

The President's Weekly Address

January 19, 2013

Hi, everybody. This week, I announced a series of concrete steps we should take to protect our children and our communities from gun violence.

These proposals grew out of meetings Vice President Biden and his task force held over the last month with more than 200 different groups, from parents and teachers to law enforcement and sportsmen, to religious leaders and mental health professionals. And in the weeks ahead, I'll do everything in my power to make them a reality, because while we may not be able to prevent every senseless act of violence in this country, if there is even one thing that we can do to reduce it, if even one life can be saved, we've got an obligation to try.

My administration is taking a series of actions right away, from strengthening our background check system to helping schools hire more resource officers if they want them, to directing the Centers for Disease Control to study the best ways to reduce gun violence. But the truth is, making a real and lasting difference also requires Congress to act and act soon.

First, it's time for Congress to require a universal background check for anyone trying to buy a gun. The law already requires licensed gun dealers to perform these checks, but as many as 40 percent of all gun purchases are conducted without one. That's not safe, it's not smart, and it's not fair to responsible gun buyers or sellers. An overwhelming majority of Americans agree that anyone trying to buy a gun should at least have to prove that they're not a felon or somebody legally prohibited from owning one. That's just common sense.

Second, Congress should restore a ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines. Many assault rifles, when combined with high-capacity magazines, have one purpose and one purpose only: to fire as many bullets as possible as quickly as possible. These weapons have no place in our communities, and a majority of the American people agree with me.

Finally, Congress needs to make it easier, rather than harder, for law enforcement to do its job. We should get tougher on people who buy guns only to turn around and sell them to criminals. And at a time when many communities have been forced to make cuts to their police force, we should put more cops back on the job and back on the street.

Like most Americans, I believe the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to bear arms. We have a strong tradition of gun ownership in this country, and the vast majority of gun owners act responsibly. But I also believe most gun owners agree that we can respect the Second Amendment while keeping an irresponsible, law-breaking few from causing harm on a massive scale. That's what these reforms are designed to do.

None of this will be easy. Already, we're seeing pundits and politicians and special interest lobbyists calling any attempt at commonsense reform an all-out assault on liberty, not because that's true, but because that's how they get higher ratings or make more money. And behind the scenes, they're doing everything they can to protect the status quo.

But this time, it can't be up to them. It's got to be up to you. If, like me, you want this time to be different, then I need your help to make it different. Ask your Member of Congress if they support universal background checks and renewing a ban on military-style assault

weapons and high-capacity magazines. And if the answer is no, ask them why not. Ask them why an A grade from the gun lobby is more important than keeping kids safe in a first grade classroom.

Since the tragedy in Newtown, I've gotten letters from all over the country, including many from our young people. One of them was from 8-year-old Rachel, who lives in Brooklyn, New York. She wrote: "Please do something so that bad people cannot get guns to kill other people. Children should be safe, especially in school."

Rachel is counting on us. Let's get this done for her and all the other children in this country, and let's make sure this country is a safer place for all children to learn and to grow.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:25 p.m. on January 18 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on January 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 19.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.

Subjects: Civil rights : Firearm rights; Connecticut : Shootings in Newtown; Education : School improvement and renovation; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Health and Human Services, Department of : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Law enforcement and crime : Federal Assault Weapons Ban; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Illegal arms trade, reduction efforts; White House Office : Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300028.