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Statement on Walmart Decision to No Longer Sell Military Weapons

New York City, NY – August 27, 2015 – NYAGV released the following statement following Walmart’s announcement yesterday that it would no longer sell military purposed firearms in its stores.

Walmart’s decision to stop selling military AR-15 firearms that are at the heart of a shareholder lawsuit by Trinity Church is a clear indication that economic pressure to influence the gun industry is effective. The decision is an acknowledgement that military purposed firearms, designed to kill quickly and efficiently on the battlefield, have no legitimate sporting function and do not belong in America’s schools, malls, churches or movie theaters. This is an encouraging first step.

However, as the largest retailer of firearms and ammunition in the United States, Walmart has a unique opportunity to go further, just as it did with its 2002 policy to not sell a gun until a background check has been completed. This policy would have prevented the Charleston shooter from getting his gun.

As a next step, we urge the company to come out publicly to strongly support smart gun laws that will save lives including criminal background checks on all gun sales, stronger penalties for gun traffickers, limits on high capacity ammunition magazines and rescinding a nearly twenty-year ban on federal funding for gun violence research.

Walmart’s support for smart gun laws would send a clear message to the NRA that its vehement opposition to gun safety measures that save lives is morally craven. As yesterday’s shooting in Virginia showed, our weak federal and state gun laws make it ridiculously easy for dangerous people to get their hands on a gun. It has been demonstrated over and over again that states with smart gun laws have lower gun death rates. New York State has the third lowest gun death rate whereas nationally gun deaths are rising and mass shootings have nearly
tripled since 2011.

Walmart, like most corporations, operates with its bottom line in mind. At the same time, however, the company’s management has shown a growing awareness as the nation’s top retailer that it has a responsibility not only to its customers and shareholders but also to society as a whole. Walmart has a chance to show a supine Congress how to stand up to the NRA’s extremist agenda. Until our elected leaders start representing us and not the corporate gun lobby, our shameful gun violence epidemic will continue to rage.

**New Yorkers Against Gun Violence** 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 gun laws, policies and practices that protect New York State residents from gun violence.

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