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## **Shooting of 7-year-old underscores need for safe storage for firearms Colorado lacks adequate safe storage laws**

STATEWIDE – Following the tragic unintentional shooting of a 7-year-old boy in Aurora last Thursday afternoon, Colorado Ceasefire is reminding gun owners to always keep their guns unloaded and locked up. It also urges parents to ask if there are guns in the home of where their children play. “One out of every four homes in the United States has a gun, so it is so important to take these steps” says Eileen McCarron, President of Colorado Ceasefire Capitol Fund. “Too many gun owners think they can safely have a gun in their home without locking it up, but the shooting of this young boy shows how wrong that thinking is,” added McCarron.

Of the 58 unintentional firearm deaths in Colorado from 2005 through 2012, 26 percent occurred among children and youth aged 0-19 years (CDPHE).

Former state Senator Pat Pascoe, who in the 90’s ran multiple bills requiring safe storage said, “We need to create a crime of negligent storage and establish it as a class 1 misdemeanor.” Her thoughts were echoed by former state senator Sue Windels, who later sponsored a similar bill, adding “We pray for this child’s recovery, but simultaneously find it reprehensible if an adult did indeed leave an unlocked loaded gun at a site where children would be playing.”

Those and other efforts to encourage safe storage of firearms have failed in the Colorado General Assembly because of the opposition of the gun lobby, whose presence is strongly felt in Colorado, particularly in Republican primaries. “It’s clear that the gun lobby is on the wrong side of this issue and children are dying because of it,” said Tom Mauser, Colorado Ceasefire spokesperson. He noted that “a child’s innate curiosity and lack of good judgment will always trump the gun lobby’s ‘don’t touch’ message.”

“We believe most citizens want to protect children and support safe storage laws. We encourage citizens to let their elected officials know that safe storage is not in contradiction with the right to keep and bear arms,” said Mauser.

In Colorado charges can only be incurred if the gun owner intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly gives a gun to a child (Colo. Rev. stat. § 18-12-108.7). Fifteen other states have more stringent laws in which the gun owner can be charged if child “may” or “is likely to” access carelessly stored gun or if a child accesses a carelessly stored gun. Research has shown that states with such laws experienced a 23% reduction in child deaths from unintentional shootings (Peter Cummings et al., *State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms*, 278 JAMA 1084, 1084 (Oct. 1997).

Since 2000, Colorado Ceasefire has been working to reduce gun violence in Colorado through legislation and education.

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