

Hear testimony from Chicago Police Superintendent Jody Weis, victims of gun violence

CHICAGO—Today, U.S. Representatives Mike Quigley (IL-05), Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (MI-14), Bobby Scott (VA-3), and Jan Schakowsky (IL-09) heard testimony from law enforcement officials, victims of gun violence, and academic experts on the devastating effects of the Gun Show Loophole, a gap in federal law that allows private gun dealers to sell weapons to anyone—including terrorists, felons, and the mentally disabled—without performing background checks.

“It has been law in the United States since 1993 that there are three groups of people who should never be allowed to buy guns in this country: terrorists, felons, and the mentally ill,” said Quigley. “Yet inexplicably any of them can walk into a gun show tomorrow and buy a firearm. Each gun sale performed without a background check in states like Indiana undermines law enforcement in Illinois, and contributes to the epidemic of illegal guns that is decimating our city.”

According to the Bureau for Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 55,000 illegally trafficked guns were linked to gun shows and flea markets in a two-year period. A survey conducted by Republican pollster Frank Luntz revealed 69 percent of National Rifle Association (NRA) members and 85 percent of non-NRA gun-owners support requiring criminal background checks on all purchasers at gun shows.

Representatives from the Illinois NRA were invited to the forum, but did not attend.

Added Conyers: “I commend my colleague, Representative Quigley, for convening this forum, as it comprehensively educated and informed citizens of the potential criminal dangers that result from this gun show loophole. As we have heard today, the lack of legal requirements placed on unlicensed firearms sellers at gun shows have been the cause of some of our country’s deadliest school shootings. Always considering ways the Federal government can better fulfill its duty in protecting our citizens from crime, we simply cannot afford to allow this loophole to continue to exist while placing our precious children’s lives at stake.”

In Chicago, gun violence has ravaged neighborhoods across the city in recent years. Five hundred Chicago Public School students have been involved in a gun-related incident in the past two years, and 34 have lost their lives to gun violence.

[The Gun Show Loophole Closing Act of 2009](#) was introduced with bipartisan support and now has 109 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. It has not been brought to the House floor for a vote, although earlier this summer a bill to [help gun owners keep their firearms when declaring bankruptcy](#) passed the House.

Panelists from the forum included Superintendent of Chicago Police, Jody Weis, as well as Colin Goddard, a survivor of the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007. Three of the four guns used in the Columbine school shooting were bought at a gun show. Guns used by the Pentagon shooter and by Nidal Hasan, the perpetrator of the Ft. Hood massacre, were also products of gun shows.

“Gun shows have been shown to be the source of many guns used in crimes, many of which were obtained by persons who could not legally purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer,” said Scott. “The government has a responsibility to enforce public safety and protect its citizens from those who wish to obtain firearms illegally.”

“Gun shows are notorious for their lack of regulation and are often the place where violent criminals obtain the firearms used to murder innocent people,” added Schakowsky. “Unlicensed sellers turn a hefty profit at gun shows without having to check buyers’ identification or keep records of their sales, and they have no way of running background checks. This lack of gun show regulation has proved to be deadly time and again. It’s totally outrageous that such safety checks are required of licensed firearms sellers while the unlicensed sellers get a free pass, which too often results in homicide. I have long been a proponent of ending the scourge of gun violence that is of epidemic proportions in the Chicago area. Closing the gun show loophole is a key part of that effort.”

Gun shows are firearm flea markets, where private citizens sell all types of guns from pistols to assault rifles. In 17 states sales at gun shows require a background check, while in 33 states the gun show loophole remains open.

Quigley's full opening statement is available [here](#) .