



Coalition Applauds Progress of Firearm Transfer Legislation

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Baton Rouge, LA – On Tuesday, the Senate passed legislation creating a process for the transfer or relinquishment of firearms from domestic abusers. The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV), applauded the Senate’s passage of SB 231 by Senator J.P. Morrell, citing its potential to reduce domestic violence homicides in Louisiana.

According to research by the Washington, D.C. based Violence Policy Center, Louisiana ranks third in the nation for the rate of female victims killed by male offenders in single victim/single offender incidents. Advocates say this legislation could lead to reduced homicides by creating a mechanism for removing firearms from those already prohibited by law from possessing them. Mariah Wineski, executive director of LCADV, says the lack of an enforcement procedure thus far has resulted in easy firearm access for abusers. “State and federal law prohibit many abusers from possessing firearms. Currently, our state lacks any consistent process for actually implementing these prohibitions. This means many people convicted of domestic abuse battery - and therefore prohibited from possessing a firearm - nonetheless retain access to their guns.” This bill seeks to close that gap by requiring sheriffs to facilitate the sale, donation, or lawful transfer of firearms from convicted abusers and those subject to a protective order. In 2017, 73% of domestic violence homicides in Louisiana were committed with firearms.

Advocates have consistently expressed frustration with Louisiana’s high domestic homicide rate, and they are hopeful that this legislation will lead to a reduction in homicides by addressing the deadly combination of domestic violence and guns. Louisiana is not alone in pursuing firearm transfer procedures for domestic abusers. In 2017, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee of the Louisiana Domestic Violence Prevention Commission issued a report summarizing similar procedures in several other jurisdictions nationwide. That commission’s report recommended a legislative process to bridge the gap between laws that prohibit possession of firearms and laws that impose criminal penalties for prohibited possession of firearms, noting that “a properly implemented and executed program of firearm relinquishment will serve to dramatically reduce the number of murders of women in Louisiana.”

“This legislation bridges the gap between existing domestic violence laws and their meaningful implementation,” said Wineski. “At the end of the day, this bill is about enforcing existing laws designed to protect the lives of domestic violence victims. We look forward to working with the legislature to secure the full passage of this lifesaving measure.” The bill now moves to the House of Representatives.

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The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) is a statewide network of programs, organizations, and individuals who share the goal of ending domestic violence in Louisiana. LCADV empowers its members and communities through advocacy, education, resource development, and technical assistance. LCADV is dedicated to bringing about change in our institutions, laws, politics, attitudes, and beliefs which will allow individuals to live free of violence. For more information, visit www.lcadv.org.