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# BACKGROUND CHECKS ON ALL GUN SALES

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## BACKGROUND CHECKS ARE QUICK, EASY, AND NEEDED

Federally licensed firearm dealers are already required to run background checks before selling a gun, but, by law, private sellers cannot. This private sale loophole allows just about anyone to buy a gun with no identification and no questions asked.

A background check law would require that a private gun sale involves a licensed gun dealer, who would complete a background check on the prospective purchaser.

There are more than 1,400 federally licensed gun dealers in the state of Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> This means there are

- Almost five times as many federally licensed dealers as McDonalds.<sup>2</sup>
- Roughly eight times as many federally licensed dealers as hospitals.<sup>3</sup>

99.6% of Wisconsinites live within 10 miles of a federally licensed gun dealer.<sup>4</sup>

On average, a federal background check takes less than two minutes.<sup>5</sup>

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## BACKGROUND CHECKS ARE EFFECTIVE

Other states have implemented universal background checks as a means of effectively reducing gun violence.

One state that passed a "permit to purchase law," which included a universal background check requirement, saw firearm homicides fall by 40%.<sup>6</sup> Whereas, in a state that eliminated its permit to purchase law, firearm homicides rose by 25%.<sup>7</sup>

Further, researchers agree: Universal background checks form an essential foundation for most other gun violence prevention policies. They ensure that those policies will be applicable to everyone, not just those who buy guns from licensed gun dealers.

## "NEAR-UNANIMOUS SUPPORT"

- 87% of Wisconsinites—including 83% of Republicans—support universal background checks.<sup>8</sup>
- This makes background checks more popular than beer or cheese.<sup>9</sup>
- A June 2022 poll by Quinnipiac University found that 92 percent of Americans support background checks for all buyers, calling this number "near unanimous."<sup>10</sup>

# HOW DO BACKGROUND CHECKS WORK?

When someone attempts to buy a gun from a federally licensed gun dealer, the seller runs a background check through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). If the prospective purchaser is prohibited by law from acquiring a gun, the system will alert the seller that the sale cannot proceed.

## WHY A BACKGROUND CHECK BILL IS CRITICAL FOR WISCONSIN

Wisconsin law currently allows private gun sales without background checks. These sales occur just about anywhere -- on the internet, at gun shows, in parking lots, at garage sales, and elsewhere. This law would require private sales to include a background check conducted by a licensed gun dealer.

Background check laws typically allow exemptions in some situations, such as transfer by gift, bequest, or inheritance to a family member.

Nationally, approximately 22% of gun sales occur without a background check.<sup>11</sup> In states, like Wisconsin, that do not regulate private sales, that percentage is likely much higher. This loophole allows too many people who couldn't pass a criminal background check to easily acquire guns.

For example, one study found that more than 10% of the prospective buyers they reviewed on Armslist.com -- a prominent online marketplace for firearms -- could not legally possess a gun. This is "a rate over seven times higher than that of buyers who fail background checks at licensed dealers or in other contexts where background checks are required."<sup>12</sup>

Strengthening Wisconsin's background check system will make it more difficult for people who are legally prohibited from obtaining guns to purchase a firearm. This will help create a safer Wisconsin.

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