

SUBJECT TO DEBATE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM



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May 2–3 in Milwaukee

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PERF Members Express Support For Key Elements of Obama Gun Violence Plan

IN LATE JANUARY, PERF SENT AN EMAIL TO POLICE chiefs and sheriffs asking for their views about President Obama's proposals for reducing gun violence, which are summarized in a 15-page document called "Now is the Time."¹

PERF's request had two parts. First, we asked chiefs and sheriffs to tell us confidentially whether they support 4 specific elements of the President's plan. The results are as follows:

Do You Support These Elements of the President's Proposal?				
	Yes	No	Total	Level of Support
Requiring background checks for all gun sales	107	6	113	95%
Limiting ammunition magazines to 10 rounds	76	37	113	67%
Reinstating and strengthening the ban on assault weapons	73	37	110	66%
Establishing a federal crime of gun trafficking and straw purchasing	107	4	111	96%

Thus, the results show very strong support among PERF chiefs and sheriffs for universal background checks and a federal trafficking statute.

The proposals that involve restricting what law-abiding persons can purchase—regarding assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines—received about two-thirds support from PERF members.

The second part of PERF's email asked PERF chiefs and sheriffs to provide comments about President Obama's plan that we could share with their colleagues and the public in *Subject to Debate*.

Following is a sampling of the comments we received:

PHILADELPHIA COMMISSIONER AND PERF PRESIDENT CHARLES RAMSEY:

The Gun Problem Is Not Going to Fix Itself

I support what President Obama is proposing. I believe that the background checks for gun purchases, the restrictions on assault weapons and high-capacity clips, the federal gun trafficking statute, and other elements of the President's plan will help police chiefs to get a handle on the gun violence problem.

Passing new federal laws is not the only thing we should be doing. We also need to step up enforcement. We have many people now who get caught committing gun crimes, and little or nothing happens to them. We need tough sentences for people caught carrying guns illegally, and especially for straw purchasers.

But it's a good sign that the President and Congress are finally talking about doing something to reduce gun violence. The politics of this are tough, but we need to sit down and figure it out. Everyone may need to give in a bit, and we'll see what we can come up with. **But people on all sides of the issue must acknowledge that the status quo is not acceptable.** We cannot keep saying no to everything, or we'll keep having more Newtowns and Auroras and all these tragedies.

This problem is not going to fix itself.

LOS ANGELES CHIEF CHARLIE BECK:

I Support the President's Plan Plus Several Additional Measures

I support the President's recommendations as well as the specific actions he included to support them. I would ask that we also consider the following:

>> continued on page 2

1. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh_now_is_the_time_full.pdf

First, make sure DOJ has adequate resources to update its lists of prohibited possessors. In Los Angeles we use these lists to make sure firearms aren't in the hands of people recently convicted or determined to be prohibited due to mental health issues. Oftentimes our investigatory results aren't updated by DOJ, which causes duplication of effort. On the same general topic, I believe ATF should be involved with local agencies in these types of prohibited possessor investigations.

Second, we should create a national ammunition purchasers registry which is cross-referenced to the prohibited possessors data. We have used this system in Los Angeles for many years and it is effective despite its limits of jurisdiction. A national model would make all of us safer from gun violence.

Lastly, we should require rifles sold to the public to be top-load only. No magazine that is removable by tool or any other method should be allowed. As long as magazines are removable, they are far too easily replaced with high-capacity magazines.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CA SHERIFF STAN SNIFF:

So-Called Assault Rifles Have Legitimate Sporting Purposes

The assault rifle ban is much more about cosmetics than anything else, and it is far too intrusive into our 2nd Amendment rights. The term assault rifle is a misnomer as these are not "military weapons on our street." They have legitimate sporting purposes: hunting, competition, and recreational.

The focus should be on keeping weapons—all weapons—out of the hands of those who should not have them.

SAN FRANCISCO CHIEF GREG SUHR:

Mental Health Professionals

Should Be Required to Report Threats

I fully support the Major Cities Chiefs Association Firearms Violence Policy recommendations, Senator Feinstein's legislation to reinstate the assault weapons ban without an expiration date, and President Obama's plan.

I support the national universal background check. And I think we should have a federal requirement similar to New York's provision—that a therapist who believes a mental health patient has made a credible threat to use a gun illegally would be required to report it to a mental health director, who would be required to notify the state, and the patient's gun could be seized.

Gun laws must be strengthened nationally. **California has the second strongest gun laws in the country, while one of our neighboring states, Arizona, has the weakest. Guns travel. It makes no sense to have such disparity in gun regulation from state to state.**

On a personal level, we lost Officer James Guelff on November 13, 1994, when he was murdered by Victor Lee Boutwell, who held off 120 officers for almost 30 minutes using a Fabrique National .223 caliber semi-automatic rifle. Officers fired over 500 rounds before a SWAT officer was able to take Boutwell out.

We lost Officer Isaac Espinoza on April 10, 2004 when he was murdered by David Hill, who opened fire with an AK-47, striking Officer Espinoza multiple times in the back.

These two men were terrific officers and close personal friends of mine. We need to do something to keep assault rifles out of the hands of criminals.

A Note from Chuck Wexler

I'd like to thank all of the PERF members who took the time to respond to my email asking for your views about President Obama's gun violence reduction plan.

Gun control and gun violence are issues that many people feel very passionate about. The responses to PERF's inquiry demonstrate that police chiefs and sheriffs are no exception—for good reasons. Who is more familiar with guns, and with the dire consequences of gun violence, than the police? I can't remember an issue that has provoked stronger comments from our members than this one.

The chart on page 1 of this newsletter shows a near-unanimous consensus of support among responding PERF members for universal background checks for gun purchases, and for a federal law against trafficking and straw purchasing guns.

And we found a roughly two-thirds consensus for an assault weapon ban and limits on high-capacity magazines for ammunition.

As you read the PERF members' comments on these pages, you will see that there is general agreement on these other points:

- **New federal laws are only one aspect of the solution.** State and local laws—and especially the application of stricter criminal penalties for gun law violations—are needed. Federal prosecutions of gun violations are helpful, but extremely limited because federal prosecutors and the federal court system have a limited capacity.
- **Mental Illness:** We must find ways to enforce the existing ban on gun possession by persons with mental illness. The

challenge is to put a firewall between persons with mental illness and guns. We must avoid stigmatizing persons with mental illness, but the reality is that making a gun available to a person with mental illness exposes both the individual and others to impulsive behavior. Nearly 20,000 people every year in our country kill themselves with a gun. Trigger locks and other ways to keep guns away from people in crisis must be a priority, and we need to improve the data about persons with mental illness in the FBI's gun purchase background check database.

- **Research:** It is absurd for Congress to prevent the government from funding research into the causes and patterns of gun violence.
- **ATF Director:** Congress needs to confirm a full-time ATF Director. I have known Todd Jones since the 1990s, when I worked with him in Minneapolis on homicide-reduction efforts. Todd has a great reputation among law enforcement leaders in Minnesota. The fact that ATF has not had a full-time director since 2006 is astounding. ATF needs leadership and stability, and Todd Jones is the right person for the job.
- **The current situation is grave:** The level of gun violence in the United States, especially when it is compared to other nations, is unacceptable.
- **Comprehensive approach:** With an estimated 300 million guns in circulation in the United States, no individual law or enforcement strategy will quickly solve the problem. But a multi-faceted approach, involving all parts of the criminal justice system as well as other agencies and organizations, could go a long way to reducing the number of shootings and deaths.

LAS VEGAS SHERIFF DOUG GILLESPIE:

We Should Move Forward

With the Crime Commission Proposal

I have reviewed the “Now Is the Time” proposal set forth by the President and his approach to dealing with gun violence in America. I don’t want to speak on one particular item; however, I would like to speak on violence in America in general terms.

I believe far too often over the past years, our ability to effectively deal with violent crime in America has been hampered because of the decisions in regards to the banning of assault weapons. It appears that every time an incident occurs in America where a high number of people are killed and an assault weapon is used, the discussion of violence in America gets sidetracked to the banning of assault weapons.

My suggestion is that we focus on crime in America, particularly violent crime, of which guns are a significant part. But we don’t start from the standpoint of specifically banning any type of firearm. Rather, we begin by discussing the issues and challenges of firearms in our communities.

Commissioner Ramsey made a suggestion to the President about a proposal that many law enforcement agencies put forth over a year ago, to create a National Commission to study violent crime in America. I believe this is the approach that should be taken. Guns will be a part of that discussion, but not the sole focus of the discussion.

ELIZABETH TOWNSHIP, PA CHIEF BOB MCNEILLY:

We Need a Registry of Persons Barred

From Gun Ownership Due to Mental Illness

I believe we need a national registry to contain all names of people who are prohibited from owning or possessing firearms due to an involuntary mental commitment.

We also need a law to ensure that people who are denied a permit to carry a weapon in one state cannot obtain a permit in another state and return to the first state to carry.

POLK COUNTY, IA SHERIFF BILL MCCARTHY:

It’s Disgraceful for Sheriffs to Talk About

Resisting Enforcement of Gun Laws

We have a system of law in this country and a process for change if one believes that the right course is not being followed by our

government. But to have law enforcement people, especially Sheriffs, speak about disobedience to the law is disgraceful. It’s a sad day to watch this flawed thinking creep into our psyche and for people to actually believe that it’s somehow American patriotism.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD CHIEF THOMAS MANGER:

We Need to Stop Internet Sales of Ammunition

I support background checks on all gun sales, transfers, etc. We should eliminate the gun show loophole and improve the data contained in the database we check. This includes finding a way to include more people with mental health issues, and ensuring that all 50 states are keeping this database up to date.

I also support banning high capacity magazines with the exception of the military and law enforcement, and we should ban sales of ammunition via the Internet. All ammunition should have to be purchased in person. And I support any legislation that strengthens our ability to go after those making straw purchases or trafficking in guns illegally.

RETIRED CHIEF TIM DOLAN, MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Most People Who Commit Extreme Acts Had Previous Contacts with Police

I believe that mandated background checks on all gun sales are “the horse that pulls the cart” to gun violence reduction. And once we have mandated background checks, we need to improve the quality of our data and the ability to share that data within law enforcement. These changes will allow law enforcement to better do its job and try to keep guns out of the hands of those who should not have them by law.

I was also pleased that the President’s plan recognizes that law enforcement needs to have appropriate time to do investigations on continued ownership or licensure. **Most, though not all, of the individuals with mental health or anger issues have some less severe contact with public safety before they commit extreme acts.** It is important that law enforcement makes it part of their standard procedures to ascertain if those involved in alleged crimes of violence have access to or own firearms, and that we assess whether that possession should be suspended.

Tucson Chief Roberto Villaseñor To Serve as PERF Treasurer

The PERF Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Tucson Chief of Police Roberto Villaseñor has agreed to serve as PERF’s Treasurer. Chief Villaseñor will fill the unexpired term of former Sacramento Police Chief Rick Braziel, who retired in December.

“Chief Villaseñor has been a real asset to PERF on a number of projects, especially our work on immigration enforcement issues, so this is outstanding that he is joining the board,” PERF President Chuck Ramsey said. “He also played a key role, with several other PERF chiefs and sheriffs, on a Department of



**FAR LEFT: Chief
Roberto Villaseñor.
LEFT: Chief Rick
Braziel.**

Homeland Security task force that recommended reforms for the Secure Communities enforcement program.”

“I also want to congratulate Chief Braziel on his retirement and thank him for taking an active role in PERF for many years,” Commissioner Ramsey said. “I’m certain we will continue to benefit from Rick’s expertise and guidance.”

ELK GROVE, CA CHIEF ROBERT LEHNER:

We Need to Keep Guns Away from Disturbed Persons

The President's plan is a sensibly balanced approach that respects Americans' rights under the Second Amendment and improves the safety of our people in their homes and on the streets. **There is no reason a sportsman or person interested in personal protection needs to have extended-capacity magazines or rifles designed and intended for combat.**

Most important of all, in my opinion, is the call for better and more comprehensive background checks. A frightening number of mass shooting incidents are carried out by people who are seriously mentally ill and have legally acquired or gained access to firearms despite their danger to society. Everyone expects that criminals will be criminals and still find a way to a gun. Let us, the police and the courts, deal with them. But we need help to keep guns out of the hands of disturbed individuals.

MILFORD, MA CHIEF TOM O'LOUGHLIN:

I Don't Think a Ban on Large Magazines Would Help

Background checks should be strengthened, particularly as it relates to mental health. I also support a federal gun trafficking statute; too many guns are being passed from state to state and into the wrong hands. But I don't support a ban on high-capacity magazines; in my experience it only makes pre-ban magazines more valuable and won't prevent violent events, particularly if the perpetrator is skilled with the weapon and reloading techniques.

CHIEF SCOTT THOMSON, CAMDEN, NJ:

Layoffs of Police Officers in Some Cities Have Made Gun Violence Worse

"Government's first duty is to protect its people..."
—President Ronald Reagan

Children and innocent people are being seriously injured or slain every day as the result of gun violence in our nation's most challenged communities.

One of the most critical variables in the equation for reducing urban gun violence is the capacity of the local law enforcement agency that shoulders the mantle of responsibility for the day-to-day security of the community. However, some of the nation's most destabilized and underrepresented cities have experienced significant reductions in their police forces. And the resulting surge in gun violence has been alarming, growing from epidemic to pandemic within these communities. Keeping an additional 15,000 cops on the street in the cities that need them the most is vital for the safety of the people and the officers.

PEABODY, MA CHIEF ROBERT CHAMPAGNE:

Here Are Some Things We Should Do

- I concur with the White House plan, in particular the portions that enhance research, improve communication and use modern technology to identify prohibited persons.
- **ATF should immediately have a full-time Director confirmed by Congress.**
- I believe schools and cities and towns benefit by putting additional resource officers in schools.

- The training of Crisis Intervention Teams is imperative.
- And I believe further review needs to be done in the areas of product liability and banning the sale of armor-piercing bullets.

NORWOOD, MA CHIEF WILLIAM BROOKS:

Lying on a Gun Application Should Be a Felony

Nothing will get all guns off the street or eliminate all gun crime, but the government should undertake the following steps:

All gun sales should be reported, perhaps by routing them through an FFL. In addition to requiring this in federal legislation, there should be requirements, or at least incentives, for states to adopt parallel legislation so that violations can be prosecuted in state courts.

Lying on an application for a gun license should be a felony, and again there should be state parallel laws.

It should be easier for ATF to trace a gun, and they should have the technology to do it electronically. To accomplish this, FFLs would need to report gun sales and transfers electronically in real time.

Finally, there should be a way for law enforcement agencies to submit information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Most people with mental illness come to the attention of the police sooner or later. If law enforcement agencies could submit information directly, providing they had internal backup for what they report, we could identify a lot of people with mental illnesses who should not be carrying firearms.

CHIEF MIKE GILLOFFO,

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF KANE COUNTY, IL:

This Is Not a Political Issue

This is not a political issue, and there is no quick political fix to crime and violence. Most city gun violence is the result of gangs and drugs. It should be addressed as that, not a broad law that affects the rest of the country. There are Second Amendment Rights to be considered as well as patient rights under a variety of mental health laws. Rushing to pass a law as a grand political gesture will only propagate years of judicial actions to untangle, and will be counter-productive.

CAPE CORAL, FL CHIEF JAY MURPHY:

People Die Because of Holes in Background Check System

The federal government must provide a means to link persons who suffer from mental illness to the comprehensive background check system. Without this link, the background checks remains incomplete.

Today, as I write this, I am reflecting on the day care shooting incident that occurred four years ago this week in our city, and the murderer's sentencing to two life terms yesterday.

Why, with all of the database technology that exists today, can an estranged, despondent husband purchase a firearm just days before walking into a day care center and killing his wife, in the presence of their young child and several other children?

This man should never have been able to purchase a gun, but he did. He did so not through the gun show loophole, but at a pawn shop. His prior medical diagnosis precluded him from purchasing a firearm, but nobody knew. The system, which only knew he wasn't a convicted felon, failed his wife, his child (who

is now being raised by grandparents), and all the children who remain traumatized from this tragedy.

As I look back at Aurora, Newtown, Columbine, Virginia Tech and Tucson, there is one striking similarity with our day care shooting: the mental state of the shooter. If we don't demand that mental illness be included in the background check system, we will find ourselves asking "why?" over and over again.

ST. LOUIS COUNTY CHIEF TIM FITCH:

Criminals Could Care Less about New Laws

Police must stay out of the political fracas. Elected officials are trying to use law enforcement to support their political position. We need to concentrate on *criminals* with firearms. Criminals could care less about new laws. Targeting law-abiding citizens by banning certain rifles and magazines will harm Americans that have no evil intent. Enforcement of existing statutes on the federal and local level should be a priority, as should funding for mental health and police officers in our schools.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD SHERIFF MELVIN HIGH:

Increasing the Obstacles to Illegal Possession Will Make Black Markets More Expensive

To reduce gun violence, we have to limit the availability of guns in the wrong hands. Increasing the obstacles to illegitimate purchases and possession ultimately affects availability. **In the long term, illicit black market firearms will simply become too expensive for criminals.** Further, technological developments can help us better identify guns used in crime.

I believe the President's proposal moves us forward with much-needed action on gun violence reduction in our country.

RETIRED CHIEF JACK HARRIS, PHOENIX, AZ:

Police Should Not Be Barred From Destroying Confiscated Guns

I have read the President's proposal and I think it is a well thought out and comprehensive plan that touches on most of the major areas of concern to police chiefs around the country.

Closing the straw purchase loophole and the work on background checks are especially important, although I would add that it will be difficult to track and enforce private sales.

I would look at the federal funding for school resource officer (SRO) positions. When I was still at Phoenix, we had a high of more than 90 SROs. When the budget crisis hit, they were some of the first to get cut as "non-crucial" positions. I understand they are now down to about 45 or so. I would recommend that funding acceptance by an agency have some type of long-term mandate that precludes the agency from cutting or moving the positions at the next budget crisis.

Second, it is my understanding that the Arizona state legislature is considering a law to forbid cities and towns in Arizona from destroying confiscated weapons.² This in essence would force police departments to sell or trade them to gun dealers or auction them to the public. This law would return thousands of guns back onto the streets, including assault weapons. The Phoenix Police Department has been melting down weapons for years.

CHIEF GARY ADAMS, UNIVERSITY PARK, TX:

Fast-Moving Legislation Makes Bad Legislation

I strongly oppose the President's effort to circumvent the Constitution of the United States and more specifically the Second Amendment. If laws need to be made to regulate certain weapons, it is the Congress's responsibility. Fast moving legislation makes bad legislation! Executive actions which limit or deprive the rights of our citizens are nothing more than tyranny. Abraham Lincoln said it best when he stated, "We the people are the rightful masters of both Congress and the courts, not to overthrow the Constitution but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution."

PARK RIDGE, IL CHIEF FRANK KAMINSKI:

This Is the First Time I Feel Hopeful That Reasonable Changes May Be Approved

I think it is shame that it took such a terrible tragedy in Connecticut to wake people up. I applaud the President for taking some bold steps to address this issue. I have been working for years to reduce gun violence, and this is the first time I feel hopeful that some reasonable steps may get accomplished.

JUPITER, FL CHIEF FRANK KITZEROW:

Threats to Officers Make "Business as Usual" Unacceptable

In my opinion, the President's plan is comprehensive and balanced, focusing on process refinements, legislation, and collaboration. As is probably true with most people, I evaluated the President's proposal based on a balance between the Second Amendment right to bear arms and our obligation as law enforcement professionals to provide for the public's safety.

The tipping point for me occurred when I considered my responsibility as a police chief to advocate for a plan that provides the greatest potential for increasing officer safety.

I cannot support a continuation of business as usual, knowing that our front-line police officers are routinely facing challenges relating to high-powered assault rifles, large-capacity magazines, bulletproof vests, and superior firepower in the hands of people who are dangerous and irresponsible.

Additional thoughts:

- There should be some consideration given to a renewal process so that the background check is not a one-time event. People and dynamics change.
- If personal sales are to continue, consideration should be given to establishing a limit on the number of transactions within a given time period.

COLUMBUS, OH CHIEF KIM JACOBS:

It Is Bizarre that the Government Is Not Allowed to Conduct Research on Gun Violence

Putting some regulations on deadly weapons is a common-sense method to address problems that plague our society. Guns are available to practically anyone who wants one, with no information being shared with the government most of the time. Guns legally obtained are stolen or fall into the hands of criminals every day, and yet there is no method to track who bought the gun the

2. <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/20130213state-house-supports-law-prevent-gun-destruction.html>

last time. In addition to this problem, they are often obtained by persons suffering from mental illness.

Regulating gun purchases through background checks and limiting the types of weapons/magazines that are legally available will very possibly prevent the murder of many U.S. citizens, including our police officers.

Lastly, the fact that it takes a mandate from the President of the United States to give researchers permission to research violence involving guns is totally bizarre and a sign of a gun lobby out of control.

How is it possible that we allow research on the many ways that substances kill our citizens slowly over years of use, such as foods and medications, but we don't allow research on the murders involving guns that we read about on the front page of newspapers around the country every day?

ST. PAUL, MN CHIEF TOM SMITH:

Doctors Should Be Required to Report Threats of Violence

The President's plan says:

"Law enforcement should never be put in the position of unknowingly returning a gun to an individual who is prohibited from having it. Currently, when law enforcement must return firearms seized as part of an investigation, they do not have the ability to conduct a full background check on the owner. The Administration will propose regulations to ensure that law enforcement has access to the database needed for complete background checks."

I suggest that police chiefs and sheriffs should have more authority to withhold the return of a firearm in cases where there is no evidence for prosecution, but where facts and circumstances create a reasonable expectation that violence may occur in the future.

Another issue that needs stronger action is clarifying that no federal law prevents health care providers from warning law enforcement authorities about threats of violence. Doctors and other mental health professionals play an important role in protecting the safety of their patients and the broader community, by reporting direct and credible threats of violence to the authorities.

But there is public confusion about whether federal law prohibits such reports about threats of violence. The Department of Health and Human Services is issuing a letter to health care providers clarifying that no federal law prohibits these reports in any way.

I suggest making it more of a "mandated reporter" requirement in cases where health professionals have information of a direct threat to the safety of themselves, their patients, or others.

PORT ORCHARD, WA CHIEF ALAN TOWNSEND:

A Serious Plan for Handling Mental Illness Is Key

I believe the President's gun violence plan has a great deal of merit. But I also believe we need to be realistic and find a solution that will be acceptable to the people of our communities. In my community and region, the gun magazine restriction and the assault weapon ban would not be supported. It's arguable that the ban and the magazine restriction would not be the best impacts on the problem anyway.

But I believe the other concepts contained in the President's plan are right on target. A better background check system and better and all-inclusive database are key; and so is closing the

loopholes for gun shows/swaps. Funding for more school resource officers would be well received.

And a serious plan to deal with mentally ill persons is paramount to the success of violence control. Every community is struggling to deal with the impact that mentally ill/substance addicted persons are causing. More services must be made available for immediate help (to assist the police officer on the street) and for long-term care, to ensure they maintain a course of action.

RETIRED CHIEF JOHN COMPARETTO, PASSAIC COUNTY, NY:

Gun Bans Do Not Work

Violent crime and murder are at a 45-year all-time low. This decrease in crime has continued since the 1994 assault weapon ban expired. Why would we want to punish the vast majority of law-abiding American gun owners because of the approximately .0000025% of semi-automatic firearms with 30-round magazines used to commit crimes?

Bans do not work. Just look at heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine. If we ban assault weapons or high-capacity magazines, the drug importers will add them to their illicit sales and only the criminal and not the law abiding citizen will have the availability of this firepower.

We need background checks and the sharing of psychiatric records to insure that guns are kept out of the hands of those who cannot have them. We need to enforce our current laws. For example, in NY State nine out of 10 persons arrested for an illegal handgun are never sentenced to the minimum mandatory one year in prison. Let us make it known through strict sentencing that if you possess or use an assault weapon or a high capacity magazine during the commission of a crime that you will never see the light of day as a free man (or woman).

NORTH CHARLESTON, SC CHIEF JON ZUMALT:

The Assault Weapon Ban Never Should Have Been Lifted

I support the President's plan.

The ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines never should have been lifted in the first place. Assault weapons have no purpose other than killing people.

Diminished funding over the past few decades for care and services for the mentally ill, along with fragmented tracking and sharing of information about the mentally ill, are key contributors to the problem.

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA CHIEF WAYNE JERMAN:

Armor-Piercing Bullets Should Be Restricted

I support the President's proposals and strongly encourage stricter laws and oversight regarding gun violence. There are many laws already in place that need to be enforced, but many of these current laws need to be strengthened and the penalties must be imposed.

The background check process to keep guns out of the hands of prohibited persons has too many loopholes nationally, and these loopholes continue to be exploited.

Armor-piercing bullets or rounds that can defeat body armor should not be available outside of law enforcement. These rounds serve only one purpose. Law enforcement officers are the only individuals not on a battlefield who should possess them.

MORGANTOWN, WV CHIEF ED PRESTON:

Gun Laws Will Not Create a Utopian Solution

We currently have laws that are not being enforced either appropriately, timely or judiciously by both state and federal prosecutors. The creation of additional restrictions, even those specifically targeting “Assault Weapons” is not going to establish the “Utopian Solution” that is touted politically. A simple lever action rifle (designed and produced since the late 1800s) has more than 10 rounds in the tubular magazine.

What is even more disturbing is the current rhetoric claiming gun restrictions and background checks would have prevented the tragedy in Newtown, Conn. The guns used and obtained in this and many criminal acts were illegally possessed and/or obtained. Furthermore, long guns are not the weapons that are most likely to be used in a crime; handguns are. Should additional firearms crimes be established, where are we going to house those incarcerated as a result? We are trying to reduce prison populations and reduce prison costs nationwide, yet at the same time we close mental health facilities and don't address many of the underlying problems.

NEWPORT NEWS, VA CHIEF JAMES D. FOX:

There Are Many Things We Can Do Right Now

As chief of police, I am very aware of the societal issues caused by gun violence in our communities. I fully support all efforts to prevent criminals and mentally unstable persons from gaining access to firearms. I believe that requiring background checks for all guns sales will greatly help in this effort. I also understand and support the need for the Department of Justice and ATF to better track firearms sales and distribution. This will assure that only those who are authorized and who have completed proper background checks will have access to firearms.

Similarly, I support full and aggressive federal prosecution of armed felons, and an increase in the severity of punishment for these criminal acts. I also support Congress approving a Director of ATF, as doing so will exponentially further our efforts.

Most importantly, I support the President's efforts to increase the number of school resource officers. I know that the work done by these officers is exemplary and adds to the safety of our

children. Likewise, increasing the number of police officers serving our communities can only add to the safety and security of our communities.

NEW YORK STATE UNIVERSITY POLICE CHIEF GERALD SCHOENLE:

The Thought of an Active Shooter

Keep University Police Chiefs Up at Night

As the Chief of Police for the largest public university in New York State, I join my colleagues in the IACP and International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) in supporting efforts to make our communities safer with an effective ban on military-style assault weapons, background checks on all gun purchasers, and a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines.

There are many other positives that should be explored in our President's plan. The thought of an “active shooter” on campus keeps all university police chiefs awake at night, and we would be remiss in our sworn duties as police chiefs if we did not speak out at this critical time in our nation's history. **Clearly, the actions we take must be across the board at the national level, and it must be a multifaceted approach.** New York State has the strongest gun control laws in the nation, but even these laws cannot be truly effective at the state level alone.

The window of opportunity is here. We must act now, seize the moment and take steps to minimize the likelihood of future tragedies.

OLYMPIA, WA CHIEF RONNIE ROBERTS:

Sadly, Incarcerating the Mentally Ill Is Common

There is a growing mental health crisis in this country and in our community. As funding continues to diminish from federal and state sources, local communities are faced with an alarming number of individuals on the streets with mental health issues. Our local jail is increasingly being used to house people with mental illness because there are few other options.

Sadly, incarcerating the mentally ill to protect them and our community seems to be the cheaper and most often used option.

ask for more detail where they have concerns before a licence is approved.

President Obama's plan to take executive action to enhance tracing data is similar to a technique used by the UK's National Ballistics Intelligence Service: <http://www.nabis.police.uk/home.asp>. This national policing resource allows for mapping of a gun's history in a database available to law enforcement. The method links crimes and individuals and builds a picture of the gun's life.

Firearm offences in the UK, excluding air weapons, decreased by 13 percent, from 8,051 in 2009–10 to 7,024 in 2010–11. Similarly, handguns were used in 3,105 offences during 2010–11, a fall of 17 percent compared to 2009–10, continuing the general downward trend seen since 2001–02 (5,874 offences).

There were 58 fatalities in 2010–11 involving a weapon being fired in the UK, with 33 of the fatalities involving the use of a handgun, 20 involving the use of a shotgun and five involving a rifle.* The 58 fatal injuries recorded in 2010–11 include the 12 people killed by Derrick Bird in June 2010.

*Annual figures are for fiscal years that begin in April and end the following March. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/hosb0212/hosb0212snr?view=Binary>

A VIEW FROM THE UK

Sir Hugh Orde, President, Association of Chief Police Officers:

The UK Had 58 Firearm Fatalities Last Year

The British approach to firearms licensing has been shaped by tragedies including shootings in Hungerford, Essex in 1987, in Dunblane, Scotland in 1996 and in Cumbria in 2010. Licensing now provides for police to risk-assess any person applying for a certificate to hold a firearm, both before an application is approved and at intervals following such an application being granted. The British experience is that closing background check loopholes is essential. For instance, private sellers of firearms should not be exempt from criminal background checks.

Issues of mental health are also important and enhance public protection. In the UK, police came to an agreement with the British Medical Association, so police officers can inform and consult with family doctors when considering applications for firearm and shotgun certificates. With this information, police are able to

Many would not be in custody but for a lack of adequate mental health services.

We also need to stop eliminating Medicare coverage for medicine just because persons are incarcerated. This shifts a burden onto local communities that are already struggling to work within reduced budgets. It also does nothing to provide a continuum of care and treatment of those who have mental illness and find their way into the criminal justice system.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM CHIEF RAY SCHULTZ:
Federal Prosecutors Need More Resources To Make Gun Cases a Priority

In order for the President's gun violence plan to be effective, it will be essential that it be supported with adequate funding and resources to ensure prosecution of prohibited possessors, illegal sellers/distributors, and straw purchasers. These cases must be a priority with the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and must be aggressively prosecuted.

WALPOLE, MA CHIEF RICHARD STILLMAN:
The President's Plan Is Reasonable

Although I support the Second Amendment, there has to be discussion among people about reasonable restrictions on who can own weapons, which weapons people are allowed to own, and what care gun owners need to implement to prevent those guns from getting into the wrong hands. I fully support the President's plan.

CHIEF THOMAS KULHAWIK, NORWALK, CT:
I Support the President's Comprehensive Approach

While no plan is perfect and there will always be debate on the specifics of any plan, I believe we all can agree that a comprehensive approach to gun violence must be undertaken. Any viable plan must include changes to our gun laws to make it more difficult for criminals to obtain weapons, make it easier for law enforcement to remove illegal weapons from the streets, and make prosecuting those trafficking in illegal firearms a priority.

And the plan must address the many other aspects of gun violence. These include improvements in our access to mental health services; better screening of prospective gun owners; additional trained social workers and other professionals to help identify those who may pose a threat to others; improvements in school security; and additional police officers on the streets and in our schools.

I believe President Obama's plan attempts to address these very important issues.

CHERRY HILLS VILLAGE, CO CITY MANAGER AND FORMER POLICE CHIEF JOHN PATTERSON:
Our Biggest Mental Health Facilities Are Jails

Mental illness continues to be the one element that consistently receives the least amount of intervention or prevention efforts, while being a significant cause of victimization. The nation's largest mental health treatment facilities are not hospitals, but county jails and state prisons.

FBI statistics for the past five years have consistently shown handguns are the primary weapon used in gun violence. In 2011, 6,220 Americans were killed by handguns.

TOTAL FIREARMS HOMICIDES IN 2011: 8,583			
Handguns:	72%	Other:	1%
Rifles:	4%	Unknown:	18% ³
Shotguns:	4%		

There are three ways the Administration's plan could indirectly stem the toll of handgun violence: by increasing access to mental health services, lifting restrictions on federally funded research on gun violence, and extending background checks before the purchase of a gun.

KALAMAZOO, MI CHIEF JEFF HADLEY:
The Poor Economy Has Hurt Our Efforts

I believe the President's plan provides a starting point for dealing with the free-flowing exchanges of weapons within the country.

Specifically, we need a more robust process around what I call the "choke points," which are the private sales and background checks. This is what I believe we can control through legislation and the compliance efforts of ATF or other federal and state agencies. By requiring any private sale or transfer of a firearm to be facilitated by a licensed federal firearms dealer, with all appropriate background checks, I believe we can "choke" the process enough to have an impact.

Here in Michigan we have three of the nation's most violent cities (Detroit, Flint, and Saginaw). And because of the Michigan economic environment, we have seen the reduction of thousands of police officers in our state. The human capital just isn't sufficient to have any sort of impact or engage in anything other than reactionary policing.

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA CHIEF DOUG SCOTT:
New Gun Laws Are Only Part of the Solution

This is a complex problem that has developed over a long period of time. There is no easy fix to eliminating evil acts by evil people. Banning assault weapons and strengthening gun purchasing regulations are absolutely needed. We will never make progress if we do not take these initial steps. Dealing more effectively with people with mental illness also has to be a priority. The glorification of violence through movies, television and video games also needs to be regulated.

If we are truly serious about changing a culture of acceptance or ambivalence towards evil acts of violence, then we need to understand this must be a long-term effort that extends far beyond gun control.

FITCHBURG, MA CHIEF ROBERT DEMOURA:
Psychological Screening Should Be Required

In Massachusetts, for years we have run background checks as well as mental health history for all firearms applicants. This gives the chiefs some type of "history" of the applicant. The only focus for

3. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-8>

chiefs of police in Massachusetts is the suitability of the candidate. We should require the applicant to pay for a psychological test as part of the screening process.

We in policing should all agree that there should be a ban on all types of assault weapons and associated magazines. There is no need to own such a weapon.

There has been a recent pattern of federal grants for hiring more firefighters, but our cities are not burning down. Our focus should be on safety, fear of crime, and more cops on the streets.

LEESBURG, VA CHIEF JOSEPH PRICE:

Anti-Smoking Efforts Provide a Model

I find the President's plan to be well balanced and an excellent starting point for tackling the complex and emotionally charged issue of gun violence. The plan identifies areas such as gun law reform, strengthening enforcement of existing gun laws, and improvements in mental health and school security as key action points.

Our country has a strong gun culture; guns are glorified in many aspects of our society. This is similar to how cigarettes were viewed in the 1950s and 60s, and I think that is a model for how to handle this debate. Some smoking restrictions were put in place, but no one banned or took away cigarettes. Through a balanced approach of changes in law, an increase in smoking cessation plans, greater public awareness of the danger posed by tobacco use, and campaigns to de-glamorize their appeal, cigarette use steadily declined, resulting in a positive health impact.

I think a similar approach can be used to reduce gun violence, and I think the President's plan lays out a positive roadmap to begin the journey.

CHIEF PAUL VERRECCHIA, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON:

We Need to Allow Research

So We Can Make Informed Decisions

I believe we need research so that informed decisions can be made, rather than relying on the emotions from both sides of the issue. Thus I believe the Tiahrt amendments need to be repealed (or at least dramatically amended), so that researchers and agencies such as the CDC and NIH could have access to information.

SPRINGBORO, OH CHIEF JEFF KRUIHOFF:

We Should Know If Dependents of a Gun Owner Have Been Diagnosed as Mentally Ill

I strongly support requiring background checks on all weapon sales. I believe these background checks should also cover the question of whether dependents within the home have been found to be mentally ill or previously diagnosed as mentally ill. I strongly support legislation dealing with gun trafficking and straw purchases.

DARIEN, IL CHIEF ERNEST BROWN:

First We Should Change Attitudes about Guns

I believe the President's idea about gun control is well placed, but I think that he may have put the cart before the horse.

There are two groups that have provided us with a road map for success when trying to change America's thought processes about ideas that are entrenched in tradition. Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the attack on the tobacco industry show us the first steps to take.

In other words, the first step should not be additional legislation; it should be a marketing campaign to change the mindset about guns. I recently served as the Chair of the Illinois Gun Trafficking Task Force, and one of the outcomes was the idea that if we changed the way people think about firearm ownership—for example, regarding women's acceptance of guns in the household—it will be easier to change the legislation about guns.

PLATTE COUNTY, MO SHERIFF MARK OWEN:

The Type of Firearm Is Not the Issue

The type of firearm is not the issue. As much damage and destruction can be done with a semi automatic hand gun or a shotgun loaded with eight #4 buckshot shells. The issue should be background checks, including mental health and prior history of domestic violence and assaults.

Then we should focus on enforcing and strengthening the current gun laws—if you are caught in possession of a stolen firearm, stealing firearms, carrying concealed without a permit, using a firearm in a crime or while transporting narcotics, etc. And these laws should be strong.

CAMBRIDGE, MA CHIEF ROBERT HAAS:

Gun Owners Are Not Held Responsible

The President's recommendations seem to address some of the critical issues. Although each state has its own laws on the books, there are many loopholes. The larger issue is how individuals who should not have access to firearms are able to readily access them.

For example, in Massachusetts, there is no affirmative legal requirement for an individual to report a firearm being stolen. In part, the argument goes that if a person were to report a firearm stolen and it hadn't been secured properly, that person would be exposing him/herself to potential criminal liability, hence violating their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

But adequate protection and storage of firearms are key issues. From the standpoint of the gun owner, there are fewer liabilities associated with owning a firearm, as compared to the consequences or penalties for negligence in owning or operating a motor vehicle, to cite one analogy.

NANTUCKET, MA CHIEF WILLIAM PITTMAN:

All States Should Be Required To Share Mental Health Information

It is hard to get excited about the potential benefits of the President's proposal to put more police officers on the streets and in the schools, because past history shows that although most of the gun violence and mass shootings have occurred in rural and smaller jurisdictions, most of the money to put more police officers on the road and in the schools will go to the major cities.

We need to make sure that all States are required to share mental health information so that informed decisions can be made before allowing someone to purchase a firearm. This is something that much to my surprise is not being done in my own State of Massachusetts.

I would support a proposal that would require all transactions involving the sale or transfer of a firearm to be handled by federally licensed dealers only. This would insure that adequate background checks are conducted prior to the transfer actually taking place.

SALEM, NH CHIEF PAUL DONOVAN:

We Need More Complete Information About Concealed-Carry Applicants

I believe that if we deal with the problem of mentally ill people getting around the background checks to purchase firearms, we can solve part of the problem. We also need sure and swift convictions and sentencing for violent crimes committed using a firearm. No early release; full time should be served. And we need more aggressive sentencing for repeat offenders as well.

We need better access to information regarding drug abuse, alcohol abuse and mental health issues before issuing concealed carry licenses to people who are unsuitable to be licensed to carry a concealed handgun.

BLOOMFIELD, CT CHIEF PAUL HAMMICK:

Gun Violence Is Our Most Pressing Issue

I fully support President Obama's proposals to reduce gun violence throughout the country. Mandatory background checks, a ban on military-style assault weapons and high capacity magazines, as well as federal penalties for straw purchases are all good initiatives.

As a law enforcement professional for the past 23 years, I believe that the illegal possession and transfer of firearms and the violence associated with these weapons are the most pressing issues for urban local law enforcement and neighboring communities. Over 70% of gun violence is committed with a handgun, and the majority of these guns are illegally possessed and transferred. I believe that more must be done at the local and federal levels to focus on reducing the volume of illegal handguns on our streets.

CHIEF KENTON RAINEY, BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT POLICE:

We Have Stricter Rules for Buying Liquor than for Ammunition

I support the President. During a previous PERF inquiry concerning gun violence, I submitted a response recommending that anyone purchasing ammunition be required to show identification. This is currently facing a court challenge. As a society, we already require anyone purchasing alcohol, cigarettes, spray paint, or goods from a pawn shop to do this. This is certainly a reasonable requirement, especially when you consider the amount of money that gun violence costs us as a nation. We need to ask ourselves, "How much is one innocent life worth?"

ROLLING MEADOWS, IL CHIEF DAVID SCANLAN:

We Should "Harden" Our Schools

Having been a part of an on-going school safety program for ten years, the gun sales restriction / firearms initiatives now being discussed are political in nature and miss the mark. I would like to see school grant programs designed to target crime prevention through environmental design (harden the schools), improve radio communications between schools and police communications centers and provide in-school armed security officers with funds provided to school districts. These retired law enforcement officers would be deputized, or made auxiliaries trained and firearms certified annually by the local police department but employed in a (MOU) partnership by the schools.

RETIRED CHIEF DAVID LEONARDO, ARDMORE, AZ:

Guns Themselves Are Not the Problem

I do not support in general the "assault rifle" legislation proposed by the President or Senator Feinstein. Good citizens are rarely involved in weapons violations. Ongoing and career criminals are the problem.

And the other problem is the mentally ill. They need specialized services and treatment, and systems need to be put in place that keep them from purchasing firearms. Many states have not entered mental health information into the National Instant Check System. This is a critical element.

We need to focus on what will actually save lives. The guns themselves are not the problems. Their use by the mentally ill and criminals is. Not enough is being done with current laws. Throughout my career I have seen how firearms have also been helpful to good citizens and made them safe. The police are often minutes away, and sometimes that is just too long. I know this from 40 years of law enforcement experience.

Additionally, I believe that there is a significant difference from one area to another. What is needed in Chicago, New York, or Washington, DC may be significantly different from what is needed in Arizona, Oklahoma or Texas.

SHERIFF TIMOTHY HOWARD, ERIE COUNTY, NY:

The Second Amendment Means What It Says

State or national, the second amendment means what it says—we have the right to bear arms. If you want to change that, call a constitutional convention and let the people decide.

Time Magazine says that 30,000 people were killed with firearms last year, *most of them were suicides* and this shows we have a gun problem. No, it shows we have a mental health problem. Allow law enforcement access to timely data on those with mental illness that constitute a danger to themselves and/or the community, including those who must remain on medication. Increase use of civil confinement for those who constitute a danger to community, and *keep violent criminals in jail*.

MARTINEZ, CA CHIEF GARY PETERSON:

Background Checks Should Be Universal

Society understands that invariably, some legally owned firearms will be stolen and will end up in the wrong hands. Some say this is the price we pay for our 2nd Amendment rights. However, I would encourage the Congress to focus on an issue that can lead to fewer guns being on the street. In the interest of protecting society, Congress should pass legislation that closes the "gun show loophole" and requires background checks for all firearm sales and transfers without exception, family members notwithstanding.

FRAMINGHAM, MA CHIEF STEVEN CARL:

School Resource Officers Can Help Prevent Shootings

Enhancing school safety by deploying more School Resource Officers and counselors in schools is critical. Prevention and intervention services, focusing on students who are involved in risky behavior or are demonstrating concerning behavior, are key to preventing violence in our schools and enhancing the safety of students and staff.

Police training in active shooter response, although important, is reactive in nature and does nothing to prevent the tragic events from occurring.

GILROY, CA CHIEF DENISE TURNER:

We Lack Sufficient Information to Make Good Decisions about Gun Sales and Concealed Carry

I recommend that we have a National Registry for all weapons (imported, bought and sold in this country) to include all current weapon holders. The registry should be accessible, like NCIC, to authorized agencies. The National Registry should be accessed during background checks on gun buyers and gun owners.

We should make it mandatory for all mental health agencies and law enforcement to report into this national registry any contacts for mental health issues with individuals. During a background check for purchase of a firearm, if information is present in the registry, it can be further vetted to determine if the applicant is qualified to own a firearm. We need to connect the dots and make all of the information available in one place in order to make informed decisions about issuing concealed carry permits or allowing gun sales.

I have been in this business for more than 30 years now and I know first-hand that we lack sufficient centralized information on applicants to make good decisions. The mental health data from local, state and federal levels are not in one place for checking.

COMMISSIONER PATRICK CARROLL, NEW ROCHELLE, NY:

We Need to Consider Measures to Prevent Bullying

I would like to mention two points:

1. Bullying in schools: There should be a specific program designed to prevent violence. Students have been shot and in some cases killed because of bullying. Potential victims and antagonizers must be identified early on, in order to prevent situations from escalating.

2. The ATF has to be more proactive in supporting municipal police. Improved tracing and data-sharing are crucial to firearms investigations.

SPARKS, NV CHIEF STEVE KEEFER:

Gun Violence Is a Complex Issue That Requires a Comprehensive Plan

The overall scope of the President's plan to reduce gun violence is very comprehensive. The plan highlights a strengthened background check system, additional resources to prevent and prosecute gun crime, and removing the barriers against additional research on gun violence and the effects of media images.

The President's plan addresses the improvement of the mental health system, providing assistance to those in need or crisis, as well as giving health care providers a voice in the protection of our communities.

Because gun violence is such a complex issue, it is imperative that any plan address all of the key issues outlined in the President's plan.

ARLINGTON, MA CHIEF FREDERICK RYAN:

We Need More Help from Federal Prosecutors

President Obama's gun control proposals as outlined in the "Now Is the Time" report are an important step forward for public/school safety.

However, any enhancement to existing federal laws and policies without a commensurate commitment (financial and political) on the part of the Administration to proactively enforce federal gun violations will result in little meaningful change.

In our jurisdiction of about 50,000 residents just outside of Boston, we have experienced tragic events and alarming conduct on the part of licensed gun owners and have discovered potential federal firearms violations, only to find that the U.S. Attorney's Office was not interested in exploring federal prosecutions.

To mention just one example, we partnered with ATF to investigate a gun shop with numerous problems, including two incidents of suicide in the shop's firing range involving persons with mental illness, and several questionable burglaries resulting in firearms landing in the hands of violent felons on the streets of Boston. At our request, ATF conducted an inspection and discovered a number of alleged violations of federal law. But the federal authorities chose not to prosecute. Fortunately, we revoked the gun dealer's state license, which caused ATF to revoke the federal license. The gun shop owner is suing the police.

We value our partnerships with federal law enforcement. However, unless and until there is a bona-fide commitment from the very highest level of the administration to seek out and proactively prosecute federal firearms violations, including non-high-profile cases, no new law or policy will have a positive impact on the safety of our communities.

DULUTH, MN CHIEF GORDON RAMSAY:

We Also Have Seen a Decrease in Federal Prosecutions

Unfortunately, we have seen a decrease in prosecution of gun crimes by our U.S. Attorney's Office. We seek federal charges because their sentences are much stronger than our state laws. But the U.S. Attorney's Office has been tasked with more and more, and they are simply unable to do everything they used to do. They need to fund and prioritize the federal prosecution of gun crimes.

When we propose increases in state penalties for gun crimes, we are turned away by our state legislators, as any increase in the number of inmates or the cost of operating prisons is tossed out.

In our area, most of the gun crimes involve handguns and repeat offenders. Many of the guns used in crimes here are from burglaries, and are now possessed by individuals who are prohibited from legally possessing a gun. We need stronger prosecution of gun crimes as a first step for the issues in our region.

CHARLESTON COUNTY, SC SHERIFF AL CANNON:

The Distinction Between Urban and Rural Police Is Artificial

Law enforcement leadership is at great risk of losing credibility if they give in to the media and the politics of this issue and do not assume their role as the public's expert on crime, firearms used in crime and the "big picture" of violence. Criminals are not going to turn in their illegal weapons. Citizens also see the hypocrisy of

some of those proposing stricter gun control, have no intention of being without protection themselves. **What we do need is greater prosecution of the gun laws that we currently have.**

I support appropriate mental health information placed in a data base that is a part of the background check, but only that which has gone through due process. I also support a mechanism whereby an individual who has had his/her right to own or possess a firearm taken away because of a court finding of mental illness that disqualifies him/her, be able to regain that right upon a showing that the prohibition is no longer necessary.

Any discussion of registering firearms are repugnant to the 2nd Amendment. Read the Federalist Papers (Esp. # 46) for a great analysis by James Madison of the importance of an armed citizenry. The oath of office that we take is more than a colorful ceremonial tradition. "...To preserve, protect and defend...the Constitution of the United States" is not some hollow "cross my heart and hope to die" children's promise.

The distinctions you cite as between urban police, suburban and rural chiefs and sheriffs is an artificial one. You cannot so easily discount the experience that some of us have merely based on the size or nature of an agency.

BOZEMAN, MT CHIEF RON PRICE:

Of 145 Children in Montana Killed By Firearms, 118 Were Suicides or Accidents

Closing the "gun show loophole" would be a step in the right direction. Firearm sales, regardless of the venue, should be subject to the same level of scrutiny. There are, however, greater roadblocks to the system. Mental health information is sporadically shared and cannot be relied upon to any level of accuracy. Enactment of a "straw purchasers" law would certainly tighten the background process, but such a law would need to be coupled with the willingness to aggressively prosecute.

The responsibility for gun safety must fall more squarely on the shoulders of the owner and less on government actions. The lack of security for stored firearms can undermine the best plans for background checking and other gun controls. Of the firearms stolen in my city in 2012, over 70% were taken from unlocked buildings or vehicles. None were secured by safes or trigger-locks.

True protection for the greatest number of our children will come through our own home security. Between 2000 and 2010, 145 children and teens were killed by firearms in the State of Montana. Homicides were to blame for 27 of those deaths. The vast majority (118) were the result of suicide or accidents.

PLYMOUTH, MN CHIEF MIKE GOLDSTEIN:

There Is No Logical Argument Against A Thorough Background Check System

With 34 people dying in the United States each day due to gun violence, things simply need to change. I am not proud of the fact that we are the most violent first-world nation in existence. That said, I am proud of the fact that this issue, albeit under tragic circumstances, is finally being addressed in a direct and comprehensive manner, both on a national and a state-by-state basis. What the President has proposed is a start. It is not the end-all and I believe there is room for negotiation.

One of the most critical aspects of the President's plan is his call to close the many loopholes in the criminal background check system. Background checks for *all* sales (dealer-related and private) need to be conducted through a national registry in which states will be mandated to supply their criminal and mental health records on dangerous individuals.

Yes, the work that is needed to create this system is complex and costly, but it is worth every effort. While this is only one component of the President's overall plan, there is no logical argument against this provision. Our country will be safer for it.

GRAND PRAIRIE, TX CHIEF STEVE DYE:

We Must Study Why People Have Low Regard for Human Life

It is imperative that we look at every opportunity to strengthen the process of controlling the sale of weapons, to only those who legally qualify, while respecting the Second Amendment. However, I think it is important to also realize that any changes in the gun sale processes will not completely solve the problem of firearms being available to the criminal element and those wishing to cause harm. Many weapons will continue to be available on the streets and through thefts from legal gun owners.

I believe we must look deeper at why our society seems to be producing more and more individuals who have such a low regard for human life and are so desensitized. A higher priority and more funding needs to be placed on our public education, as well as holding parents more accountable for the behavior of the children. **Until these core issues of self-responsibility and respect for law and society are more comprehensively addressed, gun control may do little to correct these larger societal issues.**

KANSAS CITY, KS CHIEF RICK ARMSTRONG:

The President's Plan Has Practical Solutions

The President's "Now Is the Time" initiative has some practical solutions for protecting the population from the criminal element, while being considerate to a person's Constitutionally protected right to gun ownership. The need for a more robust national information sharing network dealing with background investigations of potential gun buyers, help for the mentally ill and programs designed for early detection and treatment of the young diagnosed with mental illness, along with the reinstatement of regulations for the control of assault weapon purchases, should be explored further.

NOBLESVILLE, IN CHIEF KEVIN JOWITT:

"Shall not be infringed" is clear and strong language.

MARCO ISLAND, FL CHIEF DON HUNTER:

Gun Control Laws Are Untenable

The murder rate by firearm is burgeoning in two of our most strict gun control cities (Washington, D.C. and Chicago). We prove over and over again both through history and real-time experience that the noble intent of otherwise good law is found time after time to be undone by the inability to enforce that law.

While I have attended more than my share of funerals for murdered law enforcement officers and feel the same grief and outrage that my colleagues feel in the deaths, I am still struck by the merit of having an armed populace as partners in prevention.

The idea that we can somehow control, through enforcement, the sale of individual private firearms seems highly unlikely. Examples abound in black market goods (precious metals, pirated fuel, precious gems), the effort at alcohol prohibition, our drug war, etc.

Likewise the idea of universal background checks on all firearms is untenable and cannot rightly be accomplished as those most in need of screening will avoid review and steal their way to a firearm or pay surrogates to purchase, through sham, on their behalf.

I have found that having SROs in our schools is far more than having a gun on campus to protect students; I believe that a person properly selected as an SRO and properly placed with an age appropriate population can gather sufficient intelligence from the student body to inform us of likely and known threats on campus.

Finally, I am reminded that mass murders are also committed by edged weapons and blunt instruments (bats are popular). I would also become concerned after the outlawing of firearms that we would revert to edged weapons, cross-bow and bows of every configuration and any and all other possible weapons.

CHIEF HOWARD HALL, ROANOKE, VA:

We Should Help Our Schools with Security Plans

I recommend that, prior to enacting new legislation, we focus on ensuring that the laws already in place are being enforced effectively. For instance, numerous laws already prohibit certain people from possessing firearms. We should evaluate whether the processes currently in place are effective in preventing prohibited individuals from obtaining a firearm and punishing those who ignore the law.

In terms of school safety, there are a variety of actions that can be taken in the short term that do not require legislative action or a large amount of funding. We should assist our schools in ensuring that safety plans are up to date and that training/practice regarding the plans is completed on a continuing basis. Active shooter response needs to be coordinated with police, schools, fire/rescue, and other stakeholders using a regional approach. We should ensure that school facilities are secured in a manner that minimizes unauthorized access. Finally, all communities need assessment capabilities and intervention mechanisms to help identify individuals who pose a threat and prevent them from acting. These relatively basic steps, which have not been universally completed, could provide significant improvements to the safety of our children.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX CHIEF FLOYD SIMPSON:

Gun Owners Should Be Accountable For Securing Their Weapons

The Corpus Christi Police Department supports the lawful possession of firearms by our citizens.

The firearms that cause us the greatest concern are those used by criminals, gang members, and those involved in the trade of narcotics. These weapons are often purchased through third parties or are taken in burglaries. We would encourage legislation to provide an avenue for citizens engaged in private weapons transactions to verify the eligibility of a potential buyer. **We strongly agree that straw purchasing should be criminalized if the buyer can be shown to have knowingly purchased the weapon for another who would not be able to do so because of their criminal history.**

The Corpus Christi Police Department would like to see those who use firearms in the commission of a crime prosecuted

to the fullest extent of the law. And we believe there should be a penalty levied against gun owners who refuse to give due diligence to the security of their weapons. We are routinely documenting incidents of auto and home burglaries where weapons are taken. **Many of these incidents clearly show the gun owner as negligent in securing their weapons.**

We also support any measure that would help identify individuals with mental disorders who have violent tendencies, so that their ability to own a firearm could be properly evaluated. Weapons taken by police for incidents involving subjects with mental health issues should not be released back to that subject without proper clearance from a qualified medical professional. Currently the release of weapons requires a magistrate order only.

AURORA, IL CHIEF GREG THOMAS:

We Should Focus on Keeping Guns Away from Those Who Shouldn't Have Them

The question shouldn't be about gun control, but the reduction of violence. Gun control is just one item that we should be considering, but because the question was about gun control, I'll keep my comments to that topic. There are three areas that we have to concentrate our resources regarding gun control, keeping guns away from the (1) immature (those under 18 unless under appropriate supervision), (2) violent criminal offenders and (3) mentally unstable.

Prior to dealing with assault weapons and extended magazines that I believe will have zero affect, we need to be concentrating on keeping guns from the individuals who shouldn't have them and we will have a dramatic effect.

DARTMOUTH, MA CHIEF TIMOTHY LEE:

HIPAA Rules Should Allow Information Sharing from Health Care Professionals

I support the initiatives outlined in President Obama's plan, especially the points related to strengthening the relationships between law enforcement, schools, and mental health professionals. The more information that is available to law enforcement, whether for background checks or investigations regarding guns, the better equipped law enforcement will be to protect citizens.

HIPAA rules need to be examined and better explained to providers. Perhaps a "national" HIPAA model should be examined, as the current model enables states to be overly restrictive and prohibitive in the rules governing what information health care professionals can share with law enforcement.

WINTER HAVEN, FL CHIEF GARY HESTER:

The President's Proposals Would Not Have Prevented Sandy Hook Shooting

Based on all available information regarding the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, not one element outlined in the President's plan would have prevented this vicious mass murder from occurring. The owner of the weapons used reportedly purchased them legally and she passed the background check. If the magazines capacity was 10 rounds, the killer would have had ample time to reload since he was shooting unarmed children and teachers in a "gun free" environment.

I know that in many circles, "gun control" is politically popular and politicians need to do something in an effort to prevent

this type of horrific crime from ever happening again. We need to address the root cause—mental health resources and laws—our current culture of violence—target hardening our school—would be a good place to start the efforts.

The real issue that is being ignored in these incidents are the fact that mental health funding has been reduced in most states. It is widely reported that the largest mental health facilities in most jurisdictions are the jails. A significant demand on law enforcement resources are underserved individuals with mental health issues.

My agency has invested a great deal of time and effort providing Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to patrol officers to better equip them to deal with the growing number of individuals with mental health issues.

RETIRED CHIEF FLOYD LUCAS, HICKORY, NC:
We Must Stop Letting an Element That Fights Any Reasonable Laws Dictate Public Safety

We must stop letting an element that fights *any* reasonable regulation regarding firearms and ammunition control dictate a political agenda and dictate public safety. The President's proposals are only small steps in the right direction. They protect the right to own guns but put some logical and realistic things in place.

I retired after 34 years as a police chief and 40 years as an officer. I'm a military veteran. I own guns and have a lifetime hunting and fishing license. I do not believe the government is going to attempt to take away our guns.

CLEARWATER, FL CHIEF ANTHONY HOLLOWAY:
10-Round Magazines Are Enough for Hunting

I agree 100% with the President's plan to close the background check loophole to keep guns out of dangerous hands. Currently, private sellers can advertise guns in the newspaper or over the Internet. While a reasonable seller usually conducts some type of background check to ensure he or she is selling the gun to a responsible buyer, irresponsible owners may complete a transaction without any accountability. I strongly believe that there should be a mechanism that holds the private gun owner responsible for following through with some type of background check or requiring the private owner to list the guns that he or she has sold to another individual.

Regarding high-capacity magazines, in Florida there is a law stating that when an individual is hunting in a public wildlife area, the semi-automatic rifle magazine capacity should be no more than 5 rounds.

If the President's plan limits the number of rounds to 10, this should be more than sufficient for hunting purposes.

WHEAT RIDGE, CO CHIEF DANIEL BRENNAN:
Turning Schools into Fortresses Is Not the Answer

I am very supportive of universal background checks to close loopholes in the current system and keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those who are otherwise ineligible to possess guns.

In my opinion, the issue of gun violence is broader than military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and the President's plan should address all gun violence. Active shooters historically have targeted schools, places of employment, and

locations where groups of people gather. Yes, we need to make schools safer, but we need to have serious discussions about community safety in other places as well. We can spend a lot of money making schools fortresses, but criminals will find other ways to attack students, during a recess or when students are coming to and from school (Deer Creek Middle School, CO).

Since Columbine, law enforcement and school administrators have done a much better job of identifying the internal threats within schools. The problem is identifying the external threat.

Increasing mental health services and crisis hotlines, and creating mental health triage centers where police can take individuals who are experiencing a mental crisis, are steps that are long overdue.

Lastly, in my opinion elected officials and law enforcement are overlooking the cultural and systemic issues related to the issue of violence in this country.

ANKENY, IA CHIEF GARY MIKULEC:
We Must Have Reporting of Threats By Mental Health Professionals

The President's plan establishes a foundation for gun reform. The proposals are consistent with the majority of public opinion. Ending the freeze on gun violence research will allow a scientific approach that is likely to tie mental health issues and other predictors into a tighter pattern of understanding and more concise laws.

The reluctance by doctors and mental health professionals to report direct and credible threats of violence, as a result of HIPAA concerns, plays out many times in our city. A woman diagnosed with homicidal tendencies toward her son and husband continued to live with both of them for years following the original diagnoses, and HIPAA prevented disclosure to those at risk. The diagnosis tragically manifested itself when the woman attempted to murder her son, and following this unsuccessful attempt took her own life.

SEAT PLEASANT, MD CHIEF CHRISTOPHER COTILLO:
Background Checks Yes, Weapons Restrictions No

I have absolutely no problem with background checks being required for every gun sale in the United States. I believe that this is a minor inconvenience to pay to keep guns out of the wrong hands. However, I do strongly feel that the answer to this problem is not more weapon restrictions. Stricter gun laws do not equal a reduction in crime or homicides. I believe the solution lies in quality educational programs, accountability, mental health services, stricter background checks, and stricter penalties for violators.

URBANDALE, IA CHIEF ROSS MCCARTY:
We Need More Focus on Mental Health

The President's proposal needs to provide much more attention to a preventive model towards gun violence, a model that concentrates on the mental health aspects for preventive diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues related to gun violence.

IMPERIAL, FL CHIEF MIGUEL COLON:
Stop and Frisk Helps Reduce Gun Crime

Gun control is not the problem nor the solution to gun violence. The issue is compounded when it is politicized by elected officials. I couldn't help but notice how Newtown, Aurora, Oak Creek, and Tucson were prominently mentioned in the President's report.

Local and Federal legislators need to create Focused Deterrence in the minimum sentencing guidelines for violent gun offenders. Focused Deterrence is a strategy that narrowly tailors sanctions to specific individuals and/or specific criminal behaviors like gun violence.

Stop and Frisk has come under attack but it has proven to be a very effective law enforcement tool. The federal government should strengthen law enforcement's ability to engage in Stop and Frisk if they are serious about controlling gun violence.

MARICOPA, AZ CHIEF STEVE STAHL, MARICOPA, AZ:
Enforcement Can Send a Deterrent Message

Local law enforcement continues to struggle with enough resources to effectively respond to and prevent crime trends in their communities. There are currently state and federal laws which if sufficient punishment was implemented, a deterrent message would be sent and for those who do not heed the message, appropriate punishment would be imposed. Training to the judicial branch would be beneficial as well.

AKRON, OH CHIEF JAMES NICE:
We Need Jail Time for Illegal Possession

In Akron we seized 652 guns last year and 70 in January this year. The current gun legislation that is being proposed is not going to do anything to stop or slow down the gun violence in the cities. In Ohio it is not a violent crime to carry a concealed weapon, and individuals are out in less than a day. My battle has been to try to have some incarceration for the illegal possession of a firearm. I had a four-year-old killed last week and a homicide Tuesday along with his brother being shot in the face. Is everyone really afraid to incarcerate young violent criminals?

CHARLESTON, SC CHIEF GREG MULLEN:
*Unregulated Purchases of Guns in Parking Lots
And at Gun Shows Are Unacceptable*

There are many parts to the President's plan that are important and must be integrated if we intend to impact gun violence. Requiring background checks for all guns sales, prosecuting those who falsify information to make gun purchases, and creating federal laws to deal with gun traffickers would have a direct impact on this critical issue.

There is significant evidence to demonstrate we are not aggressively addressing the thousands of cases where background checks are falsified. And the unregulated procurement of assault rifles and semi-automatic handguns in parking lots and next to licensed dealers at gun shows—without any type of review—is simply unacceptable. These two issues demonstrate glaring gaps in our system.

Not having the laws to address those who purchase weapons and distribute them on the street to criminal gangs and individuals

who cannot legally purchase or possess them hampers law enforcement's ability to attack the gun problem and the violence associated with it. **Until the background check loopholes are closed and there are substantial consequences attached to unacceptable behavior relating to gun purchases and sales, it is not reasonable for us to believe things will change.**

SPRINGETTSBURY TOWNSHIP, PA CHIEF THOMAS HYERS:
*Police Must Work with School Officials
On Active Shooter Response Strategies*

I support the President's plan as a means of addressing gun violence in America today.

School-related active shooter incidents have three primary initial response components: Law Enforcement, First Responders, and School Administrators. The President's plan highlights his desire to increase training among the three. The challenge is much greater than allocating funds or developing lesson plans. The challenge is in getting the three components to understand the importance of collaboration when developing comprehensive active shooter response strategies.

In many jurisdictions, school administrators and law enforcement officials fail to actively collaborate in the development of their active shooter or critical incident response strategy. Each of the key stakeholders develops their critical response plans in a near-vacuum. This leads to much of the confusion we see during the initial moments of these tragic events.


I am fortunate here in York County to have a School Superintendent, Dr. Michael Snell, who appreciates the need for open dialog and collaboration. The issues we are working to address include a comprehensive evacuation/lock-down strategy, and more importantly, what happens to evacuees once they exit the building. How do we clear the building of students and teachers from locked-down classrooms after the need for the lock-down has ended? And how will we handle the many parents and relatives that will make their way to the school upon initial notification?

CHIEF KEN CORNEY, VENTURA, CA:
*California's Gun Laws Are Undermined
By Lack of Regulations in Neighboring States*

As a California police chief, I agree with the need for a universal federal law to ban military-style assault rifles and high-capacity magazines. California's strict gun laws are undermined by the lack of a federal law. As a result, these weapons can be purchased in neighboring states and easily brought into California.

I think the most important aspect to increasing mental health services is to increase access to evaluation and treatment services. This needs to occur at all levels, not just with our youths.

Community policing strategies and Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) have proved effective in many communities as a response to mental health issues. This model should be replicated in the school environment with dedicated regional teams.

Making schools safer is important, but the reality of funding resources for counselors and police officers on school campuses is not practical. Police officers are uniquely empowered and qualified to quickly and effectively investigate and intervene when there are allegations of threats or violent behavior at schools. 



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