

Today Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05) spoke on the need for Congress to debate and implement commonsense gun reform in the wake of last week's tragedy in Aurora, Colorado. With gun violence reported each weekend in Chicago, he asks, "When will we have had enough?"

Rep. Mike Quigley: Mister Speaker, two nights ago, six people were shot inside of fifteen minutes in my home the city of Chicago. Seven more victims were killed just last weekend including two 16 year old boys. In total in Chicago, since January, over 200 people have been killed in shootings. And, nationwide, everyday 34 people are killed by guns.

In the hours following the horrific tragedy in Colorado, we pause to reflect and send our prayers to families grieving an unimaginable loss. But now is the time to have a national discussion about how to stem these epidemic levels of gun violence. I wish this terrible tragedy in Aurora was an isolated incident, but it seems to be part of a recurring pattern.

Nineteen people were shot, and 8 were killed in Tucson in 2011. 29 people were shot, and 13 died at Fort Hood in 2009. 21 people were shot, and 5 were killed at a university in Northern Illinois University, in 2008. And 17 people were wounded, while 32 people died at Virginia Tech in 2007.

When will have had enough? When will we stand up and say: we may not be able to stop *every* crime, but we can stop *some* of them and at least *minimize*

the damage of others?

The gun lobby doesn't want us to have this conversation. First they accuse anyone who tries to spark a national debate about how to mitigate gun violence with exploiting the deaths of innocent people.

Yet no one was accused of exploitation when, after Hurricane Katrina, we discussed how to improve FEMA's emergency response – Or, after the deadly salmonella outbreak, when we debated how to improve public safety.

After such national tragedies society should engage in a discussion about how to address and potentially prevent such tragedies from happening again. We might not all agree, but this is a Democracy, and this is how public policy is made.

Next, the gun lobby seeks to stymie debate by arguing guns don't kill people, people kill people. I don't buy this argument. I don't buy that there's *nothing* we can do to stop criminals and the mentally ill from killing if they want to. Sure, we can't stop them with 100 percent certainty, but we can make it a lot harder for would be assassins. We can ensure *every* gun is purchased after a background check, rather *only 60 percent* of guns, as is currently the case. And, we can reduce the fatality rate by banning assault rifles and high-capacity magazines that are designed exclusively for killing dozens of people at once.

The gun lobby tries to argue that *any* attempt to regulate gun access is an attempt to restrict *all* gun access. This is simply not true.

There is such a thing as common-sense middle ground gun reform – and most gun owners support it. 81 percent of gun owners support requiring a background check on all firearm purchases.

Yet, 40 percent of U.S. gun sales are conducted by private sellers who are not required to

perform background checks. These private sellers operate at gun shows where anyone can walk in and buy whatever gun they want. Convicted felons, domestic abusers, the severely mentally ill, and even people on the terrorist watch list can – *and do* – go into gun shows and buy any gun they want.

Ninety percent of all Americans also support strengthening databases to prevent the mentally ill from buying guns. But sadly, ten states have still failed to flag a single person as mentally ill in the national background check database, and 17 other states have fewer than 100 people listed as mentally ill. Over a million disqualifying mental health records are still missing from the database.

Finally, we must have a conversation about getting assault weapons and high-capacity magazines – machines designed exclusively for killing a lot of people – off the streets. When you have a high-volume magazine or an assault weapon, you're not hunting deer or protecting your home - you're out to hunt people.

And let's be clear: this not about restricting anyone's Second Amendment rights.

The Supreme Court has ruled and made clear the right of Americans to own guns. But, while reaffirming the Second Amendment, the Court was careful to note that the amendment is not limitless. Justice Scalia explained in *Columbia v. Heller* that "like most rights, the Second Amendment is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose."

Can we stop every shooting? No. But can we reduce their frequency and deadliness? Absolutely. Can we do it while respecting the Second Amendment? Of this, I am certain.

But the first step toward keeping dangerous guns out of the hands of dangerous people is to begin a conversation. Let's break the silence, stop the violence, and start the conversation.

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