center model; improves access to mental health services for children, youth, and families through the Medicaid program and CHIP; increases access to mental health services for youth and families in crisis via telehealth; and provides major investments at the Department of Health and Human Services to programs that expand provider training in mental health, support suicide prevention, crisis and trauma intervention and recovery.
- **Investing in Safe Schools:** Invests in programs to expand mental health and supportive services in schools, including early identification and intervention programs, school-based mental health and wrap-around services, improvements to school-wide learning conditions, and school safety.

In addition to the BSCA, there are other bills that Democrats are working on to pass into law. Although I worked to pass many of these bills out of the House last Congress, they were stalled in the Senate and failed to pass. Many of the following bills have been reintroduced in the 118th Congress and I will continue to work with my colleagues to pass this commonsense legislation.

In the 117th Congress, I was an original cosponsor of, and on March 11, 2021, voted to pass H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021. Since the federal background check requirement was enacted in 1994, more than 3 million illegal gun sales have been stopped by background checks. This has kept guns out of the hands of criminals, domestic abusers, individuals with dangerous mental illnesses, or other prohibited purchasers. Moreover, 84 percent of the American public agrees with this common sense legislation. However, in some states, individuals can buy identical guns at a gun show, over the internet, or through a newspaper ad without any background checks. H.R. 8 would greatly reduce opportunities to acquire a firearm for criminals, the mentally ill, and the dangerously irresponsible.

On March 11, 2021, I also voted to pass H.R.1446, the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021. This bill would close the Charleston Loophole, a gap in federal law that allows gun sales to proceed without a completed background check after three days. This bill would give officials more time to conduct background checks, extending the background check review period from three days to 10 days.

On June 8, 2022, the House of Representatives voted to pass two major, bipartisan pieces of gun violence prevention legislation: H.R. 7910, the Protecting Our Kids Act and H.R. 2377, the Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2022. The Protecting Our Kids Act would ensure that individuals under 21 years of age cannot purchase semiautomatic rifles. The bill would also make firearms trafficking a distinct federal crime – giving prosecutors the tools they need to hold accountable the people responsible for the flow of firearms to the hands of criminals. The bill would promote responsible maintenance of firearms and hold adults accountable if they fail to safely store their firearms, thereby giving access to a minor or someone otherwise unauthorized to possess a firearm. The Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2022, which I cosponsored, establishes nationwide access to extreme risk protection orders through federal courts to ensure that those who pose a threat to themselves, or others do not have access to firearms. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia currently have extreme risk protection orders in place, and this legislation would set a national standard to save lives. On July 13, 2022, the House voted to pass H.R.6538, the Active Shooter Alert Act of 2022. The Active Shooter Alert Act would create an AMBER Alert like system for active shooter incidents. The new alert system could be deployed during emergency situations like that recently seen in Highland Park, Illinois when the suspected shooter was at large for 8 hours, posing an even greater threat to the community.

On July 29, 2022, the House voted to pass the Assault Weapons Ban of 2022. The previous federal assault weapons ban, the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Act, was signed into law in 1994 and expired in 2004. This legislation will prohibit the sale, transfer, manufacture, and importation of semiautomatic weapons and ammunition feeding devices capable of accepting more than ten rounds, while protecting hunting and sporting rifles and assault weapons used by members of the military and law enforcement. This legislation will improve upon the previous Assault Weapons Ban and existing state bans by prohibiting duplicates or altered facsimiles with semiautomatic capabilities and prohibiting the importation of assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.

While these six bills were passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, they either failed or were not considered in the U.S. Senate. My colleagues and I will continue to advocate for their passage in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

In the 117th Congress, I also authored and introduced H.R. 6281, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Data Integrity Act. Under current law, the FBI is unable to complete background checks if they are not finalized within 88 days. After that arbitrary duration, the FBI is required by law to purge all records related to a background check from its systems. The result is that prohibited individuals are sometimes allowed to retain possession of firearms because a background check has not been finalized. This 88-day requirement has become even more of a burden as gun sales have increased in recent years. More gun sales mean more background checks that must be completed by an already overburdened system. Like in the 117th Congress, this year Rep. Robin Kelly and I reintroduced the Federal Firearm Licensee Act. This legislation would improve our system of background checks and ensure

proper dealer licensing for firearm purchases. This bill is necessary because our outdated federal firearm licensing laws aren't keeping pace with the proliferation of rogue firearms dealers or advancements in new technology

In addition to my own legislation, I have been proud to cosponsor a series of gun violence prevention bills, including:

- **The Keep Americans Safe Act** would prohibit the importation, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of high-capacity magazines for firearms which hold more than ten rounds of ammunition.
- **The Ghost Guns Are Guns Act** would close the “ghost guns” loophole which allows purchasers to avoid federal background checks by buying unassembled firearms online.
- **Ethan’s Law** would set federal standards for safe gun storage, as well as give states incentives to create and implement safe gun storage laws.
- **The Help for Healing Communities Act** would establish evidence-based violence prevention and community engagement programs, as well as linkages to trauma-informed behavioral health services.
- **The Firearms Retailer Code of Conduct Act** would require gun dealers and their employees to undergo training every two years to identify fraudulent or potentially unlawful firearms purchases.
- **The Preventing Pretrial Gun Purchases Act** would amend federal gun laws to deny gun sales to any person subject to a pretrial release order from a court that prohibits the person from purchasing, possessing, or receiving guns.
- **The Gun Trafficking and Crime Prevention Act** would prohibit the purchase or transfer of a firearm if the intent is to deliver it to someone else who is prohibited by Federal or State law from possessing one.
- **The Gun Safety Board and Research Act** would establish a board of experts housed at the Department of Health and Human Services responsible for conducting research, evaluating federal and state policy proposals, and recommending best practices for reducing firearm deaths.
- **The STOP Violence Act** would provide federal funding for preventative security measures at active shooter sites and public assembly facilities.
- **The Safe Workplaces Act** would direct the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to conduct a study on threats of violence, including gun violence, in the workplace.
- **The Prioritizing Resources for Victims of Firearm Violence Act** would designate as a fifth priority category programs that provide assistance and mental health services to victims of firearm violence and families of victims of homicide through the Victims of Crime Act.

As a member of the Congressional Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, I am committed to finding solutions to address our nation’s ongoing gun violence epidemic. My colleagues and I work with other Members of Congress, mental health experts, law enforcement organizations, teachers, and gun owners to pursue a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence and

strengthening our nation's laws. As evidenced by the above bills, please know that I and many of my colleagues will continue to work to provide federal solutions with common sense laws that protect the Second Amendment and help prevent gun violence.