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Rep. Sensenbrenner: Statement on passage of important second amendment legislation

Posted on Wednesday, Dec 6, 2017

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Washington, D.C.—Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) voted for H.R. 38, the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act, which passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 231 to 198. Contained in the bill was language from the Fix NICS Act, which adds enforcement measures to ensure that federal agencies provide the most accurate data to the National Instant Background Check System.

Congressman Sensenbrenner gave the following remarks on the House floor:

I am pleased that H.R. 38, as amended, includes the Fix NICS Act. I have long supported the National Instant Check System, or NICS. NICS is about saving lives and protecting people from harm—by preventing guns from falling into the wrong hands. It does this without interfering in the timely transfer of firearms to eligible gun buyers.

I was an original cosponsor of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993, and worked diligently for its passage. I strongly supported this bill because it makes sense to prevent convicted felons, and individuals judged to be mentally ill, from obtaining guns. At the time of negotiations, I insisted on the inclusion of a NICS program. Under this system, firearm dealers use the FBI's NICS system to cross-reference with a list of known convicted felons, drug users, illegal aliens, and those convicted of domestic violence.

As I have stated many times, the NICS system is only as good as the records that are put into it. Too often, people who otherwise would not pass a background check can slip through the cracks and buy guns. After the recent shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, the U.S. Air Force disclosed that it failed to report the gunman's history of domestic assault to the database, which should have prevented him from purchasing a firearm in the first place.

This legislation will provide a much needed push to speed implementation of the NICS system used in conducting instant background checks prior to gun purchases. At the federal level, it would require federal agency cooperation in providing relevant records to the Attorney General for inclusion into the NICS. It holds federal agencies accountable if they fail to upload relevant records to the background check system through public reporting and prohibiting bonus pay for political appointees. At the state level, it will incentivize them to make sure their reporting is up-to-date by giving federal grant preferences to states who comply.

Let me be clear, this bill is not about expanding background checks. This is about ensuring that existing law is working. There is strong bipartisan support for improving what has become a systemic problem of missing information in the database. Accurate reporting is essential to ensuring the system works as intended. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

You can read the full text of H.R. 38 HERE.