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ANOTHER GUN MASSACRE IN AMERICA

The deadliest mass shooting in the history of the U.S. occurred Monday at Virginia Tech University. A total of 33 people died from gunshot injuries, including the shooter, and numerous others were injured. Those who died were innocent students, whose young lives were snuffed out in a senseless act of violence, and dedicated academics, who devoted their lives to teaching these fine young men and women. Reports indicate the shooter was also a student at the University with documented mental health problems who wielded two automatic handguns with multiple clips of ammunition. This combination of mental health problems (or the shooter's "madness") and his access to such powerful guns and firepower resulted in a massacre with catastrophic loss of life.

Our hearts go out to the victims, the families and the school community. It is simply unimaginable that such violence could be inflicted upon a college campus in our midst. But tragic events of gun violence, like those at Columbine High in 1999 (12 killed, 23 wounded), Red Lake High in 2005 (8 killed) and the Amish School in 2006 (6 killed, 5 wounded), indicate we must be vigilant in our quest to end gun violence. We must look at the many factors that cause, or contribute to such horrific events, and act to change them. This includes **changing policies that allows someone to have ready access to such powerful firepower that over 50 people could be shot multiple times in a matter of minutes.**

Despite the continuing tragedies, our nation refuses to re-examine and toughen policies concerning access to handguns (the most common weapon used in crime and homicides), automatic and semi-automatic weapons and assault weapons (none of which have any legitimate use for sport), universal background checks for all gun purchases (not limiting checks to purchases from Federal Firearms Licensees, who are only involved in about 60% of firearm transactions), improving the quality and access of data bases for comprehensive background checks on gun purchasers, the sale of "copkiller" bullets, investigative powers to stop gun traffickers and those selling guns illegally, and the list goes on and on.

Arizonans for Gun Safety (AzGS) is a community-based organization working to educate people about gun violence and to reduce the harm that this type of violence inflicts on people, their families and communities. The Greater Phoenix Million Mom March (www.mmmphoenix.org) is a community-based group that supports gun violence prevention and gun safety awareness. We believe that all children (and their families)

have the right to grow up and live free from the threat of gun violence. Our collective goals are to work toward reducing gun violence and keeping our communities safe. We have a strong focus on child-safety gun issues, eliminating the illegal sale of guns, and a “Speak Up” feature that allows teens (or anyone) to report the illegal use of guns.

The scourge of gun violence is a plague that this great country cannot continue to ignore. Ten times as many people die from gun violence in this country **every year** than have died in the conflict in Iraq from its inception. It is long past time for our elected officials to show the courage to stand up to the gun lobby, the National Rifle Association and the gun manufacturers and to do everything that we can reasonably do to stop this devastating violence. We urge all Arizonans to demand that your congress representatives and senators effect meaningful legislation to stop this carnage. We must learn from this terrible tragedy in Virginia to keep it from happening again somewhere else.

Over 80 people a day die from gun violence, but on April 16, 2007, 33 additional people from Virginia Tech were added to that daily statistic. Enough is enough. It’s time to take a stand for gun violence prevention.