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### **By Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05)**

In Chicago, if you ask a school-aged child their number one fear, it's not braces or a book report. It's being shot on the way to school. While law enforcement officials around the country face the monumental task of cracking down on the thousands of illegal weapons that flood our streets and take innocent lives each day, it's children in Chicago who bear the brunt of such violence. Last year in my hometown of Chicago alone, gun violence led to more than 500 homicides and the seizure of more than 7,400 illegal firearms by the Chicago Police Department.

The time for action is now. No longer can we allow the gun lobby to cut off any substantive discussion of gun violence with the same, tired refrain we heard from the NRA last week. "Proposing more gun control laws, while failing to enforce the thousands we already have -- it's not a serious solution for reducing crime," said the head of the NRA. The truth is we do need new gun laws, but combating this epidemic of gun violence cannot be accomplished through commonsense gun law reforms alone. We must also enforce the gun laws already on the books.

But what the NRA neglects to mention is how the gun lobby and its allies in Congress have handcuffed law enforcement for nearly a decade, making it virtually impossible for them to enforce our existing gun laws. Pushing little-known, NRA-written provisions called the Tiahrt Amendments, the gun lobby has hindered the ability of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to do its job and conduct routine enforcement measures. Attached to appropriations bills, these self-serving provisions prohibit the ATF from requiring gun dealers to perform inventory checks, require background check records be destroyed within 24 hours, and restrict state and local law enforcement's access to crime gun trace data.

In 2000, the ATF estimated that 57 percent of crime guns came from only 1.2 percent of licensed dealers, but local and state law enforcement is restricted from using gun trace data to revoke the licenses of those who break the law. Even worse, requiring the destruction of background check records within 24 hours makes it nearly impossible for the ATF to catch

rogue gun dealers who falsify their records or straw purchasers who buy guns on behalf of criminals. Finally, by prohibiting the ATF from requiring dealers to complete inventory checks for lost and stolen weapons, the ATF is forced to rely solely on its own limited resources, resulting in less than 20 percent of the nation's gun dealers being inspected annually.

Now is the time to repeal the Tiahrt Amendments and restore the ATF's power to enforce our current gun laws. The Trafficking Reduction and Criminal Enforcement (TRACE) Act, which I introduced last week, will repeal these illogical amendments, require an additional, hidden serial number on firearms to improve gun tracing data, and close the loopholes that allow criminals to obtain illicit guns. The TRACE Act will help the ATF keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people and is supported by both the Brady Campaign and the Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

Now more than ever, the vast majority of Americans, including gun owners, want to make our communities safer with commonsense gun law reforms like the TRACE Act. It's time for Congress to stand up to the NRA and start listening to the American people. Let's give law enforcement the ability to do its job, enforce our gun laws, and get illegal weapons off our streets.

