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**NEW POLL FINDS 85 PERCENT IN VIRGINIA'S 2ND
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT FAVOR MANDATORY
BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR ALL GUN BUYERS**

Survey Released Today By Mayors Against Illegal Guns Finds Overwhelming Majority of VA-2 Residents Favor Background Checks for All Gun Buyers

Polling data released today by Mayors Against Illegal Guns shows that likely voters in Virginia's 2nd Congressional District overwhelmingly support expanding the gun background check system to include all gun buyers. The data is the first to be released from a survey conducted in more than 60 states and congressional districts by Schoen LLC for the bipartisan coalition of more than 850 U.S. mayors.

“That 85 percent of Virginia's 2nd Congressional District residents want every gun buyer to pass a criminal background check speaks volumes about the changing public mood on guns,” said pollster Doug Schoen. “This margin is unlike any I've seen on this issue, and it marks a real sea change. Voters want their elected officials to fight gun violence, and after Newtown, they're demanding it.”

“Newtown broke our hearts. Two months later, it's time for Washington to hear the call coming from Virginia's 2nd District, and from every corner of the country, to close the loopholes in the background check system,” said John Feinblatt, chief policy advisor to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who co-chairs the coalition with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino. “Even with major loopholes, the system blocks more than 70,000 felons and other dangerous people from buying guns every year. We can reform the system and save many lives – and Americans are virtually unanimous in demanding that Congress do it now.”

Under current federal law, licensed firearms dealers are required to conduct background checks on potential buyers. Around 40 percent of U.S. gun transfers are conducted by unlicensed

“private sellers” who are not required to conduct a federal check,¹ however, and who often do business at gun shows and on the Internet – indicating that about 6.6 million guns are transferred in the U.S. every year with no background check for the buyer.² This “private sale loophole” now allows dangerous people who are already prohibited from buying guns – including felons, domestic abusers and the seriously mentally ill – to avoid a background check by simply avoiding licensed dealers.

Evidence demonstrates that background checks save lives. For example, in the fourteen states that already require background checks for all gun sales:

- In 2010, the rate of women murdered by an intimate partner with a gun was 38 percent lower than in other states, while the rate murdered by other means was nearly identical.³
- The firearm suicide rate was 49 percent lower than in other states – and 43 percent lower than in Virginia – even though people committed suicide in other ways at almost precisely the same rate.⁴
- Gun trafficking is 48 percent lower than in states that fail to require background checks for all handgun sales.⁵

The Schoen LLC poll was conducted Feb. 15 through Feb. 18 of 400 voters. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

***About Mayors Against Illegal Guns:** Since our founding in April 2006, Mayors Against Illegal Guns has grown from 15 members to more than 850 U.S. mayors – Republicans and Democrats, from big cities and small towns. More than a million Americans support our work, making the coalition the largest gun violence prevention advocacy organization in the country. The bipartisan partnership - co-chaired by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino - has united the nation’s mayors around these common goals: protecting our communities by holding gun offenders and irresponsible gun dealers accountable; demanding access to trace data that is critical to law enforcement efforts to combat illegal gun trafficking; and working with legislators to strengthen laws that now make it far too easy for criminals and other prohibited purchasers to get guns. Learn more at www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org*

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¹ Philip J. Cook & Jens Ludwig, *Guns in America*, 1996, available at <http://www.policefoundation.org/pdf/GunsinAmerica.pdf>. 2,568 individuals, including 251 gun owners, were surveyed by telephone and asked how they obtained their firearms.

² In the 38 states that have not fully closed the private sale loophole, an estimated 9,856,984 background checks were conducted between November 2011 and November 2012, out of an estimated 16.5 million total firearm transfers in those states. 40 percent of this total—6.6 million transfers—occurred without background checks. Calculation based on FBI data. Available: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/reports/20130205_1998_2013_state_program_to_date_purpose_ids.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Supplementary Homicide Reports*, 2011.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)* [online]. (2005) [cited 2012 Dec. 20].

⁵ Daniel Webster, Jon Vernick, & Maria Bulzacchelli, “Effects of State-Level Firearm Seller Accountability Policies on Firearm Trafficking,” *Journal of Urban Health*, July 2009.

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