



ACTION ALERT: Urge Your Senators and Representatives to Co-Sponsor and Pass a Law to Prevent Domestic Abusers from Having Firearms

Oct. 6, 2015

NOTE: Again, a crazed, lone gunman is responsible for a mass shooting. The tragedy occurred on Oct. 1 at Umpquah Community College in Roseburg, Ore. when a student, Chris Harper-Mercer, opened fire, shooting and killing nine people and injuring nine others. Harper-Mercer, who is reported to have suffered from mental health issues, owned 14 guns. This tragedy was the 294th mass shooting – where four or more people are killed or injured by gunfire – thus far in 2015. A significant proportion of those shot or injured in mass shootings are victims of a domestic violence/family violence incident. The toll for women murdered by men usually with a gun in 2013 was more than 1,600, according to new study by the Violence Policy Center. ⁱ

Dating Violence A Problem - Many would be concerned to learn that current law does not prohibit those convicted of domestic violence against a dating partner from purchasing and owning firearms. This gaping hole in federal legislation could be filled by passing the Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act (H.R.3130), a domestic violence victim protection bill. The legislation is sponsored by Rep. Debbie Dingle (D-Mich.) who disclosed at a Domestic Violence Month Awareness event last week that, as a child, she was a victim of family violence with a father who terrorized the family with violent threats and attacks.

Gaps in Legislation – Currently, only those who have been convicted of domestic violence against a current or former spouse, cohabitant, or person with whom the perpetrator shares a biological child are barred from owning firearms. Passed in 1996, the Lautenberg Amendment aimed to protect people at increased risk of gun violence by barring those convicted of domestic violence from owning guns. However, this law does not apply to offenders who are found to have punched, strangled, or beaten a dating partner.

Danger Offenders with Guns Pose to Women - With statistics showing that half of all women killed by intimate partners are killed by dating partners, it is clear that firearms should be kept out of the hands of all perpetrators of domestic violence, regardless of their marital status. ⁱⁱ People facing dating violence are 500 percent more likely to be killed by their perpetrator if a firearm is present, demonstrating that keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers is key to saving lives. ⁱⁱⁱ A study cited by Rep. Robert Dold (R-Ill.), a co-sponsor of H.R.3130, found that 76 percent of murdered women had been stalked in the year leading up to their death. Stalking and intimate partner violence are both indicators of lethality which means that the more quickly Congress acts on this legislation, the fewer people will die at the hands of abusers and stalkers who can now legally and easily obtain firearms.

A similar measure (S. 1520, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2015) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) with Sen. Mazie Hirono

(D-Hawaii) as co-sponsor. Both bills have been referred to the respective judiciary committees. Pressure on members of Congress is needed – especially during October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month – to schedule hearings and move these important bills to a floor vote.

Call, e-mail, or schedule a meeting with your representative and senators and ask them to co-sponsor, support, and vote for these bills.

The main number for Congress is (202) 225-3131 and a directory of House member's office numbers is available at <http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

A directory of Senate member's office numbers is available at <http://www.senate.gov/senators/>

You can send a formatted email message to Member of Congress by clicking on Take Action.

ⁱ *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2013 Homicide Data*, <http://www.vpc.org/press/more-than-1600-women-murdered-by-men-in-one-year-new-study-finds/>

ⁱⁱ Cooper, A. & Smith, E. L. (2011). *Homicide trends in the United States, 1980-2008*.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research (2003). *Firearms and Intimate partner violence*.

URGE YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE TO CO-SPONSOR BILLS TO PREVENT ABUSERS FROM HAVING GUNS

TAKE ACTION: October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Members of Congress should be asked to co-sponsor and help to pass legislation such as H.R. 3130/S. 1520 that would close a loophole in the Lautenberg Amendment. More than 1,600 women are murdered each year by a man and usually with a gun. This potentially lifesaving legislation would protect the many women facing dating abuse and stalking violence by keeping guns out of the hands of violent offenders.

Subject: Please co-sponsor “No Guns for Abusers” legislation

Your Letter:

Dear Member of Congress:

I am urging you to become a co-sponsor of legislation that would close a loophole in the Lautenberg Amendment that allows offenders who have punched, strangled or beaten a dating partner to purchase and own a firearm. Stalkers would also be prohibited from purchasing and owning a firearm. As you may know, the Lautenberg Amendment prohibited those who have been convicted of domestic violence against a current or former spouse, cohabitant, or person with whom the perpetrator shares a biological child are barred from purchasing or owning firearms. But it does not cover offenses such as dating violence or stalking.

The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act (S. 1520), sponsored by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, and the Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act (H.R. 3130) would close that dangerous loophole. They would:

- Expand the definition of intimate partner to include a dating partner
- Include under “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence” the use or attempted use of physical force or a deadly weapon by a current or former intimate partner
- Bar convicted stalkers from buying or owning firearms
- Prohibit people who have abused dating partners and been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence from buying or owning firearms

The Violence Policy Center reports that 1,600 women were killed by men in 2013, usually with a gun. Closing the Lautenberg Amendment loophole will help reduce this horrendous number of murders.

Please sign on to this important legislation as a co-sponsor as well as urge the Judiciary Committee to hold hearings and move the legislation to a floor vote.

Sincerely,