

interfaith coalition against domestic & sexual violence

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Dear Members of Congress,

As clergy members and faith-based organizations representing a diverse range of religious traditions, we believe that every person has the right to live free from violence and we are committed to fostering safe homes and communities. Domestic violence, dating abuse, and stalking are extreme violations of the dignity and humanity of a person, and these crimes have no place in our faith traditions. Wherever we see these crimes occurring, we must speak out, and when there is an opportunity to act, we must act. The epidemic of domestic violence, dating abuse, and stalking has a lethal intersection with convicted criminals' access to firearms. As faith leaders and advocates, we urge you to cosponsor commonsense legislation to update our laws and prohibit violent abusers from purchasing or possessing guns.

The Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act (H.R. 3130) and the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act (S.1520) would close loopholes that allow convicted abusers and stalkers to buy and own guns. Currently, individuals convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence who have not cohabited with their victim or who do not have a child with their victim, and individuals convicted of misdemeanor stalking, are not prohibited from purchasing or possessing guns. When convicted abusers and stalkers have guns, women's lives are at risk.

Domestic violence is an epidemic in the United States, with one in four women experiencing severe physical abuse by an intimate partner, and the presence of a gun in a violent relationship raises the risk of homicide for women by a shocking five hundred percent. There is also a strong connection between stalking and future violence: one study found that seventy-six percent of women murdered by a current or former intimate partner experienced stalking in the year preceding the murder. Additionally, misdemeanor stalking convictions commonly arise out of domestic violence charges that are pled down; many stalking misdemeanants have already physically abused the victim.

Nearly half of all intimate partner homicides were committed by a dating partner, and stalking behavior is often used by an abuser to menace a victim after she leaves the relationship. Under current federal law, these convicted abusers can legally purchase and possess deadly firearms, which are all too often used to threaten, injure, and kill victims.

Therefore, we urge you to cosponsor the Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abusers Act (H.R. 3130) or the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act (S.1520). In closing loopholes, this commonsense legislation would save lives and make our communities safer places for victims and survivors to worship, heal, and thrive. As people of faith, we affirm the right of every person to live free from violence, and we ask that you act now to protect that sacred right.

Sincerely,