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Albany Leaders Announce New Firearm Safe Storage Law

Albany, NY – January 14, 2016 – New Yorkers Against Gun Violence joined Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Police Chief Brendan Cox and Albany Common Council member Cathy Fahey to announce that the City's new firearm safe storage law, passed overwhelmingly last September, went into effect on January 1. Albany is the fifth New York municipality to enact such a law, joining Rochester, Buffalo, Westchester County and New York City.

The new law requires any person who owns or is custodian of a firearm to safely store it in a locked container or with a trigger lock when the firearm is out of his/her immediate possession or control. In addition, retailers selling firearms must post a notice that notifies purchasers of the safe storage law and the penalties incurred if the law is violated.

Evidence shows that safe storage laws reduce gun deaths and injury by preventing unintentional shootings, suicides and homicides. Importantly, the law will also help prevent the theft of guns that end up on the streets. In the past five years, nearly 100 guns have been stolen from homes and motor vehicles in the City of Albany. Nationally, it is estimated that at least half a million firearms are stolen every year, representing an important source of crime guns.

Leah Gunn Barrett, NYAGV Executive Director, said, "We are proud to stand with Mayor Sheehan, Chief Cox and Albany Common Council member Fahey to welcome the new firearm safe storage law for the City of Albany. Federal and state courts have repeatedly found safe storage laws to be consistent with the Second Amendment right to have a firearm in the home for self-defense. Responsible gun owners are already securing their firearms to keep children and others safe. This law will encourage other gun owners to do the same or face criminal penalties."

Mayor Sheehan said, "Albany has worked for many years to reduce gun violence in the City. With this sensible law, we take one more step forward, protecting children, families and the larger community from unintentional gun violence and also creating a barrier to the illegal gun trade. This law makes Albany a leader in gun safety, and a role model for all communities wanting to take practical measures to prevent unacceptable violence."

"As police officers, we take safe gun storage extremely seriously," said Albany Police Chief Cox. "By requiring guns to be safely locked or stored, this law will help prevent one of the scourges that makes all Americans less safe - guns that are stolen and end up in the illegal market and in the hands of criminals." Chief Cox announced that free firearm gun locks are available to the public at the two police stations in the City: at APD Headquarters at 165 Henry Johnson Boulevard and at Center Station at 536 Western Avenue.

"This law holds gun owners accountable for the safety of the guns they own," said Albany Common Council member Fahey. "Gun violence is an epidemic in our City, in our State and in our country, and this law protects all of us - gun owners and their families as well as the public - from tragic accidents and unnecessary deaths and injuries that can arise when these firearms are not properly secured."

NYAGV Capital Region Coordinator Pat Tuz said, "We applaud Albany's thoughtful and thorough approach to this much needed ordinance that will keep guns out of the wrong hands. And we encourage parents to ask if there are gun where their child plays, just as they ask whether swimming pools are fenced or cars are equipped with child safety seats. Safe storage means safe kids."

A statewide safe storage bill, Nicholas's Law, passed the Assembly last June but was not taken up by the Senate. The bill was named for twelve-year-old Nicholas Naumkin of Wilton, who was fatally shot while on a playdate in December, 2010 by his friend who found his father's unlocked and loaded handgun. Barrett concluded, "We encourage the State Legislature to follow Albany's lead and enact Nicholas's Law without delay to protect all New Yorkers before other lives are lost."

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence is a statewide organization 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 gun laws, policies and practices that protect New York State residents from gun violence.

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