

Crime – Handgun-Brady Report

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HANDOWN-BRADY REPORT

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New Study Provides Evidence that the Brady Law Saves Lives; Fewer Guns Used in Crime Means Fewer Deaths

(Washington, D.C.) Following the sixth anniversary of the enactment of the Brady Law, the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence has released a new report with conclusive evidence that the Brady Law is saving lives. *Saving Lives by Taking Guns Out of Crime* details the drop in gun-related crime murders following implementation of the Brady Law.

For the past five years, the Center has drawn the public's attention to the drop in gun-related crime since the Brady Law passed in 1993. While crime of all types has been going down nationwide, gun-related crimes -- murders, robberies and assaults committed with guns -- have been decreasing even faster than the violent crime rate overall. Now, *Saving Lives* translates the accelerated drop in gun crime into lives saved and provides statistical evidence linking these events to the enactment of Brady.

It has long been known that assaults and robberies committed with guns result in a higher death rate than similar crimes committed without firearms. By analyzing violent crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports for 1990 through 1998 (the most recent year available) and applying the death rate of victims of gun crimes to the drop in crimes committed with firearms, the Center was able to calculate the number of lives saved because a smaller percentage of violent crimes involved a gun. The results are telling: from 1994 (the first year of the Brady Law) to 1998, over 9,000 lives were saved because fewer guns were used in assaults and robberies.

A similar analysis of the rising gun crime rates that existed in the years just prior to the implementation of the Brady Law provide further evidence the Law is saving lives: prior to enactment of Brady, gun crimes were rising even faster than crime overall, resulting in an accelerated loss of life. According to the report, the rapid increase in gun use cost 3,000 individuals their lives in the three years (1991-1993) before Brady was enacted.

The study further illustrates the value of the Brady Law. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, background checks prevented an estimated 320,000 prohibited purchasers -- mostly felons -- from getting guns during the first five years of the Law. A September 1997 Center study, *Traffic Stop*, showed that the Brady Law's background check and waiting period requirements disrupted interstate gun trafficking.

“By preventing gun sales to felons and other prohibited purchasers and by disrupting the movement of illegal guns across state lines, the Brady Law reduces criminal gun use,” said Dr. Douglas Weil, Director of Research for the Center. “This report quantifies in human lives how important it is to take guns out of crime and provides compelling evidence of the life-saving impact of the Brady Law.”

The Brady Law was implemented in February 1994. Prior to its passage, 32 states had no system of background checks for gun purchasers; a felon could walk into a gun store, sign a form stating that he or she has never been convicted of a felony, and buy a gun. Felons were confident that their criminal records would not be discovered because the form would simply get filed away. The Brady Law closed this “lie and buy” loophole – creating a system by which all retail gun sales today are conditioned on a background check of the prospective buyers. Initially, Brady created a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases in combination with the background check requirement.

The National Rifle Association led the opposition to the Brady Bill and continues to dismiss the effectiveness of the Brady Law today. “The background check and waiting period were deemed too ‘inconvenient’ for gun owners,” noted Dr. Weil. “This ‘inconvenience’ has saved thousands of lives and would have saved thousands more had the National Rifle Association not fought passage of the Brady Bill for seven years.”

Visit our website to view the Executive Summary and full text of *Saving Lives by Taking Guns Out of Crime: The Drop in Gun-Related Crime Deaths Since Enactment of the Brady Law*. The report is available in Adobe Acrobat at <url>.

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The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, chaired by Sarah Brady, was founded in 1983 to reduce gun violence through education, legal advocacy, research, and outreach to the entertainment community. Based in Washington, DC, CPHV's national initiatives include prevention programs for parents and youth on the risks associated with guns, legal representation for gun violence victims, work with the entertainment community to encourage deglamorization of guns in the media, and research of the risks associated with guns and the efficacy of gun control laws. More information about CPHV and its affiliated organization, Handgun Control, can be found on our website at www.cphv.org.

Saving Lives by Taking Guns Out of Crime:

The Drop in Gun-Related Crime Deaths Since Enactment of the Brady Law

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 1993, the Brady Bill was signed into law and took effect on February 28, 1994. Prior to its passage, 32 states had no system of background checks for gun purchasers; a felon could walk into a gun store, sign a form stating that he or she has never been convicted of a felony, and buy a gun. The criminal's felony record would not be discovered because the form would simply get filed away by the gun dealer. The Brady Law closed the "lie and buy" loophole in the nation's gun laws – initially imposing a waiting period on handgun purchases and requiring that licensed gun dealers submit the name of all prospective buyers to law enforcement for a background check. Today, the background check requirement has been extended to all retail gun purchases.

For seven years, the National Rifle Association led the opposition to the Brady Bill and continues to dismiss the effectiveness of the Brady Law today. The background check and waiting period were deemed too "inconvenient" for gun owners. This report provides compelling evidence that this "inconvenience" has saved thousands of lives and would have saved thousands more had the National Rifle Association not fought passage of the Brady Bill.

It has long been known that assaults and robberies committed with guns result in a higher death rate than similar crimes committed without firearms. By analyzing crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports for 1990 through 1998, the Center discovered that the proportion of violent crimes committed with firearms rose steadily through 1993. Beginning in 1994, however, and coinciding with the implementation of Brady, the trend reversed and gun-related crime has been dropping faster than the violent crime rate ever since. By applying the death rate of victims of gun crimes to the drop in the proportion of crimes committed with firearms, the Center was able to calculate the number of lives saved because fewer criminals were using guns.

The results of this analysis provide compelling evidence that the Brady Law is saving lives by taking guns out of crime: **from 1994 through 1998, an estimated 9,368 fewer people died than expected because the percentage of robberies and assaults committed with firearms fell each year after reaching a peak of 42.4% of robberies and 25.1% of aggravated assaults in 1993. Furthermore, from 1991 through 1993, an estimated 3,105 more people lost their lives in gun-related crime than expected because the proportion of assaults and robberies that involved guns increased each year from 1990 through 1993.**

At a news conference on March 2, 2000, President Bill Clinton said, "The Brady Bill is saving people's lives and keeping guns out of the wrong hands." Since the Brady Law was enacted, the U.S. Department of Justice periodically releases the number of prohibited purchasers who have been denied a gun thanks to background checks. In the five years of Brady covered by this

study, that number was estimated to be 320,000 and has since grown to 500,000 denials. Clearly the Brady Law is keeping guns out of the wrong hands. This report presents for the first time powerful evidence that the Law is actually saving lives.