



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Hearing Statement of Emergency Management & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Troy Carter (D-LA)

Protecting the Homeland: An Examination of Federal Efforts to Support State and Local Law Enforcement

May 16, 2023

I want to take a moment to reflect on the tragic shooting in Allen, Texas. My condolences go out to the families of the victims. The video that circulated of this man jumping out of his SUV wielding an AR-15 and wearing a tactical vest as he mercilessly killed people until an officer, who just happened to be at the mall, took him out, was harrowing. But that video is visual testimony. It is testimony to the depravity of weak gun laws in this country. It is a testimony to the risk our communities and our police face because Republicans refuse to pass meaningful gun violence prevention laws.

Many of you know that I am a gun owner and avid hunter, but I am a responsible gun owner who firmly believes in stronger gun laws. Weak gun laws are killing children. They're killing parents and grandparents. They are killing law enforcement officers. And they are making our homeland less safe.

So, I am glad we are holding this hearing on protecting the homeland and supporting law enforcement. Because if we want to talk about protecting the homeland and supporting law enforcement, we must talk about the weapons of war that are on our streets making our homeland less safe and putting law enforcement in the line of fire.

Over the years, we have seen a dramatic increase in gun violence against civilians and law enforcement. My district has struggled with gun violence with New Orleans accounting for nearly 5% of all the mass shootings across the country this year, far outpacing any other city in the country. Gun violence isn't isolated to one space; we have seen gun violence at our schools, malls, houses of worship, and other public areas. Our country has a problem. We need strong and common-sense gun safety laws in every state not only to protect children but also to protect law enforcement.

Officers often find themselves in dangerous situations while performing their duties. In states with weak gun regulations, the dangers officers face is substantially greater according to the Giffords Law Center, which graded states based on the strength of their gun laws. States that received an "F" for their gun laws saw higher rates of police fatalities from 2017 to 2021. The virtually unregulated guns circulating in our communities are threats to homeland security and to law enforcement lives. The data is clear—in 2021, almost 73 percent of law enforcement officers who died from felonious assaults were killed by firearms. This figure has only risen in recent years, making guns one of the leading causes of death in the line of duty for law enforcement officers.

We must do more to protect our homeland, our communities, and our officers. That means we need to work across the aisle to pass commonsense gun laws and continue to work together to strengthen and fund the Department of Homeland Security's grant programs, which are critical to protecting our communities and law enforcement personnel from threats.

Programs like the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) assist in ensuring that local law enforcement have the resources they need to defend our communities against threats.

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program provides nonprofits with funding to help with their security, which is critical given the surge in right-wing violence against nonprofits, including religious institutions. While we work to address gun violence, we must continue to do our part and provide the Department of Homeland Security with funding for its grant programs to ensure that nonprofits and law enforcement have the resources they need to protect our communities.

And to our witnesses, thank you for being here today. To the law enforcement witnesses, I want to thank you, and all those who stand beside you, for your service. We appreciate you being here during National Police Week.

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