



June 1, 2022

Chairman Durbin  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
US Senate Judiciary Committee  
Washington, DC

Chairman Nadler  
2132 Rayburn House Office Building  
US House Judiciary Committee  
Washington, DC

Ranking Member Grassley  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
US Senate Judiciary Committee  
Washington, DC

Ranking Member Jordan  
2056 Rayburn House Office Building  
US House Judiciary Committee  
Washington, DC

Dear Chairs Durbin and Nadler, Ranking Members Grassley and Jordan, and Members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees:

I write to ask for your help in bringing comprehensive gun reform legislation to Congress to save lives. Last March, you held an important hearing on constitutional and common-sense steps to reduce gun violence and today we write you to ask for these committees to take a step further and take action to pass comprehensive legislation that can curb the senseless violence happening around the country. As the League of Women Voters of the United States (the “League”), we are a century-seasoned, federated organization with more than 500,000 members and supporters across the country who conduct our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. The League has fought for decades alongside state officials, law enforcement, and the public to educate on the dangers of gun violence and provide comprehensive recommendations towards reform.

While the League of Women Voters of the United States has appreciated the opportunity to share with the Senate Judiciary Committee our strong support for past hearings, we now write to implore you to do more in the wake of recent gun violence against innocent women, men, and children. Comprehensive legislative reform must be moved through this committee and considered for a floor vote to reduce gun violence and increase public safety for the nation. We are grateful that common sense legislation has moved in the US House, but there is more that must be done by both chambers of Congress to ensure that the horrific mass shootings of our children and our communities come to an end.

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In the past few weeks, we now have two *more* recent examples of horrific gun violence that led to the loss of innocent lives. Last week, the nation watched in horror as it was reported that an armed gunman walked into Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas just days before children went on summer break, shooting and killing 19 students and two adults. Across the country parents are reeling as more details are released and a community is faced with grieving lost loved ones. This shooting is one of the deadliest since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting one decade ago. And just two weeks ago, the world watched yet another gunman kill grocery shoppers at Tops Friendly Market Stores, killing 11 innocent people while carrying out what should be a safe and everyday activity of grocery shopping.

In 2021 when we submitted testimony on this issue, it was in the aftermath of mass shootings targeting Asian American women in Atlanta, Georgia, and a grocery store shooting in Boulder, Colorado. **Those attacks, coupled with new attacks just one year later, demand the League to elevate this life-or-death issue and implore Congress to move comprehensive gun reform immediately for consideration to ease the suffering of the American families already impacted by these tragedies and stand as an edict against further loss of lives.**

As comprehensive gun safety reform is considered and implemented, it must include: (1) closing the gun show loophole, (2) providing universal background checks, (3) banning assault weapons and placing limits on high-capacity ammunition magazine size, (4) increasing penalties for straw purchases of guns, and (5) funding research and reporting on gun violence in America. Curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety and health to restore public confidence in our government's ability to protect communities and vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and people of color who are often targets of gun violence.

### **Closing Gun Show Loopholes**

Only federally licensed firearms dealers are required to conduct background checks. However, 40 percent of gun sales are completed without a background check, including private online sales, gun show sales, person-to-person sales, and other private transactions. Approximately ninety-seven percent of voters want Congress to expand background checks to all gun sales, including gun owners and vendors. Background check expansions must be enacted immediately to reduce gun violence in our communities.

### **Providing Universal Background Checks**

All firearm transfers should require background checks. In the 25 years since the *Brady Law*, more than three million illegal firearm transfers have been prevented. In 2015 alone, an average of 619 individuals per day were deemed by law to be too dangerous to possess a gun and were blocked by this system. Background checks are conclusively effective and have saved countless lives. For these reasons, we encourage the Senate to pass S.529, the *Background Check Expansion Act*, and take other bold steps to limit the crisis of gun violence in our country.



## **Banning Assault Weapons and Limiting Magazine Size**

Congress must pass legislation to ban all military-style semi-automatic assault weapons like the one used to murder ten innocent people in Boulder, Colorado in 2021. Two-thirds of registered voters nationwide support a ban on the sale of assault weapons. These devices allow shooters to fire numerous rounds in rapid succession without having to stop and reload. Assault weaponry has been a central part of the mass killings in schools and public meeting places in the last ten years.

Furthermore, placing limits on magazine size is a common-sense solution to shootings that risk multiple lives. This limit should include magazines and other ammunition feeding devices that hold more than ten ammunition rounds.

## **Increasing Penalties for Straw Purchases of Guns**

Buying a gun for someone prohibited by law from possessing one or for someone who does not want their name associated with the transaction is an illegal firearm “straw” purchase. Because straw purchases of guns are a federal crime, Congress should pass legislation to increase the penalties for straw purchases when individuals who do not have criminal records buy guns and pass them on to individuals who are not eligible to purchase a firearm, including people convicted of a felony and domestic abusers.

## **Funding Research and Reporting of Gun Violence**

In 2018-2019, the nation experienced more than four hundred mass shootings according to the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research group that tracks shootings and their characteristics in the United States. These mass shootings included high-profile shootings in El Paso, Texas; Parkland, Florida; and Dayton, Ohio. The League showed up in all these instances to protect their communities.

In 2020, the House approved \$25 million in federal research funding to study gun violence. The bill passed just days after the [seventh anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting](#) that killed 26 people, including 20 children. That bill went unheard in the Senate at the time, but now is a critical opportunity for the Senate to show leadership by passing similar legislation and seeing it through to the President’s desk.

## **A Mandate for Reform**

Throughout the country, local and state League affiliates have held online and in-person meetings with their neighbors to discuss the crisis of gun violence. With the recent attacks in sacred places such as schools and everyday places like the grocery store, there is no time to wait. We will continue to testify before state legislatures and meet with community members to find common ground and determine policy solutions, but we urge Congress to pass common-sense and comprehensive gun reform legislation to curb gun violence.

The League will continue our demand that words and conversations must transcend into action. The League beseeches the House and Senate to bring bipartisan legislation before the chamber



that will close the gun show loophole, provide universal background checks, ban assault weapons and place limits on high-capacity ammunition magazine size, increase penalties for straw purchases of guns, and fund research and reporting on gun violence in America.

Comprehensive gun safety reform cannot wait. Our communities cannot bear another day of violent acts against our most vulnerable members of society. And we want reform now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Virginia Kase Solomón". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial "V".

Virginia Kase Solomón

CEO