

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.....  
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.... All the  
commandments are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as  
yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor.  
Romans 12:18,21; 13:9,10*

## **A Chance for Universal Background Checks**

adapted from Andre Gobbo, FCNL Domestic Policy Associate

On February 27, the House of Representatives passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8). This legislation (and its companion bill S. 42 in the Senate) would close loopholes in U.S. gun laws that currently allow people who are legally barred from buying or owning guns to purchase them anyway. This milestone in the House came two weeks after the first anniversary of the mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that caused the deaths of 14 students and three staff persons. The 17 year-old shooter there was reportedly known by others to be mentally unstable and obsessed with guns and mass shootings.

**In this country at present, 22 percent of all guns sold are purchased through unlicensed and private sellers without a background check.** H.R. 8 / S. 42 closes that loophole so that people who are ill-advised or barred from buying and owning guns will no longer have an easy end run around the national background check system.

Background checks do prevent gun violence. Since 1994, more than 3 million people legally prohibited from owning a gun have been denied the chance to purchase one because of existing background check laws. And yet, **every day in the US nearly 350 people still are shot and almost 100 die in gun violence** (34 from murder, 59 by suicide). That adds up to **over 124,750 people shot and 35,000 killed** (12,250 murdered, 21,500 suicides) **by gunshot every year**. Those numbers and those tragedies should be unacceptable to all thinking, feeling Americans.

After years of inaction, there is finally a chance to advance meaningful legislation in Congress to address gun violence. Following the House passage of H.R. 8, the action now moves to the Senate where the legislation faces an uncertain future. Our voices are needed to persuade their Senators that inaction is unacceptable. Please urge Senators to pass S. 42, the 2019 Background Check Expansion Act.

## **Sample Letter**

You can find out who your Senator is and how to contact them by visiting [https://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

Sen. \_\_\_\_\_:

The scourge of gun violence has plagued U.S. communities for too long. According to the Brady Campaign, nearly 350 people are shot with a firearm every day in this country, and almost 100 of them die. Far too often, the shooter in those tragedies never should have been allowed to possess a gun. It is time for Congress to act to prevent guns from getting into the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

I urge you to support and help pass S. 42, a commonsense background check reform that would reduce gun violence in the U.S. by implementing universal background checks for every gun purchase. Such checks are proven to help reduce gun violence in communities. In states that require background checks for all handgun sales, 47 percent fewer women are shot to death by their intimate partners, there are 47 percent fewer firearm suicides, and 53 percent fewer law enforcement officers are shot and killed in the line of duty.

The prevention of gun violence is not about partisanship or politics. It's about keeping people alive. Gun violence is taking an unacceptable toll on our society, resulting in mass shootings and senseless deaths happening every day. As a follower of Christ, loving my neighbors means doing whatever possible to prevent their being harmed.

A majority of Americans support legislation to reduce gun violence in our society. Universal background checks have robust, bipartisan support among Democrats, Republicans, and many gun owners alike. It is time to get on the right side of history. Please cosponsor and help pass S. 42, the Background Check Expansion Act, or explain to me why you will not do so.

Sincerely,