

August 26, 2014

Governor Jerry Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Speaker Toni G. Atkins
c/o State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg
c/o State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Majority Floor Leader V. Manuel Pérez
c/o State Capitol, Room 4112
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senate Majority Leader Ellen M. Corbett
c/o State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Minority Leader Connie Conway
c/o State Capitol, Room 3104
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senate Minority Leader Bob Huff
c/o State Capitol, Room 305
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Protect Californians; Pass AB 1014

Dear Governor Jerry Brown and California State Legislative Leadership:

We are 11 parents and family members of loved ones killed in the Isla Vista shooting on May 23, 2014. We know all too well the devastating consequences of a gun falling into the wrong hands. We also know that the Isla Vista tragedy should never have happened: Despite obvious signs that the shooter was a danger to himself and others, there was no mechanism under the law to prevent him from obtaining guns or to disarm him. That's why we are writing to urge you to enact Assembly Bill 1014, a bill that will save lives and spare other families from suffering the anguish we experience each and every day.

Three months ago, our loved ones, Veronika Weiss, Katie Cooper, and Christopher Ross Michaels-Martinez were shot to death. Their deaths have shattered our lives. Veronika, Katie, and Christopher were smart and loving young adults and we miss them everyday. They were the type of people who would befriend anyone and who family and friends turned to when they had a problem or needed advice.

Their deaths were not a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – as college students at UCSB, Veronika, Katie, and Christopher were right where they were supposed to be. But the law did not work to keep guns out of the hands of the shooter, even after he displayed warning signs of suicidal and homicidal behavior. Because he had not committed a crime and law enforcement did not think he met the criteria for commitment in a hospital, he was legally allowed to own guns—and he used those guns to kill Veronika, Katie, and Christopher, along with killing and injuring others, in a fury that devastated our families and rattled our entire nation.

After tragedies like this one, people often ask: what could have been done to prevent the shooting from happening? Assembly Bill 1014 provides an answer: the Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO).

Under AB 1014, law enforcement officers or immediate family members could present evidence to a judge that a person poses a significant danger of injury to themselves or others – and the judge can order the person temporarily prohibited from buying or possessing firearms. A person is only prohibited when a court determines they are too dangerous to have guns, and the bill directs judges to consider clear indicators of potential violence when making that decision. In fact, the Gun Violence Restraining Order process in AB 1014 mirrors the existing process for Domestic Violence Restraining Orders (DVROs), where courts weigh evidence about whether individuals are too dangerous to be allowed near their intimate partners or children. As with DVROs, GVROs would be issued only for a short period before the restrained person is entitled to a court hearing—guaranteeing that the person receives due process.

Immediate family members and law enforcement are often the first to see warning signs that a dangerous person is likely to commit violence. AB 1014 would give them a way to take action to prevent that dangerous person from killing themselves or others with a gun.

If California had a Gun Violence Restraining Order process in place when the Isla Vista shooter's parents asked the police to help their son, the police could have acted – and things may be very different for us today. Veronika, Katie, and Christopher might still be alive. Nothing can bring back Veronika, Katie, and Christopher, but we can work to make sure others don't lose their loved ones to preventable gun violence.

We're grateful for the leadership on AB 1014 by California State Assemblymembers Nancy Skinner and Das Williams, and Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson. We ask Governor Brown and the California legislature to help us honor the memory of our loved ones by enacting AB 1014 and helping prevent future tragedies like the shooting in Isla Vista.

With our respect and gratitude for your leadership on this issue,

Dan Cooper, father of Katie Cooper
Kelli Cooper, mother of Katie Cooper
Alan Martinez, uncle of Christopher Ross Michaels-Martinez
Richard Martinez, father of Christopher Ross Michaels-Martinez
Caryn Michaels, mother of Christopher Ross Michaels-Martinez
Jean Michaels, grandmother of Christopher Ross Michaels-Martinez
Colleen Weiss, mother of Veronika Weiss
Cooper Weiss, brother of Veronika Weiss
Jackson Weiss, brother of Veronika Weiss
Jane Weiss, aunt of Veronika Weiss
Robert Weiss, father of Veronika Weiss