

House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force Overview

The House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, chaired by California Representative Mike Thompson, is working to enact a comprehensive set of policy principles into law that are designed to reduce gun violence while respecting the Second Amendment Rights of law-abiding Americans.

In developing these principles, our task force met with virtually everyone: victims of gun violence and gun safety advocates; gun owners, hunters, and outdoor sportsmen; federal, state, and local law enforcement; educators and community workers; mental health experts and physicians; representatives of the motion picture, television, music, and video game industries; leaders in our faith communities; representatives of gun manufacturers and gun retailers; cabinet secretaries and the Vice President of the United States.

The task force also met with people from all sides of the issue and held hearings to inform the principles they proposed for action.

Currently, the task force is working to pass legislation requiring a background check for every commercial gun sale, such as those made at gun shows and over the internet, while respecting reasonable exceptions for cases such as gifts between family members and temporary loans for sporting purposes.

Chairman Thompson has co-authored a bipartisan background check bill, H.R. 1565, with Republican Representative Peter King of New York. It has 189 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives.

H.R. 1565 requires comprehensive and enforceable background checks on all commercial gun sales, including those at gun shows, over the internet or through classified ads while providing reasonable exceptions for family and friends. Background checks would be conducted through a licensed dealer in the same manner as they have for more than 40 years.

The evidence shows background checks work. Every day at licensed gun stores where background checks are required, the background check system stops more than 17 felons, nearly 50 domestic abusers, and nearly 20 fugitives from buying a gun. However, anyone of those people blocked at a licensed dealer could turn around and get a gun at a gun show or buy one online.

H.R. 1565 would stop this. Passing H.R. 1565 is the top priority of the Task Force. Expanding background checks saves lives and respects the Second Amendment.

The Task Force recognizes, however, a comprehensive solution is needed.

In addition to H.R. 1565, the task force is also working to pass legislation aimed specifically at cracking down on illegal gun trafficking and straw-purchasing. Straw-purchasing is when a prohibited purchaser has someone with no criminal history walk into a gun store, pass a background check and purchase a gun with the purpose of giving it to a prohibited purchaser.

Additionally, the task force is working on improving our mental health system and assisting local communities in applying evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies that address the problems that lead to gun violence before those problems start.

The Task Force has also urged Congress to restore funding for public safety, law enforcement and research initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence. The Task Force has called on Congress to support responsible gun ownership by incentivizing safety training, research into new gun safety technologies and the safe storage of firearms. And, among other proposals, the Task Force has called on Congress to take steps to enhance school safety.

While the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force recognizes that there is no one law or set of laws that will eliminate gun violence, that cannot be an excuse to do nothing. Acting on the Task Force's proposed principles will reduce gun violence, save lives and respect the Second Amendment.