NYAGV and SLAIG-NY Commemorate Newtown Anniversary and Call on Congress to Enact Sensible Gun Laws

--New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, State Legislators Against Illegal Guns, Elected Officials and Advocates Remember Victims and Offer the NY SAFE Act as a Model for What Can Be Done--

NEW YORK, NY - December 12, 2013 - New Yorkers Against Gun Violence (NYAGV) and State Legislators Against Illegal Guns (SLAIG) were joined by national, state, and local elected officials and gun safety advocates at a press conference today at New York City Hall to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the horrific shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

The elected officials and advocates gathered to honor the victims of the Sandy Hook shootings, which occurred on December 14, 2012, and the many thousands who have lost their lives to gun violence in the ensuing year, and to renew the call for Congress and state governments across the country to enact sensible gun laws. They pointed to the passage and implementation of the NY SAFE Act, which was enacted with bipartisan support and signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo less than five weeks after the Sandy Hook tragedy, as a model for what legislatures can do to help protect Americans from gun violence.
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said, "New York’s families and neighborhoods are safer because our state passed the strongest gun laws in nation," said Governor Cuomo. “Although it is difficult to think that one year has already passed since the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook, the best way to honor the memory of those we lost is to take action to prevent future senseless violence. By working together, we were the first state to enact sensible gun control laws, after Sandy Hook, which keep guns out of the hands of the mentally ill, ban assault weapons, limit high capacity magazines and increase the penalty for killing a first responder.”

NYAGV Executive Director Leah Gunn Barrett said, "We remember not only the 26 innocent victims from Newtown, but the 31,000 Americans who die each year from gun violence - that’s 85 people a day. Thanks to Governor Cuomo’s leadership, New York passed the SAFE Act, making it the first state to take decisive action after Newtown. We know that strong gun laws reduce gun death and injury which is why New York has the fourth lowest gun death rate in the nation. Now we need Congress to follow New York’s lead to protect all Americans.”

Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy commented, "For gun violence prevention advocates, December is a particularly difficult month because of the anniversaries of two tragic mass shootings, the incident on the Long Island Railroad in 1993 and, most recently, the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. New York State has often been ahead of the curve on gun violence prevention and the most recent legislative accomplishment, the passage of the NY SAFE Act, is no exception. Too often it takes great tragedy to address long overdue national reforms, especially when it comes to the issue of gun violence. It is my hope that the United States Congress will follow New York’s lead and see the merits of tightening gun violence prevention laws nationwide now, rather than suffer through more senseless and preventable tragedy.”

Congressman Peter King stated, "This Saturday will mark one year since the senseless shooting at Sandy Hook. It is wrong that Congress has failed to act after so many lives have been lost. The overwhelming majority of Americans want to see action, and we owe it to the victims and their families to prevent such tragedies from occurring again.”

SLAIG Co-Chair and Assemblymember Michelle Schimel said, "Has a year lessened the horror of witnessing 20 innocent elementary school children and their teachers being violently murdered? Certainly not. This week marks not just the anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, but the 20-year mark of the LIRR massacre, a seminal event for all of the nation’s suburbs. That horrific event shook the nation two decades ago.” She added, “So what does our nation have to show in terms of a sensible legislative agenda to reduce our gun violence? Not much. There is lots of talk in Washington, but no action. By contrast the NY SAFE Act, passed with bipartisan support, helps to give NY the 4th lowest gun death rate in the nation.”

SLAIG Co-Chair and Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh said, “This somber anniversary is a reminder of the ongoing gun violence crisis in our country. Of course Congress ought to act and the failure of some of our leaders in Washington to recognize that is disheartening. While we renew our call for strong, sensible national laws, we also want to shift some of the focus to the states. We’re calling on our colleagues in the legislature in each state to take the lead and pass laws mandating background checks
for all gun sales, tougher restrictions on assault weapons, and other laws we’ve successfully enacted here that will save lives.”

Assemblymember Amy Paulin stated, “I was an outspoken proponent of the NYSAFE Act when it passed and remain so today. Still, we need a tougher law that is aimed specifically at keeping guns out of the hands of children. My bill will do just that. A-8293, The Safe Weapon Storage Act, provides for criminal penalties for any person who leaves a weapon out of his or her immediate possession or control without securely locking it up or using a locking device on it. We need to continue our efforts to combat gun violence and prevent the future loss of innocent lives. My bill will expand our current law to protect those that are the most innocent – children.”

Majority State Senate Coalition Leader Jeff Klein said, “In the wake of the tragedy in Newtown, New Yorkers knew that enough was enough. We needed a comprehensive, no-nonsense approach to combating gun violence. That’s why on the first day of the legislative session, I led the charge to pass some of the toughest gun control laws in the nation. With the support of groups like New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, Million Mom March and the Brady Campaign, we have sent the message that New York will not tolerate gun violence. Nationwide, New York has the fourth lowest gun rate, due in no small part to our strong gun laws. But we know that reducing gun violence requires action on multiple fronts. That’s why this year, I also helped to secure $3 million dollars for proven gun violence prevention programs across New York State. Together, we will continue to fight to keep gun violence off our streets and out of our schools.”

State Senator Jose Serrano said, “The anniversary of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School is a chilling reminder of the all too common horror of senseless gun violence across our nation. While I am pleased that we in the New York State Legislature were able to pass common sense gun control with the NY SAFE Act, there is still much work to be done. Not only must we continue to enact far reaching gun control policies in New York, but we must also ensure that Congress and state governments across the country join the fight in sensible gun control reform.”

Assemblymember Shelley Mayer commented, “As we remember the tragic events at Sandy Hook one year ago, we also remember the many other people who lost their lives to gun violence throughout the year. With the Governor’s leadership, New York State has taken bold steps to enact sensible gun laws, and I call on the federal government to do the same.”

Assemblymember David I. Weprin said, "I am proud to join my colleagues and the community on the one year anniversary of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School to honor the lives of the 20 children and six adults who died from this tragedy. When more than 30,000 people are killed by firearms each year in the United States and 1/3 of victims are under the age of 20, we must do all that we can to prevent as well combat gun violence. In response to the shooting, we passed the NY SAFE Act and I along with my colleagues will continue to champion for gun control legislation that will ensure all New Yorkers are protected from gun violence."
Assemblyman Tom Abinanti said, "On this anniversary of the Newtown tragedy, let us honor the memory of those victims by doing everything possible to prevent future gun tragedies. Whether it is mandating safe and secure storage of guns or keeping plastic guns off our streets, there is is still much to be done to stop the gun violence that plagues our communities."

Assemblymember David Buchwald said, "One year following the tragedy at Sandy Hook, we continue to reflect on the safety of our children and the importance of gun safety measures in New York State. I was pleased to join the legislature in passing the SAFE Act earlier this year, but there’s always more to be done to ensure that New York is a safe place to raise a family."

The New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act (the NY SAFE Act), the historic legislation signed into law by Governor Cuomo in January of 2013, includes multiple common-sense provisions to prevent gun violence including requiring background checks for purchasers of ammunition and for private gun sales, restricting possession of high-capacity magazines, and requiring the registration of assault weapons.

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence (NYAGV) is a statewide advocacy group working to reduce gun violence through advocacy and education designed to encourage action, influence public opinion and lead to policy change. With a primary focus on New York State, the organization also advocates at the local and national levels for sensible laws, policies and practices that protect New York State residents from gun violence. www.nyagv.org

State Legislators Against Illegal Guns (SLAIG) was established in 2010 to support common-sense state legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of criminals, including background checks for purchasers, efforts to prevent straw sales, and better coordination and technology to trace and detect illegal gun sales.

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(Shown in photo: Leticia James, NYC Public Advocate-Elect, speaking at today’s press conference commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Newtown shootings.)