

WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) introduced a bill to combat gun trafficking by toughening penalties on straw purchasers and complicit dealers. The Border Security Enhancement Act is the first to give the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) the authority to crackdown on gun sellers who routinely traffic weapons to straw purchasers.

“In the words of Mark Twain, ‘denial’ ain’t just a river in Egypt. It also happens to be our gun policy,” said Quigley. “Congress must side with law enforcement and give them the tools they need to combat the flow of illegal guns.”

Quigley’s bill is a two-pronged approach to targeting straw purchasers and gun traffickers.

- **Increasing prison sentences:** Currently, the law stipulates a five-year sentence for straw purchasers, however those convicted of the crime typically receive probation or no more than a few months in jail. By allowing longer prison sentences, prosecutors will have more leverage in their investigations and greater ability to stop firearms trafficking.

When ATF agent Peter Forcelli of the Phoenix Field Division testified at a June 15 hearing in the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, he said existing laws were “toothless.” He added: “Some people view this as no more consequential than doing 65 in a 55...for somebody to testify against members of a cartel where the alternative is seeing a probation officer once a month, they’re going to opt toward, you know, not cooperating with the law enforcement authorities.”

- **Linking gun trafficking with money laundering:** Congress can add crimes to the list of specified unlawful activities to allow money-laundering charges to be brought in conjunction with other crimes. Since a straw purchasing violation occurs at the point of sale, this will allow the ATF to combat firearms trafficking at the earliest possible point, before the firearms begin their journey to the southwest border.

“Congressman Quigley’s legislation gives us a new tool to attack the gun trafficking that’s feeding the lethal violence in Mexico as well as in this country,” said Brady Campaign Acting President Dennis Henigan. “When we toughen the laws against gun trafficking, we protect not

only Mexican families, but American families. We protect not only Mexican law enforcement, but American law enforcement. And that's exactly what the American people expect Congress to do."

The ATF's failed Operation Fast and Furious, an attempt to connect straw purchasers to Mexican drug cartels, was in part due to the few inadequate laws to combat the practice of gun-trafficking on any scale. As part of Operation Fast and Furious, the ATF allowed the sale of weapons to suspected straw purchasers along the southwest border. One of the guns was used to kill Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry.

Currently, Mexican drug cartels are killing people at a staggering rate: more than 30,000 since 2006. In September 2010, a report from Mayors Against Illegal Guns revealed that 90 percent of the firearms recovered and traced in drug cartel-related crimes in Mexico originated in the United States; this report also noted that southwest border states were the source for 75 percent of these firearms.

Quigley introduced the [TRACE Act](#) in April to improve crime gun tracing and crack down on the illegal gun market. He also introduced [an amendment to the Patriot Act to prevent suspected terrorists from purchasing guns](#), but it was voted down in the Judiciary Committee