

**NYAGV – Leah Gunn Barrett, Executive Director – remarks for 2/22/14 Carolyn Maloney press conference**

The corporate gun lobby stokes fear – among consumers, politicians and the scientific research community - to sell their lethal products that kill 33k and injure 80k Americans each year. The corporate gun lobby, like the tobacco industry, has smothered scientific research into the causes of the public health crisis of gun violence.

They tell Americans they can't be safe unless they are armed. They tell politicians if they pass any gun safety legislation, they'll not be re-elected. They tell scientific researchers, if they research the causes of gun violence, their careers will end. Why do we allow this to go on?

At the NRA's behest, federal funds for gun violence research were eliminated in 1996. This meant that basic data on gun violence could not be gathered. This ban of nearly 20 years has resulted in ZERO gun safety legislation being passed by Congress since the 1993 Brady background check law. In fact, we've regressed. 26 states now have 'stand your ground laws' when in 1981 none did. All 50 states have some form of conceal carry law – the list goes on and the death toll mounts.

Why did this happen? In 1992, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) was launched at the Centers for Disease Control, solely to do research on injury causation in America.

A year later, the results of one of the first studies funded by CDC was published the New England Journal of Medicine. The article by Arthur Kellerman found that keeping a gun in the home was strongly and independently associated with an increased risk of homicide. The article concluded that rather than confer protection, guns kept in the home are 22 times more likely to be used in homicide, suicide or an accidental shooting than to deter an intruder.

This study enraged the NRA because it had implications for the sales of its deadly product. In 1996, at the behest of the NRA's "point person" Congressman Jay Dickey, the NRA got language in the Appropriations bill stripping the CDC of their entire budget for firearm injury research (\$2.6million) and included a provision explicitly forbidding any CDC funding "to advocate or promote gun control".

This had the further chilling effect of sending the message to the CDC that further research on firearms would endanger the agency's funding as a whole. Academics are highly dependent on federal grants for the research, so general academic research also followed suit (60% decline during the same period).

Ironically, in a 2012 op-ed with CDC researcher Mark Rosenberg, Dickey repudiated his earlier position and now acknowledges muzzling research is a big mistake; Dickey wrote: "We were on opposite sides of the heated battle 16 years ago but we are in strong agreement now that scientific research should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners."

***The Results of the Dickey Amendment, the Reduction of Research, and the Suppression of Data:***

- Public funding to study gun violence averaged \$2.5 million annually (1993-1996). By 2012, public funding for gun violence research had decreased to \$100,000 of the NCIPC \$5.6 billion budget. This represents a 96% decline from 1996-2012.
- *By contrast* motor vehicle injury used to claim over 40,000 lives annually in the mid 90's. By investing in safety research (\$500 million annually) this rate has fallen 36%, to an annual rate similar to firearm injury.
- In 2004 the National Research Council issued a report, Firearms and Violence, a landmark assessment of the state of knowledge in the field and said "the inadequacy of data on gun ownership and use is among the most critical barriers to a better understanding of gun violence... if policy makers are to have a solid empirical and research base for decisions about firearms and violence, the federal government needs to support a systemic program of data collection and research that specifically addresses this issue."

President Obama committed to ending the freeze on gun violence research in his executive orders following the Newtown tragedy. He included in the 2014 Federal Budget \$30 million in new funding to "track gun violence" and to research prevention strategies.

The virtual research blackout has meant that efforts to craft legislation to reduce gun violence have little empirical data to rely on. Without hard information, policymakers are stuck arguing against emotional and ideological positions rather than evidence-based ones.

We know gun safety laws work. The Johns Hopkins School of Public just published a study

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2014/02/18/study-repealing-missouris-background-check-law-associated-with-a-murder-spike//?print=1>) funded by the Joyce Foundation on the effects of

Missouri's 2007 repeal of its background check law for unlicensed gun sales. The study found that from 2008-2010, gun homicides in Missouri jumped 23%. Thanks to NY's strong gun safety laws, NY has the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest gun death rate in the nation and NYC is the safest big city in the country.

**It's time that Congress stands up to the bullying of the corporate gun lobby and instead stands up for the safety of all Americans.**