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# Gov. Evers: Wisconsin Democrats announce Universal Background Checks bill, call on Republicans to act

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Gov. Evers, Lt. Gov. Barnes, Attorney General Kaul join Rep. Sargent and Sen. Johnson in supporting universal background checks.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, and Attorney General Josh Kaul today joined Rep. Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) and Sen. LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) announcing LRB-3949, a bill closing the background check loophole in Wisconsin, and released the below statements.

Gov. Evers: “We have to stop ignoring the problem of gun violence in our state and our country, and it’s time for our elected officials to find the courage to do what is right. Addressing gun violence doesn’t have to be a false choice between the 2nd Amendment and keeping our kids and our communities safe—we can walk and chew gum at the same time, and a majority of Wisconsinites agree that no matter what kind of firearm is being purchased or where it’s being purchased from, the process should be the same.”

Lt. Gov. Barnes: “Gun violence is an issue that’s personal for me as a citizen and as an elected official. Growing up, I lost classmates and friends to gun violence, while experiencing the pain and grief it brings to entire neighborhoods. During my time as a state legislator, I fought for common-sense gun laws that would keep Wisconsin safe. Now, as lieutenant governor, I support this legislation that will require

background checks for those purchasing or transferring firearms. Only then will we have communities where every woman, man, and child have a chance to thrive."

Attorney General Kaul: "Background checks are conducted for the vast majority of firearm purchases in Wisconsin. But because we don't have universal background checks, people who are a danger to others—including people who have been convicted of a dangerous felony or are subject to a domestic violence restraining order—currently can buy a firearm without going through a background check. This legislation would change that—and make Wisconsin safer."

Sen. Johnson: "As elected officials, those we serve want to know that we are prioritizing the safety of their families. No parent should be afraid for their child's life when they are walking down the street or in school, yet that is exactly what is happening. 90% of Americans support background checks for all gun sales. This bill is a common-sense start to a needed conversation about how we can protect our children and make our communities safer."

Rep. Sargent: "Everyone deserves to live in a safe community and without the fear of gun violence. Yet, here in Wisconsin, many firearm sales continue to be conducted without necessary background checks due to this egregious loophole in our laws. Closing this loophole ensures that all firearm sales are vetted and properly checked, working to keep our kids, our communities, and our state safe. Continued inaction is complicity. We must listen to the voices of the people of Wisconsin and take tangible steps to reduce gun violence by closing the background check loophole in our state."

Background on LRB-3949:

Under current law, only licensed gun dealers must conduct background checks when selling a firearm, which means that someone attempting to purchase a firearm can circumvent the background check process by purchasing a firearm from an unlicensed seller. LRB-3949 unifies the background check process under the Wisconsin DOJ for all firearm purchases, including requiring the Wisconsin DOJ to conduct background checks on frames and receivers.

Under LRB-3949, firearm sales or transfers (including frames and receivers) must be made through a licensed firearms dealer, and a background check is required for all firearm purchases with some limited exceptions, including transfers to a family member by gift, bequest, or inheritance (if the family member is otherwise not

prohibited from possessing a firearm) and any firearm classified as an antique by regulations of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Find a copy of LRB-3949 here.