



International Association of Chiefs of Police Position Paper on Firearm Violence

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), an organization of law enforcement executives from around the globe, has long held positions intended to reduce and prevent firearms violence. As police chiefs, it is our duty to protect and serve our communities and display the leadership needed to ensure public safety.

The persistent and pernicious problem of gun violence impacts communities across the United States on a daily basis. Ranging from random shootings and suicides to retaliatory assaults and targeted mass killings, violence committed with firearms universally challenges law enforcement and taxes resources. This insidious problem requires law enforcement to lead a new, coordinated, and dedicated response involving citizens, elected leaders, lawmakers, and the entire criminal justice system

In the years since the terrorist attacks of 2001, over 300,000 American lives have been lost to gun violence.

We are clearly facing a crisis.

In response, the IACP has long advocated for the adoption of common sense policies that will assist in reducing gun violence. These proposals are drawn from the policy positions adopted by the 21,000 members of the IACP over the past several years.

Armor Piercing Ammunition

The IACP supports legislation and policies that will prohibit the sale or transfer of armor piercing ammunition. In addition, the IACP believes that the process utilized to determine whether a round of ammunition is armor piercing should include performance based testing conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Assault Weapons Ban

First passed in 1994, the assault weapons ban required domestic gun manufacturers to stop production of semiautomatic assault weapons and ammunition magazines holding more than ten rounds except for military or police use. While the ban was in place, it was remarkably effective in

reducing the number of crimes involving assault weapons. In the period of the ban, (1994-2004) the proportion of assault weapons traced to crimes fell by a dramatic 66 percent.

Assault weapons are routinely the weapons of choice for gang members and drug dealers. They are regularly encountered in drug busts and are all too often used against police officers..

The IACP has been a strong supporter of the assault weapons ban since 1992, and our membership has approved several reauthorizations of support in the years since. The membership took this action because we, as law enforcement executives, understand that semiautomatic assault weapons pose a grave risk to our officers and the communities they are sworn to protect.

Body Armor

The IACP supports legislation to prohibit the mail order sale of bulletproof vests and body armor to all individuals except sworn or certified law enforcement officers. In recent years, the safety of law enforcement officers has often been compromised due to the possession of body armor and bulletproof vests by the criminals they were attempting to apprehend. The IACP believes that the sale, transfer, or acquisition of these items should be conducted in person in order to make it more difficult for criminals to acquire and use these items while committing crimes of violence.

Concealed Weapons

The IACP continues to oppose any federal legislative proposals that would either pre-empt and/or mandate the liberalization of individual states' CCW laws pertaining to the carrying of concealed weapons in other states without meeting that state's requirements. This applies to private citizens as well as active, former, and/or federal, tribal, state and local law enforcement personnel. IACP believes it is essential that state governments maintain the ability to legislate concealed carry laws that best fit the needs of their communities.

Firearms Enforcement

The IACP urges Congress to increase resources to better allow state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and the Department of Justice to enable greater prosecution of individuals for Brady Act violations. In addition, the IACP supports firearms enforcement programs that involve local, state and federal agencies, such as Project Safe Neighborhoods and Project Exile, which have shown significant reductions in firearms-related violent crime.

Firearms Offender Registry

The reduction of firearms-related violent crime has been and continues to be a major goal of IACP. Studies have shown that firearm offenders have a higher recidivist rate for committing other firearms-related violent crime with firearms than the rate for sexual offenders. Therefore, the IACP supports creating a federal registry, similar to the sexual offender registry, for offenders who have been previously convicted of a felony firearm violation or a misdemeanor that involved violent or threatening acts with firearms. At little cost, this registry would have great benefit toward preventing and investigating a myriad of violent crimes, as well as establishing a computerized list of dangerous offenders that could be utilized as a notification system to alert officers of potential danger.

Firearm Purchase Waiting Period

The IACP has gone on record supporting a waiting period for the purchase of a handgun. In the past, waiting periods have not only served as time for a thorough background investigation, but also as an informal cooling off period for handgun purchasers. However, the time needed to perform most background checks has become obsolete due to transition to the National Instant Check Background System (NICS). Nevertheless, the IACP believes there must still be a cooling off period in place before an individual can purchase a handgun. Therefore, the IACP supports legislation to create a mandatory five-day waiting period prior to the completion of a handgun purchase.

Gun Show Loophole

The federal Gun Control Act of 1968 stipulates that individuals “engaged in the business” of selling firearms must possess a Federal Firearms License (FFL). Holders of FFLs are required to conduct background checks and maintain a record of all their firearm sales. Certain gun sales and transfers between private individuals, however, are exempt from this requirement.

Those who would fail a background check can access firearms through these sources. Unlike an FFL, the seller is not required to conduct a background check to determine whether the purchaser is prohibited from purchasing and possessing a gun. Federal, state, local and tribal laws should be enacted to close these loopholes. If all gun sales proceed through an FFL, a single, consistent system for conducting gun sales, including background checks, will be established.

The laws we have in place to ensure gun purchasers go through FFLs are undermined by oversights in the law that allow individuals prohibited from owning firearms to obtain weapons at events such as gun shows without undergoing a background check. The IACP calls on Congress to act swiftly to close these loopholes and preserve the effectiveness of the laws in place.

Illegal Firearms Trafficking/Firearms Tracing

The IACP opposes any legislation that would limit or reduce the ability of our nation's law enforcement agencies to combat the sale of illegal guns. The IACP believes that the ability to trace illegal firearms effectively plays a critical role in law enforcement's ability to protect communities from the scourge of firearms violence.

The IACP is opposed to the "Tiahrt Amendment" restricts the ATF's ability to share vital gun trace information with its state and local counterparts, which severely limits the ability of those agencies to conduct critical investigations designed to identify and apprehend corrupt firearms dealers and the traffickers they supply.

The IACP strongly believes that these provisions, and others like them, put our citizens and our officers at risk. Therefore, the IACP strongly supports efforts to repeal the Tiahrt amendment and any piece of legislation containing provisions that would weaken law enforcement's ability to trace illegal firearms.

Juvenile Crime Firearms Disability

The IACP believes that juveniles must be held accountable for their acts of violence. Therefore, the IACP supports the passage of legislation, sometimes referred to as Juvenile Brady, which would permanently prohibit gun ownership by an individual, if that individual, while a juvenile, commits a crime that would have triggered a gun disability if their crime had been committed as an adult.