



## House Passes Bill to Increase Funding for Background Checks

Late last Thursday the House voted 260-145 to increase federal grant money to states to improve their reporting to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. It was a textbook case of revolutionary parliamentarianism at work.

Less than one week after the Isla Vista, California, shootings which left seven people dead and 13 wounded, the House voted to increase funding by \$19.5 million to assist the states in their data collection and entry into the federal gun registry system. It was all for good reasons, according to Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), who helped sponsor the amendment:



Our national criminal background check system is only as good as the data you put in it, and right now all the information isn't getting into the system.

When this happens, we can't enforce the law, and criminals, domestic abusers, or dangerously mentally ill individuals who otherwise wouldn't pass a background check can slip through the cracks and buy guns.

Our bipartisan amendment addresses this dangerous shortfall of information by providing states with the resources they need to get their records into the criminal background checks system.

On May 28, when Thompson proposed his amendment to a massive funding bill being considered by the House, he explained the big problem his funding measure was designed to solve:

Every day, the background checks system stops more than 170 felons, some 50 domestic abusers, and nearly 20 fugitives from buying a gun.

However, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), the database used to determine whether or not a prospective buyer is eligible to buy a firearm, is missing valuable information.

Because of this, dangerous people who otherwise wouldn't pass a background check can slip through the cracks and buy guns.

That was the first step. Following a national tragedy, covered extensively by nearly every member of the national media, legislation was proposed to solve the alleged problem of mental cases obtaining guns.

Thompson's amendment was supported by a number of anti-gun proponents, including Elizabeth Esty (D-Conn.), Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), Peter King (R-N.Y.), Joe Heck (R-Nev.), and Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.). Behind that group stood a vast array of left-wing groups, including:

- Everytown for Gun Safety



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- The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
- Sandy Hook Promise
- Third Way
- The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
- The National Education Association
- Americans for Responsible Solutions
- The National Parent Teacher Association
- The Union for Reform Judaism
- The Washington Office on Latin America
- States United to Prevent Gun Violence
- Moms Rising
- The American Federation of Teachers

Results of polls were presented showing a majority of Americans supporting stricter gun control laws, and the deal was sealed: 76 Republicans joined nearly every Democrat in voting for the increase.

Far-leftists were ecstatic. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, rejoiced. "I want to think [that] this is a major victory, and I want to believe that it opens the door for more comprehensive gun safety legislation," Cummings said.

As constitutionalist author and political lecturer Ed Griffin explained in 1996, getting this bill passed was textbook revolutionary parliamentarianism:

Pressure from above is created when agents inside the ... government bring forward recommendations for new big government/police state legislation.

This will be promoted as a solution to some kind of national ... problem, but that will be a ruse. The hidden objective will be to expand the power of the bureaucracy and to move the country closer to the ultimate goal of total government.

Pressure from below is created when agents working in the media and inside "grassroots" organizations cooperate to create the appearance of popular demand for the proposed legislation...

Through this strategy the nation gradually becomes totalitarian, and the masses are convinced it is of their own choosing.

The NICS, for all intents and purposes, is a national gun registry. Passed under President Clinton in 1993 as part of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (a deliberately Orwellian title), it is linked to the Interstate Identification Index and the National Crime Information Center, which keeps permanent records of all firearms sold since 1998.

It does not yet have a complete, or completely accurate, record of all guns in existence in the United States, but this additional funding will help close some of those gaps in the federal registry. In just the last two years grant funding to the states to improve the NICS has increased from \$18 million to \$58 million, and now to \$78 million when the Senate passes the bill and the president signs it into law.



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Resistance to the bill was futile. To its credit Gun Owners of America (GOA), headed by Executive Director Larry Pratt, attempted a last-minute grassroots pushback, spearheaded with a letter to every member of the House. The letter made clear that Thompson's bill was anti-gun, calling it a "vile political stunt" which was "irrelevant to Isla Vista" where "[the criminal attacker had] passed a background check in a state which falls over itself to report every possible Californian to the NICS system."

Pratt's letter noted that a March 2013 poll taken by PoliceOne.com of 15,000 of its members — current, former, or retired law enforcement personnel — showed little support either for the idea that mental health background checks would have any impact on mass shootings, or for a national database tracking all legal guns sales. The poll showed support for concealed carry for civilians over mental health background screenings by two to one.

Pratt had no support from the NRA, which had long been neutralized on the background check issue. In 1999, right after the criminal attack at Columbine High School in Colorado, NRA's CEO Wayne LaPierre told a congressional panel, "It's reasonable to provide mandatory instant background checks for every sale at every gun show. No loopholes, anywhere, for anyone."

His more recent attempts to "clarify" the NRA's position gained him little traction, or credibility. Following the Newtown, Connecticut, attack, LaPierre said,

The only people who will be checked are law-abiding, normal, sane, decent Americans.

It will be our names — the names of good people — that will be put into a massive database, subject to potential federal registration and abuse of privacy.

By working behind the scenes with Congress, the NRA had already sullied its image as a defender of the Second Amendment by hammering out a compromise on the Brady bill. It went along with congressional spending of \$200 million annually to set up and run the states' computerized gun registries, which became effective in 1998.

Richard Feldman, then an NRA lobbyist, explained that pragmatism overruled principle at the NRA: "The NRA was smart enough to see the handwriting on the wall. It wasn't so much about liking it [the Brady bill] as it was liking it better than the alternative."

The amendment passed last Thursday by the House was simply the end point of an effort to limit further, however slightly, rights of Americans to own guns. It's a textbook example of how liberty is lost an inch at a time.

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