Support Common Sense Steps To Prevent Gun Violence

Since 2013, we have had nearly 400 school shootings, according to Everytown for Gun Safety. Like most Americans, NEA members overwhelmingly support universal background checks. But they are only a first step — we need a comprehensive approach to addressing gun violence that includes the common sense steps discussed below.

STRENGTHEN BACKGROUND CHECKS (H.R. 8/S. 42 and H.R. 1112)

- On January 8 — the eighth anniversary of the mass shooting in Arizona that killed six and injured 15, including former Representative Gabrielle Giffords — bills were introduced in both chambers to expand background checks.
- The Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8) and Background Checks Expansion Act (S. 42) require a background check for every gun sold, including those purchased at gun shows and over the internet, as well as most transfers.
- The Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 1112) extends the initial background check review period from three to 10 days. (Under current law, the “Charleston loophole” allows gun ownership to be transferred after three days even if the background check is incomplete.)
- The March 2018 Monmouth University Poll found that the vast majority of Americans (83 percent) support comprehensive background checks for all gun sales, including 69 percent of NRA members and 78 percent of gun owners who are not NRA members.

DRAMATICALLY EXPAND FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

- Increase funding and access to school-based health centers and their staffs. Proper diagnosis can and often starts in our schools, yet there is a shortage of counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists in public education.
- Expand and increase professional development funding for educators in the areas of bullying, mental and behavioral health, cultural competence, restorative practices, and classroom management.

TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SCHOOL SAFETY

- We need fewer guns in schools, not more.
- To help ensure students get a well-rounded education, increase funding for Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants, Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but do not divert resources from this grant to arm educators.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention have authority to research gun violence as a public health issue — now, Congress needs to provide funding for such research.