



April 5, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to applaud your efforts in introducing legislation to address needed reforms in the wake of the Newtown, CT tragedy. ACP is the nation's largest physician specialty society, and the second largest physician membership organization in the United States. ACP members include 133,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

The *Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act of 2013* (S. 649), as introduced on March 21, represents a positive step forward in the debate on how best to reduce firearms-related deaths and injuries and we urge a vote on the measure in the full Senate. For more than 15 years, ACP has proposed and advocated for policies to reduce deaths and injuries related to firearms and other forms of violence. Firearm violence is a serious public health issue. As an organization representing physicians who have first-hand experience with the devastating impact on the health of their patients resulting from firearms-related injuries and deaths, we have a responsibility to be part of the solution in trying to mitigate firearms-related tragedies.

We are pleased that S. 649 is largely consistent with ACP policies. We strongly support the provisions to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and require a background check for every firearm sale. For the NICS to be effective, all relevant records must be electronically available and added to the system in a timely manner. An estimated 40 percent of gun sales are made at gun shows and through private sales which do not require background checks. Closing this loop hole by requiring a background check for every firearm sale is an essential step toward ensuring that firearms are kept out of the hands of those who are not supposed to possess them. We also support your measure that would provide harsher penalties for "straw man" purchases of guns. These reasonable provisions, which are supported by an overwhelming majority of the public, will help reduce firearms-related injuries and deaths without infringing on Second Amendment rights. A March 13 poll by the Pew Research Center found that 83 percent of the public supports background checks for private and gun show sales of firearms.

We recognize that any solution to reduce firearms violence must be multi-faceted, addressing culture, mental health, firearms safety, and reasonable regulation to keep firearms out of the hands of persons who will use them to harm themselves and others, as well as measures to reduce mass casualties associated with certain types of firearms. In addition to the provisions in your legislation, we call on Congress and the Administration to ban assault-type weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines, eliminate restrictions on research on the causes of firearms-related violence, and improve access to mental health services.

We applaud your leadership on this important issue and look forward to working with you to end the recurring tragedy of deaths and injuries from persons using firearms and all forms of violence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Bronson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David L. Bronson, MD, FACP
President

Cc: United States Senators