

**Testimony for the Record by Bonnie Campbell**

**Submitted to the**

**Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate**

**Hearing on VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence**

**July 30, 2014**

Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, Judiciary Committee Members, Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input for this landmark hearing. My name is Bonnie Campbell. I was the inaugural director of the United States Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, established in 1995 through the Violence Against Women Act ("VAWA"). Before that, I was the Attorney General of Iowa, where, as the state's top law enforcement official, I helped to strengthen our domestic violence laws, to increase funding for victim shelters, and to write an anti-stalking statute that would become a national model.

Today I'm asking you to do two things. First, please support Senate Bill 1290, The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, which will close loopholes in federal law that allow abusive dating partners and convicted stalkers to purchase and possess guns. Second, Congress should require background checks for gun sales by unlicensed sellers, so that abusers who are legally barred from having guns can't end-run the law and buy guns anyway.

VAWA has been critical for tackling domestic violence in this country—both punishing the perpetrators of these all-too-common crimes and providing resources for victims of abuse. I was extremely pleased that Congress reauthorized VAWA last year, with the votes of 78 Senators and 286 Members of the House. But widespread—and lethal—violence against women persists: Until we address our weak gun laws, we will not be able to protect American women from the gun violence that make this the most dangerous country for firearm homicide in the developed world. American women are 11 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than women in other developed countries.<sup>1</sup> And more than half of the American women shot to death each year are killed by their intimate partners or family members.<sup>2</sup>

Domestic violence and gun violence are intimately connected—and our weak gun laws are the culprit.

One in three American women will experience abuse in her lifetime<sup>3</sup>—and women in households with a history of abuse are nearly *15 times* more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner or

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<sup>1</sup> Hemenway D, Shinoda-Tagawa T, Miller M. Firearm availability and female homicide victimization rates among 25 populous high-income countries. *J Am Med Womens Assoc.* 2002; 57(2):100-4.

<sup>2</sup> U.S Department of Justice, FBI, Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2011

<sup>3</sup> CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010, available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1jed2Xe>

family member.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, when guns are present in domestic abuse situations, women are 5 times more likely to be murdered.<sup>5</sup>

And yet we know that strong laws can make a real difference. Since the National Instant Criminal Background Check System began operating 15 years ago, more than 300,000 gun sales have been denied to domestic abusers.<sup>6</sup> Our laws work, but they're still far too weak—and they're still giving abusers easy access to guns.

When Congress first passed VAWA, it wisely prohibited people from having guns while they are subject to domestic violence restraining orders. But the definition of domestic violence in the federal gun prohibitor does not match the definition of domestic violence in VAWA. VAWA protects victims against all intimate partner violence, regardless of marital status. But the restraining order prohibitor includes only abusive spouses and abusers who have cohabitated or share a child with their victims. This means that if a woman goes to court and gets a restraining order against her abusive boyfriend, he will still be able to buy guns—simply because the couple is not married. Similarly, when Congress passed a law prohibiting partners convicted of domestic abuse, the law again relied on the narrow definition—meaning that an ex-boyfriend may not be prohibited even after he is convicted of serious physical abuse.

This is a dangerous gap in the law. And its impact has only grown more dire in the years since VAWA was enacted: The number of women murdered by dating partners has increased regularly over that period, and, as of 2012, more women are killed by boyfriends than husbands.<sup>7</sup>

The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act would address this serious problem, defining domestic violence under the federal gun prohibitors to include the same dating relationships covered in VAWA—and bringing our federal gun laws in line with the reality of domestic abuse.

S.1290 would also prohibit convicted stalkers from buying or possessing guns. Not only is this plain common-sense, but we also know that a history of stalking does predict subsequent violent behavior: Among female victims of attempted murder, nearly 90 percent were stalked by their attackers in the previous year.<sup>8</sup> In fact, more than *one in ten* women will be stalked in her lifetime.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> JE Bailey et al, "Risk factors for violent death of women in the home", *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> JC Campbell et al, "Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study," *American Journal of Public Health*, July 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Between the inception of the NICS system in 1998 and April 30, 2014, 154,584 gun sales were federally denied due to misdemeanor crime of domestic violence convictions or restraining or protection orders for domestic violence. U.S. Department of Justice, FBI, NICS Denials: Reasons Why the NICS Section Denies, Nov. 1, 1998 – Apr. 30, 2014, at <http://1.usa.gov/1k9zURj>. Between 1998 and 2010, state and local agencies issued a total of 945,915 denials, and it is estimated they have issued 225,000 denials in the three years since data was last released. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Feb. 2013, Background Checks for Firearms Transfers, 2010–Statistical Tables, Feb. 2013, at <http://1.usa.gov/Z8vYsa>. For agencies that reported reasons for these denials, 13.2% were denials for domestic violence reasons — which would represent another 155,000 domestic violence denials. Thus, the background check system has likely issued more than 300,000 denials for domestic violence reasons.

<sup>7</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> JM McFarlane et al, "Stalking and intimate partner femicide," *Homicide Studies*, Nov. 1999.

<sup>9</sup> CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010, available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1jed2Xe>

Protecting women from abusive dating partners and from stalkers should be a bipartisan effort, and S.1290 should pass Congress by the same large majorities as VAWA did. Make no mistake, this bill is the unfinished business of VAWA. The connection between protecting women and keeping guns out of abusive hands is clear. And while we wait to take action, 48 women are killed with guns each month by their intimate partners.<sup>10</sup> We need to take this important step to keep our mothers, daughters, and sisters safe.

I'm also asking you to renew the fight for background checks on all gun sales—the most important step we can take to keep guns out of dangerous hands. For fifty years we have prohibited dangerous people from having guns. For twenty years we have had a background checks system that allows us to enforce those prohibitions at the point of sale. But our work to prohibit criminals, spousal abusers, and the seriously mentally ill, and our work to create an background checks system with integrity, is undermined by the loophole that allows prohibited people to buy guns from unlicensed sellers without a background check. A spousal abuser can be convicted of rape and sexual assault, and can be subject to an active restraining order, but federal law still enables him to buy a gun from an unlicensed seller—online markets like Armslist.com make this easy—with no background check, and no questions asked. I urge you to require background checks for sales by unlicensed sellers, perhaps by revisiting the legislation introduced last year by bipartisan cosponsors Pat Toomey and Joe Manchin.

Thank you for having this important hearing. Please stand up and vote for S.1290 and for background checks, legislation that carries on the work to stop domestic abuse in America.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S Department of Justice, FBI, Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008-2012

**Testimony for the Record by Christy Salters Martin**

**Submitted to the**

**Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate**

**Hearing on VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence**

**July 30, 2014**

Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, Judiciary Committee Members, Senators:

Thank you for considering this important issue and letting me share my own near-death experience with domestic violence.

My name is Christy Salters Martin. I am a concealed carry permit holder and a gun owner. I spent many years in the ring as a successful professional boxer. But on November 23, 2010, I literally fought for my life when my husband of 19 years tried to murder me.

Jim always told me that if I ever left him, he would kill me. He threatened my life for more than 20 years. When I finally got up the courage to tell him we were through, he did his best to make good on his promise, stabbing me four times with a 9-inch long blade and then shooting me with my own 9mm handgun. The bullet came within four inches of my heart.

Jim left me for dead on the bedroom floor, but I managed to make it outside and flag down a passing car to take me to the hospital. Somehow, I survived.

But thousands of American women are not so lucky. A woman has a 1 in 3 chance of experiencing abuse during her lifetime,<sup>1</sup> and guns make it much worse: when an abuser has access to a gun, it's five times more likely that the woman will be murdered.<sup>2</sup> In fact, over half of all women murdered in this country are killed by an intimate partner or family member.<sup>3</sup>

That's why I'm writing to ask you to support the Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2013, S.1290, introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar. This important legislation would fix two holes in the law protecting abused women from gun violence.

Right now, federal law recognizes that guns and abuse are a deadly combination and says that if you are convicted of a crime of domestic violence or have a domestic violence restraining order

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<sup>1</sup> CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010, available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1jed2Xe>

<sup>2</sup> JC Campbell et al, "Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study," *American Journal of Public Health*, July 2003.

<sup>3</sup> FBI, Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2011

taken out against you, you're not allowed to buy or own a gun.<sup>4</sup> This law works to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous abusers, and it turns out that one out of six people stopped from buying guns from a licensed dealer is a confirmed domestic abuser.<sup>5</sup>

But the law has serious loopholes. First, it only applies to a person who abuses his intimate partner if they were married, have lived together, or had a child together. But in today's world, more people are killed by a dating partner than by a spouse.<sup>6</sup> S.1290 would change the definition of intimate partner to include dating partners. Second, current federal law does nothing to stop many convicted stalkers from buying or owning guns. Considering that almost 9 out of 10 victims of attempted murder were stalked by their attacker within a year of the crime,<sup>7</sup> it's critically important to keep guns out of the hands of stalkers. S.1290 would do so by adding stalking to the list of prohibiting crimes.

Some say that removing guns from an abusive home prevents a woman from using the best tool she has to defend herself. Well, I'm an experienced gun owner, with a concealed carry permit. I'm also a professionally trained fighter. But even I wasn't able to stop my abuser from using my gun against me, and my experience is all too common. Abused women are almost ten times as likely to be threatened with a gun as they are to use it to defend themselves.<sup>8</sup>

I am still a gun owner and a proud supporter of the Second Amendment. But respect for the rights of law-abiding citizens does not mean we cannot prevent dangerous abusers from getting their hands on deadly weapons. Women will continue to face an epidemic of gun violence until Congress steps up and strengthens these laws. I'm asking you to take action and vote for S.1290 so that fewer women in abusive relationships will experience what I went through, or even worse.

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<sup>4</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8),(9).

<sup>5</sup> FBI, NICS Operations Reports, 1998-2013.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Homicide Trends in the United States 1980-2008, available online at: <http://1.usa.gov/1uARYtW>.

<sup>7</sup> Source: JM McFarlane et al, "Stalking and intimate partner femicide," *Homicide Studies*, Nov. 1999.

<sup>8</sup> SB Sorenson and Wiebe, "Weapons in the lives of battered women," *American Journal of Public Health*, 2004.



Comments submitted to the  
Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate

For its hearing on  
VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence

July 30, 2014

Thank you Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to provide input for this historic hearing on this important topic.

In 2000, the National Center for Victims of Crime, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women, established the National Stalking Resource Center (SRC). Over the last 14 years, we have provided training and technical assistance to over 100,000 multidisciplinary professionals nationwide, including law enforcement, prosecutors, victim service providers, and other allied professionals. Our mission is to enhance the ability of professionals, organizations, and systems to effectively respond to stalking, and we are working towards a criminal justice system that improves victim safety and well-being and holds offenders accountable.

Since the first stalking law was enacted in 1990, our nation has made great strides in improving our response to stalking, including the passage of the Violence Against Women Act,<sup>1</sup> the establishment of January as National Stalking Awareness Month in 2004,<sup>2</sup> and the first White House roundtable on stalking in 2012.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the Federal stalking statute, stalking is a crime in every state, U.S. territory, and the District of Columbia. While this progress is commendable, it is far from complete: in many states stalking victims do not have access to protection orders and in a majority of states criminals convicted of stalking offenses can still legally—and easily—buy and use firearms.

Federal law, too, fails to fully protect victims. It allows convicted stalkers to legally buy and possess firearms that they all too frequently use to harass, threaten, and even kill those they target. Although federal law prohibits gun ownership by some persons convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence,<sup>4</sup> it does not contain a parallel provision for stalking misdemeanors. In other words, someone who is convicted or pleads guilty to a stalking misdemeanor can walk out of the courthouse, go to a gun store, and pass a background check despite the conviction.

This represents a major threat to public safety because stalking of women is a predictor of further violence toward women. A study in ten major American cities found that in 85 percent of attempted murders of women, the perpetrator had stalked the intended victim in the year before the attempted murder. The same study shows that 76 percent of women killed by their intimate

partners had been stalked in the prior year.<sup>5</sup> Altogether, fully 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men have experienced stalking at some point in their lifetime in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Given the major risks that stalkers pose to victims when they have easy access to deadly weapons, a federal law prohibiting convicted stalkers from using firearms is long overdue and is crucial to keeping all victims safe.

To that end, we strongly urge the passage of S.1290, The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, sponsored by Senator Amy Klobuchar. S.1290 would close loopholes in federal law that exempt certain convicted stalkers from the federal gun prohibitions.

An additional provision in S.1290 would prohibit abusive dating partners from owning or possessing firearms. Nationwide, in 2012, more women were killed by their boyfriends than by their spouses, culminating a decades-long trend.<sup>7</sup> Despite this, federal law currently allows abusive partners convicted of misdemeanors for abusing their girlfriends or boyfriends to buy guns legally—simply because they never married or lived with their partners. The risks posed by an abusive partner do not depend on whether a couple has ever lived together or married; neither should the abusers treatment under the law.

These loopholes are not hypothetical: they are real gaps in our laws that are costing women, children, and men their lives. To protect victims of stalking and dating violence, we urge you to close the loopholes in the federal gun laws and pass S.1290.

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<sup>1</sup> The White House, Factsheet: The Violence Against Women Act. Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1qz51vN>

<sup>2</sup> National Stalking Awareness Month, Welcome (2014). Available at: <http://bit.ly/1kkXT00>

<sup>3</sup> White House Council on Women and Girls, Raising Awareness about Stalking (Jan 30, 2012) Available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1qhaKVO>

<sup>4</sup> 18 U.S.C. §§ 922(d)(9), (g)(9).

<sup>5</sup> Judith MacFarlane, Jacquelyn Campbell et al., Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide, 3Homicide Studies No. 4, 300-16 (Nov. 1999).

<sup>6</sup> National Stalking Resource Center, Stalking Fact Sheet (2012). Available at: <http://bit.ly/1ff9Be8>

<sup>7</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008-2012.



**Testimony for the Record by**

**Everytown for Gun Safety**

**Before the**

**Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate**

**Hearing on VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence**

**July 30, 2014**

Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this important hearing on "Protecting Women from Gun Violence." In the United States, violence against women is inextricably linked to our weak gun laws which allow guns to pass into the hands of domestic abusers. To protect women from gun violence, we must strengthen our laws to ensure that domestic abusers do not have access to guns.

The data are clear: The majority of women killed with guns each year are murdered by intimate partners.<sup>1</sup> People with a history of domestic violence pose an elevated risk of killing an intimate partner, and when a firearm is present in a domestic violence situation it increases the woman's risk of being murdered by more than 500 percent.<sup>2</sup> This is why women in the United States are 11 times more likely to be killed with guns than their peers in other comparable countries [see Figure 1]<sup>3</sup> — and why 48 American women are shot to death by their intimate partners each month.<sup>4</sup> As long as abusers continue to access guns through loopholes in our laws, hundreds of American women will needlessly die each year.

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<sup>1</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008-2012.

<sup>2</sup> JC Campbell et al, "Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study," *American Journal of Public Health*, July 2003.

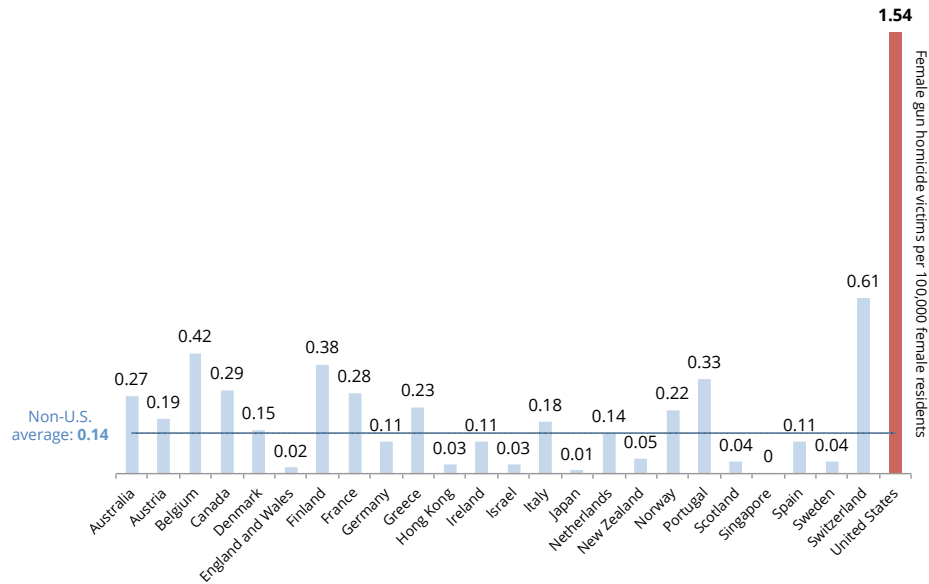
<sup>3</sup> Hemenway D, Shinoda-Tagawa T, Miller M. Firearm availability and female homicide victimization rates among 25 populous high-income countries. *J Am Med Womens Assoc.* 2002; 57(2):100-4.

<sup>4</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008-2012.





Figure 1: Comparing female gun homicide rates across high-income countries



Source: Hemenway D, Shinoda-Tagawa T, Miller M. Firearm availability and female homicide victimization rates among 25 populous high-income countries. *J Am Med Womens Assoc.* 2002; 57(2):100-4.

As the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country, Everytown for Gun Safety represents 1200 current and former mayors, along with a broad coalition of moms, law enforcement, gun violence survivors, and 2 million everyday Americans. We are Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. We develop and promote evidence-based laws and policies that will reduce gun violence and save lives, and we mobilize our members to advocate for common-sense public safety measures in their communities. In 2014 alone, we worked with legislators and domestic violence prevention advocates to pass laws in six states — Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin — that will protect victims of abuse by keeping guns out of abusers’ hands. These bills were signed into law by Democratic and Republican governors alike. And we will continue to work on both sides of the aisle to help pass common-sense laws that will save women’s lives.

Original research conducted by our organization provides further evidence that the domestic violence crisis in this country is a gun violence crisis. Our analysis of every mass shooting that occurred in the U.S. in the last six years showed that more than half of the perpetrators targeted an intimate partner or family member.<sup>5</sup> And our analysis of guns transferred online by unlicensed sellers found that 1 in 30 prospective gun buyers had a criminal history that prohibited them from buying guns — of whom 1 in 5 had a domestic violence conviction.<sup>6</sup> These numbers are stark, and we urge Congress to pass legislation soon to close loopholes in our laws and protect women from further harm.

**First**, we urge Congress to pass S. 1290, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act. The bill would save lives by closing the loopholes that allow abusive dating partners and convicted stalkers to buy and possess guns.

- Federal law already prohibits spousal abusers from having guns if they are convicted of domestic violence or subject to a restraining order, but it generally does not prohibit unmarried abusers. For three decades the share of intimate partner homicides committed by dating partners has been increasing,<sup>7</sup> and nationwide in 2012, more women were killed by their boyfriends than by their spouses.<sup>8</sup> But federal law currently allows abusive boyfriends convicted of assault to buy guns legally — simply because they were

<sup>5</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety, July 2014, “Analysis of Recent Mass Shootings,” available at: <http://every.tw/1tZDRDB>

<sup>6</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, September 2013, “Felon Seeks Firearm, No Strings Attached,” available at: <http://every.tw/1p1Zc77>

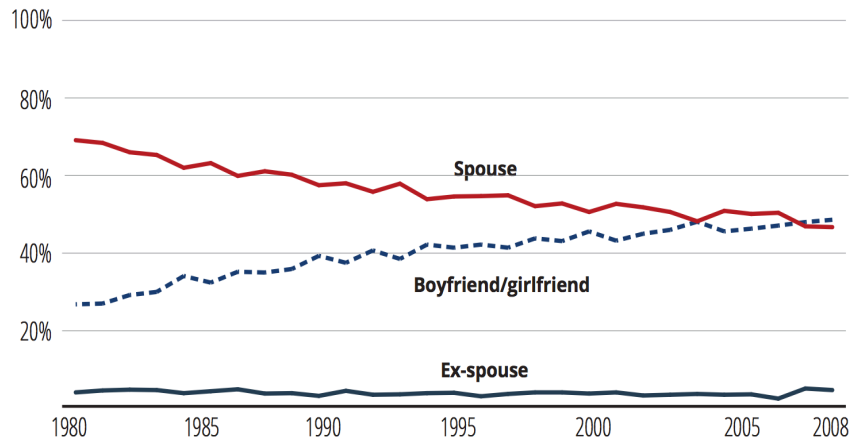
<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, November 2011, “Homicide Trends in the United States 1980-2008,” available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1uARYtW>

<sup>8</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports, 2008-2012.



never married to their victims. S.1290 would fix this loophole, updating federal gun law to encompass the same dating partners already protected under the Violence Against Women Act. Senator Blumenthal's bill, the Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act (S. 2483), would also make this critical fix.

**Figure 2: Murders of intimate partners by relationship type**



U.S. Department of Justice, Homicide Trends in the United States 1980-2008, available online at: <http://1.usa.gov/1uARYYW>. Percentages are based on the 63% of homicides for which victim/offender relationship was known.

- Federal law already prohibits convicted stalkers from having guns if their crimes are felonies, but it does not prohibit other stalking offenders with misdemeanor convictions. A study in 10 major American cities found that in nearly 90 percent of attempted murders of women, the perpetrator had stalked his intended victim in the year before the attempted murder.<sup>9</sup> S. 1290 would prohibit all convicted stalkers from possessing guns, ensuring that guns do not fall into these dangerous hands.

Fixing our laws to include these two categories of dangerous people who should be prohibited from having guns will save lives. Indeed, a history of domestic violence is highly predictive of intimate partner homicide: Women living in abusive households are nearly 15 times more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner or a family member.<sup>10</sup>

**Second**, Congress can protect women by requiring background checks for gun sales by unlicensed sellers, and ensuring that abusers cannot evade their prohibition and obtain guns. The existing background check system works well: 300,000 sales to prohibited abusers have been stopped since the National Instant Criminal Background Check System started operating in 1998.<sup>11</sup> But because federal law allows unlicensed sellers to transfer guns without a background check, it is easy for abusers to evade the system and avoid detection. For example, they can simply visit websites like Armslist.com — where more than 80,000 gun ads are hosted on any given day, the vast majority posted by unlicensed sellers — and find a gun locally that they can buy without a background check. This loophole ensures that whether or not an abuser's prohibiting conviction or restraining order is in the background check system, he can arm himself with no questions asked.

<sup>9</sup> JM McFarlane et al, "Stalking and intimate partner femicide," *Homicide Studies*, Nov. 1999.

<sup>10</sup> JE Bailey et al, "Risk factors for violent death of women in the home", *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1997.

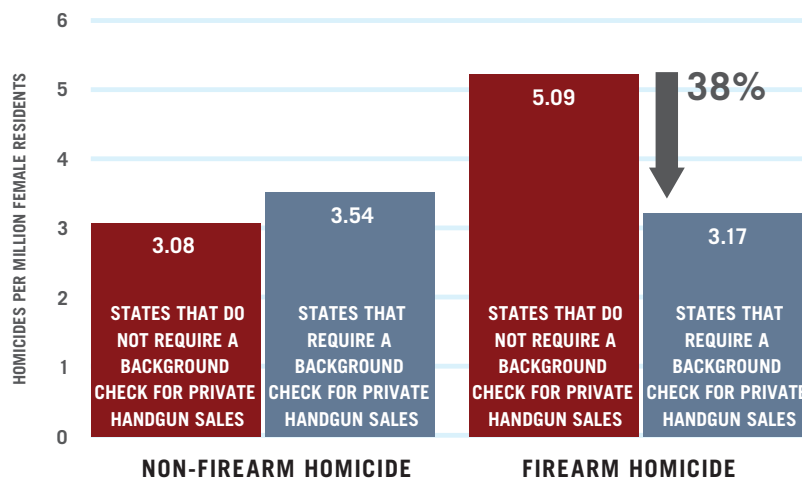
<sup>11</sup> Between the inception of the NICS system in 1998 and April 30, 2014, 154,584 gun sales were federally denied due to misdemeanor crime of domestic violence convictions or restraining or protection orders for domestic violence. (U.S. Department of Justice, FBI, NICS Denials: Reasons Why the NICS Section Denies, Nov. 1, 1998 – Apr. 30, 2014, at <http://1.usa.gov/1k9zURj>). Between 1998 and 2010, state and local agencies issued a total of 945,915 denials, and it is estimated they have issued 225,000 denials in the three years since data was last released. (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Feb. 2013, Background Checks for Firearms Transfers, 2010–Statistical Tables, Feb. 2013, at <http://1.usa.gov/Z8vYsa>). For agencies that reported reasons for these denials, 13.2% were denials for domestic violence reasons — which would represent another 155,000 domestic violence denials. Thus, the background check system has likely issued more than 300,000 denials for domestic violence reasons.



A groundbreaking investigation by Mayors Against Illegal Guns documented these sales in depth, showing that at least 1 in 30 people looking to buy guns on Armslist has a prohibiting criminal record.<sup>12</sup> One such person was Radcliffe Haughton — the domestic abuser who murdered his estranged wife Zina Daniel and two of her co-workers in Brookfield, Wisconsin in October 2012. As Zina’s brother Elvin will testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee today, Zina had taken out a restraining order against her husband, which prohibited Haughton from buying a gun. So he couldn’t shop at a gun store — because he would have failed a background check — but he was able to post an ad on Armslist seeking a gun “ASAP.” Just two days after the restraining order was in place, Haughton met an unlicensed gun seller in a McDonald’s parking lot and bought the handgun he would use the next day to murder Zina and two other women.

Strong laws can prevent these murders. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia now require background checks for all handgun sales. And where these laws are in place, 38 percent fewer women are killed by their intimate partners [see Figure 3].<sup>13</sup> Congress should require background checks for sales by unlicensed sellers — by passing the bipartisan legislation introduced in the Senate by Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) (S.Amdt.715 to S.649) and in the House by Congressmen Peter King (R-NY) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) (H.R. 1565). That legislation would simply require buyers to pass the same background checks they already pass when shopping with licensed dealers. The process is fast and straightforward, and gun owners already do it every time they buy from a licensed dealer. Fully 98.4% of Americans live within 10 miles of a gun dealer.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 3: Comparing intimate partner homicide rates of women in states that with and without background check laws**



These two measures are the most important steps Congress can take to protect women from fatal abuse. This is violence that affects all of our mothers, sisters, and daughters. Indeed, one in three women will face domestic abuse in her lifetime.<sup>15</sup> It’s time to ensure that abusers are prohibited from having guns and to ensure that the prohibition is enforced with a background check every time an abuser goes looking for a murder weapon.

<sup>12</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, September 2013, “Felon Seeks Firearm, No Strings Attached,” available at: <http://every.tw/1p1Zc77>

<sup>13</sup> Everytown analysis of FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports and Florida Department of Law Enforcement, 2010. Excludes New York due to incomplete data.

<sup>14</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety, “How Many Gun Dealers Are There in Your State?” available at: <http://everytown.org/article/how-many-gun-dealers-are-there-in-your-state/>

<sup>15</sup> CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2010, available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1jed2Xe>



# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING

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July 30, 2014

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senator  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

The American Academy of Nursing is pleased to extend our support for **S. 1290, *Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act*** and urge its adoption by Congress and signature into law.

Half of women murdered in the United States are killed by an intimate partner<sup>1</sup> and women in the United States are 11 times more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner than are women in other high income countries.<sup>2,3</sup> Research by nursing leaders has shown that access to a firearm increases a battered women's odds of being killed by her abuser by more than 5 times.<sup>4</sup> Among cases where the perpetrator killed himself after committing the intimate partner homicide, access to a gun increased the odds of homicide-suicide by 13-fold.

Evidence supports that restricting access to firearms reduces the risk of homicide. Two separate studies have demonstrated that when state laws restrict access to firearms by those under domestic violence restraining orders, the number of homicides by gun and overall homicide rates are reduced.<sup>5,6</sup>

Despite these alarming facts, Federal laws do not currently restrict abusive partners and those convicted of stalking from possessing firearms. S. 1290, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, closes loopholes that allow abusers and stalkers to possess and purchase firearms and addresses a significant public health problem: intimate partner murder.

Thank you for your leadership. Please do not hesitate to contact the American Academy of Nursing should you have questions or if our organization can be of any assistance; CEO Cheryl Sullivan may be contacted at [Cheryl\\_Sullivan@AANnet.org](mailto:Cheryl_Sullivan@AANnet.org).

<sup>1</sup>Violence Policy Center. When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2011 Homicide Data - Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender. [www.vpc.org](http://www.vpc.org)

<sup>2</sup>Hemenway D, Shinoda-Tagawa T, Miller M. Firearm availability and female homicide victimization rates

<sup>3</sup>Stöckl, H., Devries, K., Rotstein, A. Abrahams, N., Campbell, J., Watts, C. Garcia-Moreno, C. (2013). The global prevalence of intimate partner homicide. *The Lancet*. Published online June 20, 2013 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)61030-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)61030-2)<sup>3</sup>Lemaire J. (2005). The effect of firearm deaths on life expectancy and insurance premiums in the United States. *LDI Issue Brief*. 11(2):1-4.

<sup>4</sup>Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A Gary, F., Glass, N., McFarlane, J., Sachs, C., Sharps, P., Ulrich, Y., Wilt, S., Manganello, J., Xiao, X., Schollenberger, J., Frye, V.,

& Laughon, K. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multi-site case control study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

<sup>5</sup>Vigdor ER, Mercy JA. Do laws restricting access to firearms by domestic violence offenders prevent intimate partner homicide? *Evaluation Review* 2006; 30:313-46.

<sup>6</sup>Zeoli, A. & Webster, D. Effects of domestic violence policies, alcohol taxes and police staffing levels on intimate partner homicide in large US cities. *Injury Prevention* 2010;16:90-95.  
doi:10.1136/ip.2009.024620.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diana J. Mason".

Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN  
President, American Academy of Nursing

**Testimony for the Record by Laura Ponce**

**Submitted to the**

**Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate**

**Hearing on VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence**

**July 30, 2014**

Thank you to Chairman Leahy, Chairman Whitehouse, Senator Grassley, and the members of the Judiciary Committee, for holding this important hearing, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

My name is Laura Ponce, and I submit this testimony to honor my daughter, Laura Aceves, who was gunned down by her abusive boyfriend last year.

Laura died when she was just 21 years old, at the hands of a man who terrorized her more than a year before she died. I submit these comments to inform the members of the committee of the serious risks that face women like Laura when their abusers have easy access to guns. And I urge the Committee to make sure that dangerous abusers like Laura's killer cannot continue to use guns to threaten and kill women.

Laura met the man who killed her, Victor Acuna-Sanchez, at a friend's birthday party in our hometown, Berryville, Arkansas. They were just teenagers: Laura was 19, and Victor was only 17. They started dating soon after they met.

Before long, it became clear to Laura that getting involved with Victor was a terrible mistake. He was deeply controlling and violent, and he made her every moment a nightmare. He beat her on a weekly basis — beating her with a baseball bat, dragging her behind a car, repeatedly giving her black eyes, and choking her until she passed out. He also constantly threatened Laura and controlled everything she did: he repeatedly told her he would kill her if she ever left him, he destroyed her belongings, and he tried to stop her from leaving by burning her passport, social security card and birth certificate.

Obviously, Laura wanted the abuse to stop, and she didn't want to be in the relationship. But he would not let her leave, and every time she tried, he would beat her, destroy her stuff, and threaten her with more abuse if she tried to leave.

Less than a year before she died, Laura applied for a restraining order against Victor, telling the court that he terrorized her and wouldn't leave her alone. A few months after that, when Laura again tried to force him out of her life, he assaulted her and the police arrested him for domestic battery. But he was out of jail on bail within a couple of days, and he went to her apartment and attacked her. She told police about the attack, and even though it took a month for police to act, they finally arrested him and put him in jail. About three months before Laura's death, a judge set bail at \$15,000.

Unfortunately, about a month after that, his lawyer made a motion to let him out on bail, and it was granted. The court ordered him not to have any contact with Laura.

But on New Years Eve last year, Victor stormed into Laura's apartment and shot and killed her. Police found her dying on the floor of her apartment with a gunshot to the head. Her four-month-old son was lying by her side, covered in Laura's blood.

I am not a politician and I am not a policy expert. I am not filing these comments to give the members of this Committee a bunch of statistics. I'm writing these comments to share Laura's story, because there are so many thousands of women across the country who suffer the same kind of abuse that Laura did, and who are at risk of dying like Laura did, because our gun laws let their abusers buy and own guns.

I'm filing these comments so that the members of this Committee know that the problems of guns and violence against women are not abstract, theoretical numbers. These problems affect real people, and all too often they end real lives. I want the Committee to know Laura's story so you know the real flesh and blood people who your actions affect.

I want you to know Laura's story — and I want you to think of Laura, and what happened to her — when you are called upon to vote on laws that would keep guns away from dangerous abusers. I want you to think about Laura's story because I believe if you do then you will vote to keep women safe.

I understand that there are loopholes in our federal gun laws, that the gun prohibitions only apply to couples who are married, but generally not to unmarried dating partners and not to people who are convicted of stalking crimes. I also understand that Senator Klobuchar has introduced a bill, S.1290, that would save women's lives by updating the law to cover abusive dating partners and convicted stalkers. I urge you to pass S.1290 immediately.

I understand that it is too easy for domestic abusers to get guns in this country because even if they are prohibited from owning guns they can bypass the background check system and buy a gun from an unlicensed seller with no questions asked. I urge you to pass legislation that will require background checks on gun sales by unlicensed sellers.

I believe that all of the members of this Committee — and all your colleagues in Congress — are here in Washington because you want to do the right thing and you want to make our country stronger. You can make our country stronger by strengthening the laws that keep guns away from the most dangerous members of society, and by protecting the most vulnerable Americans — women like my daughter Laura.

I urge you to do so.

Thank you.





# STATES UNITED TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

**Board of Directors:**

Margot Bennett  
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Utah  
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Testimony for the Record by States United to Prevent Gun Violence

Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate

Hearing on VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence

July 30, 2014

Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley,  
Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a hearing on “Protecting Women from Gun Violence.” Our weak gun laws make it much too easy for domestic abusers to access firearms. We must do more to keep guns out of the hands of stalkers and domestic abusers.

Unfortunately, States United to Prevent Gun Violence and our 28 state affiliates are much too familiar with the tragedies that result from domestic abuse and guns. Four of our states, Arizona, Delaware, New Mexico and Oklahoma, were listed in the ten states with the highest rates of females murdered by males in Violence Policy Center’s September 2013 report *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2011 Homicide Data*. In many of our states, including Utah, Georgia, Maine, North Carolina, Colorado, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia, more than half the domestic violence homicides are committed with firearms. Recent tragedies in Virginia and Maine remind us that guns are sometimes used to wipe out an entire family. In Culpeper, Virginia a 35-year-old man shot to death his wife and his three children, ages 4, 6 and 13, before turning the gun on himself. And in Saco, Maine a man shot and killed his wife and three children, ages 4, 7 and 12, before taking his own life.

States United to Prevent Gun Violence strongly supports S. 1290, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act. The prohibition on gun and ammunition possession by a person convicted of a misdemeanor crime of stalking is an important step in keeping our families safe.

We urge you to do all you can to make our homes and our communities free from gun violence. Thank you.





Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
Hart Senate Office Bldg. Room 530  
Washington, DC 20510

August 5, 2014

Dear Senator Whitehouse:

Please accept this letter as part of the record of the hearing held by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on July 30, 2014 entitled, “VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence.”

### *Summary*

We are writing to clarify the record regarding statements that were made during the July 30<sup>th</sup> hearing that referenced our June 2014 report, “Women Under the Gun: How Gun Violence Affects Women and 4 Policy Solutions to Better Protect Them.”<sup>1</sup> During the hearing, Ranking Member Grassley correctly indicated that research conducted by the Center for American Progress found that most states are not submitting complete records of individuals prohibited from gun possession under 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(8) and (g)(9) to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for inclusion in the National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICS) Index. However, in referencing and quoting from this portion of our report, we are concerned that Ranking Member Grassley may have presented an incomplete picture of the extent to which states are failing in their responsibility to provide and access records of prohibited abusers during gun background checks. While few states are submitting complete records directly to the NICS Index, more states are pre-screening and flagging these records as gun-prohibiting in other FBI databases that are queried during background checks. Additionally, background checks across all states involve attempted case-by-case reviews of potentially disqualifying domestic violence records. It would be incorrect to draw an inference from Ranking Member Grassley’s statements during the hearing, as some observers may have, that a state’s failure to provide any domestic violence records to the NICS Index means that no domestic violence records from that state are searched during a background check of a gun buyer from that state. In fact, such records are searched. However, as our report recommends, pre-screening and pre-validating records is the best practice to ensure that these records are immediately available during a firearms background check. The failure of many states to pre-validate abuser records by providing them to the NICS Index and/or flagging them in another FBI criminal records database does lead to delayed background checks and, in some cases, to gun sales proceeding when individuals are, in fact, prohibited from gun possession under federal law because of domestic violence.

*Background on the NICS Index, the Interstate Identification Index, and the National Crime Information Center*

When an individual seeks to buy a firearm from a licensed dealer, the dealer submits the person's name and other limited identifying information to NICS for a background check to determine if the individual is qualified under state and federal law to buy a gun. The agency running the check – FBI for most states or state law enforcement in so-called “point-of-contact” states – then queries NICS, which primarily involves searches of three databases that contain criminal justice information and are used for a number of purposes in addition to firearm background checks: the Interstate Identification Index (III), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the NICS Index.<sup>2</sup> Each of these databases contains different types of records relevant to gun sale background checks: III includes records pertaining to criminal convictions; NCIC includes records relating to fugitives and individuals subject to restraining orders; and the NICS Index contains records submitted by states regarding any of the categories of prohibited purchasers.<sup>3</sup> The FBI also queries databases of Immigration and Customs Enforcement for records pertaining to noncitizens who attempt to purchase firearms.<sup>4</sup>

*Why Reviews of Domestic Abuser Records Are More Challenging*

Unlike other categories of prohibited purchasers, such as convicted felons or fugitives, it can be difficult to quickly ascertain whether an individual's criminal history renders him or her ineligible to purchase a firearm because of a conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence or the issuance of a domestic violence restraining order unless the record has been submitted directly to the NICS Index or pre-screened and flagged as prohibiting in III or NCIC. For potentially disqualifying domestic violence records that are not in the NICS Index or flagged, there are a number of reasons that the case-by-case review is slower and less complete than reviews of other categories of prohibited persons. First, records of misdemeanor domestic violence convictions and restraining orders that are in III and NCIC are often incomplete and require additional investigation to determine if they render the individual prohibited from gun possession.<sup>5</sup> For example, III may have a record of the individual being arrested for misdemeanor assault but not have information about whether that arrest resulted in a conviction. In such cases, the FBI (or state law enforcement in point-of-contact states) must contact the local court system or police agency to determine how the arrest was resolved, an investigation that can easily take longer than the three days the FBI is permitted by law to complete the check before the sale must proceed.<sup>6</sup>

Second, the federal definition of misdemeanor crime of domestic violence does not always easily align with state law crimes. For example, III may show that an individual was convicted of misdemeanor assault but does not indicate the relationship between the defendant and the victim or whether the requisite use of force required under federal law was an element of the state crime.<sup>7</sup> When that occurs, the FBI or state law enforcement must again contact local court and police officials to piece together the details of the conviction – a process that is even more time-consuming than just determining the basic disposition of a case.<sup>8</sup>

Third, even simply identifying whether a misdemeanor conviction is prohibiting because it involves domestic violence can pose a challenge, as many of these convictions do not present as such initially. In a number of states, these are merely assault or battery convictions, and the FBI must again do further research with local agencies to determine if it qualifies as a prohibiting conviction under federal law.<sup>9</sup> This process is made even more difficult because many states do not have easily accessible electronic records regarding misdemeanor convictions.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Benefits of Pre-Screening and Pre-Validating Domestic Abuser Records*

One solution to this problem is for states to proactively identify the individuals prohibited from gun ownership due to a domestic violence misdemeanor conviction or restraining order through a process that law enforcement experts refer to as “pre-validation.” Instead of urgent case-by-case examinations, where the FBI or state law enforcement try to figure out whether a particular record is qualifying at the time of a sale, pre-validation would mean that state law enforcement had reviewed all the potentially disqualifying records, identified those that are prohibiting under federal law and pre-validate them as such, and submit all those records to the FBI. Doing so would ensure that information regarding these individuals is immediately accessible to NICS operators during a background check and eliminate the need for any additional investigation into whether the individual’s criminal history renders him or her ineligible to purchase a firearm.

One way for states to engage in this pre-validation process is to flag disqualifying records in NCIC and III. Each of these indexes currently has a flag that allows states to identify records of individuals who are barred from gun ownership—restraining orders in NCIC and misdemeanor convictions in III. Using these flags allows the NICS operators to immediately ascertain that the individual is prohibited from gun possession and eliminates any ambiguity as to whether the individual has a disqualifying conviction or restraining order. While these flags are a preferred method of indicating that an individual is barred from gun possession because of his or her criminal history, according to a January 2014 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, only 22 states currently employ a flag to indicate that an individual is ineligible to purchase firearms.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to using these flags, when states pre-validate disqualifying records, they also have the option of submitting these records directly to the NICS Index. While the NICS Index is generally used to collect prohibiting records that are not otherwise available in the other indexes, it can also be used for records pertaining to any of the federal prohibitors. Submitting these pre-validated records to the NICS Index should not replace flagging these records in NCIC and III but instead should act as an additional safeguard to ensure that clear records of who is prohibited from firearm possession because of a domestic violence conviction or restraining order are immediately available during a background check.

The NICS Index is currently set up to accept these records, and, in fact, there are a substantial number of these records already in the index: As of June 30, 2014, there were more than 108,000 records of individuals convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors and more than 27,000

records of those subject to a domestic violence restraining order.<sup>12</sup> Few states, however, have adopted this approach; most either rely on III and NCIC to flag prohibited domestic abusers or are not flagging abusers at all. According to data obtained by the Center for American Progress through a Freedom of Information Act request to the FBI, as of December 31, 2013, only 36 states have submitted any domestic violence misdemeanor conviction records to the NICS Index, and of these, 21 states have submitted 20 or fewer of these records. But a few states have begun to submit these records to the FBI for inclusion in the NICS Index in large numbers—conducting exactly the “pre-validating” batch review that the FBI recommended in a 2012 report.<sup>13</sup> In fact, fully 79 percent of all the state domestic violence conviction records submitted to the NICS Index come from just three states: Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New Mexico.

Progress has been made in recent years to improve electronic access to state conviction records, which has likely reduced some of the problems with identifying prohibited domestic abusers during a NICS background check. A number of states have received significant grant funding through the National Criminal History Improvement Program to improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of criminal history records as a general matter,<sup>14</sup> as well as funding through the NICS Improvement Act of 2007 specifically intended to improve record submission to NICS.<sup>15</sup> But despite these efforts, as of the end 2012, less than half of the states employed a flag to indicate that an individual’s criminal history renders him or her ineligible to buy a gun.<sup>16</sup> All states should consider following practices like those of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New Mexico—reviewing all potentially disqualifying domestic violence records upfront, pre-validating those records, flagging those records in III and NCIC, and submitting these records directly to the FBI for inclusion in the NICS Index.<sup>17</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this issue for the record.

Very truly yours,

Arkadi Gerney  
Senior Fellow

Chelsea Parsons  
Director, Crime and Firearms Policy

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<sup>1</sup> Our full report can be found at <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/GunsDomesticViolencereport.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Gun Control: Sharing Promising Practices and Assessing Incentives Could Better Position Justice to Assist States in Providing Records for Background Checks,” GAO-12-684, Report to Congressional Requesters, United States Congress, July 2012, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/592452.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Operations 2012,” available at <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/reports/2012-operations-report> (last accessed May 2014).

<sup>5</sup> General Accounting Office, “Gun Control: Opportunities to Close Loopholes in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, July 2002,” p. 20-23, GAO-02-720, Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/235091.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2012* (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014), table 7, available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bjs/grants/244563.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Active Records in NICS Index as of June 30, 2014,” available at <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/reports/nics-index-070314.pdf> (last accessed July 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Operations 2012.”

<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “National Criminal History Improvement Program,” available at <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=47> (last accessed May 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “The NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007,” available at <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=49> (last accessed May 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2012*, table 7.

<sup>17</sup> One caveat to this recommendation is that states that conduct their own NICS background checks—known as “Point of Contact” states—may have better practices already in place for quickly identifying prohibiting records for domestic abusers when they seek to buy guns. In these states, because a state law-enforcement agency is conducting the check they often have better access to local conviction and restraining order data.



July 31, 2014

The Honorable Pat Leahy  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: National Physicians Alliance Supports Federal Legislation to Protect Women**

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the National Physicians Alliance, an organization representing physicians across medical specialties, I am writing to express strong support for two pieces of legislation designed to protect victims of domestic violence by restricting their abusers' access to firearms:

- S. 1290 - The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, introduced by Senator Klobuchar
- S. 2483 - The Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act, introduced by Senator Blumenthal

Thank you for holding yesterday's hearing to address this important issue. As physicians, we see the impact of domestic violence on our patients and their families. We treat the wounds and bruises and work to help victims heal, but when firearms are part of the picture there is all too often little we can do but help families and communities grieve. Protecting victims of domestic violence and stalking from gun violence by their intimate partners—*regardless of their marital status*—and restricting their abusers' access to firearms are critically necessary steps, as are requiring provision of all records of prohibited abusers to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and a background check on all gun sales.

Both of these pieces of legislation include commonsense measures that will protect victims and strengthen families and communities. We urge you to support their swift passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Scott", is written over a white rectangular area.

Jim Scott, MD  
NPA President





NATIONAL NETWORK  
TO END DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

NNEADV

1400 16TH STREET NW  
SUITE 330  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

[www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org)  
phone: 202.543.5566  
fax: 202.543.5626

**Testimony for the Record of the National Network to End Domestic Violence  
for the July 30, 2014 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on  
VAWA Next Steps: Protecting Women from Gun Violence**

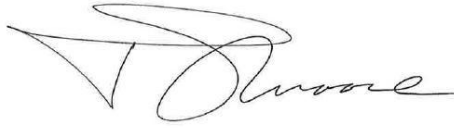
Senator Whitehouse, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEADV), along with its 56 State and Territorial Domestic Violence and Dual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions, their 2300 programs and the millions of women, children and men they serve, thank you for convening this first ever Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the tragic, yet solvable, connection between women's homicides and dangerous abusers' and stalkers' possession of firearms.

NNEADV made this hearing our highest priority for the Senate Judiciary Committee this session because [the statistics](#) show that the nexus between women's homicides and firearm abuse is startling. Annually, an average 3,551 women in the U.S. are homicide victims. More than half are killed with a firearm. More than three times as many women are murdered with guns used by current or former husbands' and boyfriends', than by any combination of strangers' guns, knives or other weapons. Fifty-seven (57%) of recent mass murders in the U.S. involved domestic violence. Homicides are among the leading causes of death for U.S. women of dating age. More women are killed by dating partners than married partners. There is a high correlation between stalking and women's homicides. And critically, abusers are at their deadliest when they recognize a victim's efforts to end an abusive relationship.

The statistics are appalling. The stories behind the statistics are horrifying. In Semmes, [Alabama](#), Erica Lankford and Steven Lankford were killed by their brother in law during his stalking of Ms. Lankford's sister. The same year in Phoenix, [Arizona](#), Carol Sanders, her 14 year-old daughter, Audrey, and Ms. Sander's brother, Tom Fitzpatrick were murdered by Ms. Sanders' abusive husband who was able to retain multiple firearms despite Ms. Sanders' protection order against him. In Sacramento, [California](#), Tamisha Evette, after obtaining a temporary restraining order, was fatally shot by her ex-boyfriend who had stalked her from Los Angeles to Sacramento. In Oxford, [Connecticut](#), Lori Jackson was murdered and her mother severely injured when Lori's estranged husband shot them just one day before the temporary restraining order against him became permanent. After months of being stalked by her ex-husband and his family, Christine Belford and her friend Laura Mulford were murdered, and two police officers shot, in a [Delaware](#) court house. Kristine Cass had been stalked by her ex-boyfriend for weeks before he killed her and her 13-year-old daughter, Sandra in a residential neighborhood of Honolulu, [Hawaii](#). In Jesup, [Iowa](#), 22-year-old Lindsay Marie Nichols was stalked and then fatally shot by her ex-boyfriend, a 45-year-old radiologist. Just one day after obtaining a protection order against him, Melissa Nickel, of Freeport, [Illinois](#), was fatally shot by her ex-boyfriend. In Antrim Township, [Minnesota](#), 25-year Ashley Ann Sullivan and her stepfather Chester Michael Gronewold, were shot and killed by Ms. Sullivan's ex-boyfriend after twice being arrested for acts of domestic violence (including violation of a no contact order) and just three days after having been released from jail. In Lakeview, [New York](#), Jackie Wisniewski, after ending a relationship with her ex-boyfriend was stalked and then murdered in a stairwell at the Erie County Medical Center. In [South Carolina](#), Lancaster teen, Sierra Landry, was fatally shot by her ex-boyfriend. Ashleigh Lindsey, a 20-year-old Texoma, [Texas](#) woman, was fatally shot by her ex-boyfriend. In [Utah](#), Shantelle Reid was fatally shot by her boyfriend. In [Vermont](#), Rhonda Gray, was shot and

killed by her husband who was prohibited from having firearms. S. 1290, S. 2483 and S. 2676 could have helped save these victims' lives.

For these reasons we urge every member the Senate Judiciary to support the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2013 (S. 1290), the Domestic Violence Gun Homicide Prevention Act of 2014 (S. 2676) and the Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act (S. 2483). As the following stories illustrate, passage of these three legislative initiatives can play a significant role in reducing the homicides of abuse and stalking victims and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paulette Sullivan Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S" that are connected.

Paulette Sullivan Moore  
Vice President of Public Policy  
National Network to End Domestic Violence