



P.O. Box 7501
Denver, Colorado 80207
303-380-6711
web: www.ColoradoCeasefire.org

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For information, contact:
Eileen McCarron 303-946-6959 or 303-377-7697

Colorado Ceasefire Applauds President Obama's Executive Actions to Reduce Gun Violence and Notes Effects in Colorado

Colorado Ceasefire applauds President Obama's announcement of new executive actions* to reduce gun violence. His proposal is a multi-pronged common sense approach focused on:

- Keeping guns out of the wrong hands through more thorough background checks.
- Making our communities safer from gun violence
- Increasing mental health treatment and reporting to the background system
- Shaping the future of gun safety technology

Many of the criticisms of the President's actions, including those of Rep. Mike Coffman, are related to the fact that Obama is issuing executive orders rather than seeking legislative action. But we believe that the President had little choice but to act in this way, given that Congress has failed to act on loopholes in our gun laws or consider any other changes.

After the Columbine massacre, the ramifications of the gun show loophole became obvious. In 2000, the late state Senator Ken Gordon elicited testimony from a young woman who was the purchaser of three of the guns used in the massacre. About buying the guns for her friends, she stated: "It was too easy. I wish it would have been more difficult. I wouldn't have helped them buy the guns if I had faced a criminal background check."

Colorado citizens realized how easy it was to circumvent criminal background checks by utilizing gun shows and subsequently closed the gun show loophole by a 70%-30% vote.

Following the Aurora massacre in 2012, Colorado further extended background checks to cover all transfers of firearms. Critics have charged that background checks do not work and that criminals don't get them. But in the first 11 months of 2015, over 6500 persons in Colorado were blocked from purchasing firearms, including 329 for domestic violence restraining orders and 21 for homicide. Obviously, they were stopped from making a purchase.

"Across the country, polls indicate that 92% of Americans (including 83% of gun owners) support universal background checks," stated Eileen McCarron of Colorado Ceasefire, "but Congress has been deaf to the people's wishes and has blocked all efforts to tighten the law." Even though we in Colorado require background checks on every gun transfer, we are vulnerable to the gun shows in neighboring states. Prohibited persons can circumvent the entire process by making a quick trip to a gun show in Kansas, Wyoming, Utah or other nearby state. President Obama's action to tighten up the vague language of "engaged in the business" of firearms sales will provide an impediment to the ability of felons and domestic violence abusers to cross state lines in order to obtain firearms.

Critics charge that these proposals attack gun rights. Tom Mauser, father of Daniel Mauser, who perished at Columbine High School, stated "I fail to see how background checks deny the right of law-abiding citizens to bear arms. The first step to determining who is law-abiding is to conduct a background check."

The gun lobby has repeatedly intoned that "we don't need more laws; we just need to enforce the ones we have." They should therefore be pleased with a large portion of the President's actions today, including stepped up enforcement of gun laws through the U.S. Attorney's offices. Additionally, the FBI will improve notification of local authorities when prohibited individuals attempt to purchase a firearm, a practice that reportedly is already occurring through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, which conducts all background checks in this state.

Colorado will additionally benefit from more FBI and ATF staff, and from the increase in mental health funding. Through combined efforts of the Social Security Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services, the background check system will be improved by removing some impediments to inclusion of persons prohibited for mental health reasons.

President Obama clearly was deeply touched by the repeated mass shootings in 2015. At the Charleston memorial for Rev. Pickney in June, he declared "For too long, we've been blind to the unique mayhem that gun violence inflicts upon this nation." McCarron noted that "President Obama is not blind to that mayhem, and we praise him for the courage and leadership he has taken in acting within his constitutionally-provided powers to work to save people's lives."

*An extensive White House fact sheet on all the executive actions can be found at:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/04/fact-sheet-new-executive-actions-reduce-gun-violence-and-make-our>

Colorado Ceasefire, an all-volunteer statewide organization, has been fighting for freedom from gun violence since 2000. Ceasefire initiated and was instrumental in the enactment of the 2013 Colorado firearms laws, which included universal background checks, a high capacity magazine ban, and domestic violence firearms relinquishment.

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