

Brady Campaign



To Prevent Gun Violence

December 2, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Warning regarding significant threat to homeland security

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid, and Members of the United States Senate:

We are writing to urge you to immediately address an issue that poses a vital threat to our homeland security: the easy availability of firearms in our nation to known or suspected terrorists, and others intent on doing harm to U.S. citizens on U.S. soil. **We hope you will consider this warning with all the gravity attached in hindsight to the now famous August 2001 President's Daily Brief delivered by the CIA entitled "Bin Ladin determined to strike U.S."**

The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence united with the Million Mom March urges you to bring legislation immediately to the Senate floor to close the obvious and significant loopholes in our laws that make guns easily available to would-be terrorists and others intent on doing harm in our nation.

One proposal under consideration is S.551, The **Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act of 2015**, sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), which would prevent known or suspected terrorists from buying guns at federally licensed dealers. While current federal law prohibits nine categories of dangerous people from purchasing or owning firearms, known and suspected terrorists are not among them. To be clear, this is an important measure, but it is not nearly enough.

In most states, background checks are only conducted at federally licensed firearm dealers. This means anyone prohibited from buying a firearm, who would be stopped by a background check at a federally licensed dealer, can just as easily go online or go to a gun show and buy a gun without any background check at all. That's why Congress must BOTH add known or suspected terrorists to our background check system AND expand Brady background checks to all gun sales.

If we don't do both, it would be like giving would-be terrorists two options to board a plane, one with screening that is likely to stop them, and one with no screening whatsoever. What's more, we have

evidence that terrorists are very knowledgeable of this significant vulnerability. In 2011, in an [Al Qaeda video](#), a notorious Al Qaeda spokesperson explicitly encourages jihadists in the U.S. to buy weapons at gun shows and use them to shoot their fellow citizens:

“America is absolutely awash with easily obtainable firearms. You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center and come away with a fully automatic assault rifle without a background check... so what are you waiting for.”

The reality is, Brady background checks have already been remarkably effective keeping guns out of dangerous hands. More than 2.4 million sales have been blocked to prohibited purchasers such as convicted felons, domestic abusers and the dangerously mentally ill without infringing, whatsoever on the rights of law abiding citizens to buy and own guns.

The problem is that gun shows and the Internet have become major commercial outlets for gun sales where, every day, thousands of guns are sold in our country without any background check whatsoever. Expanding effective Brady background checks to gun shows and online and adding known or suspected terrorists to the background check system, would do even more to keep guns out of the wrong hands including, significantly, any known or suspected terrorists that are added to the background check system.

If Congress truly is concerned with closing the so-called “terror gap,” it must not only add known or suspected terrorists to the background check system, it must expand the background checks to the thousands of sales that happen every day online and at gun shows.

It is our great fear that if Congress continues to do nothing to address these significant loopholes in our nation’s background check laws that make guns easily available to people intent on doing us harm, that this issue is a time bomb waiting to explode. If it winds up resulting in the loss of American lives to terrorism on our own soil, Congress will have to answer as to why it did nothing about it.

Thank you for your anticipated time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Dan Gross
President, Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence