

**Questions for the Record from Senator Charles E. Grassley
Hearing on “After the Highland Park Attack: Protecting Our Communities from Mass
Shootings”
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1. In March of 2021, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8, also called the “Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021.” A companion to this bill has also been introduced in the Senate. This law would require background checks on virtually all transfers of firearms between individuals. Do you or does the National African American Gun Association have a stance on Universal Background Checks?

As an organization founded to preserve our African American community through armed protection and community building, we oppose legislation that infringes on the Second Amendment and our ability to protect our community and loved ones. A background check run by a federally licensed firearms retailer on a prospective buyer is different than so-called “Universal Background Checks.” It is my understanding that Universal Background Checks can only be enforced by maintaining a national gun registry, which is against the law and one step closer to gun confiscation. The history of gun ownership in the United States is dramatically different for African Americans. Racism is deeply rooted in gun control laws. Given the history of laws aimed at disarming those in the Black community, we are particularly concerned about the possibility of confiscation. Our ancestors have fought hard for and have paid the ultimate sacrifice to help ensure that we, as Americans, have the right to keep and bear arms. Therefore, we oppose H.R.8, which puts that right at risk.

2. Dr. Hunter stated in her testimony that ATF firearms trace data could not be shared with researchers, preventing their ability to study trends and conduct analysis. The Tiahrt Amendment, which prevents the ATF from sharing this data, was first passed in 2003 and has passed by each Congress, until made permanent in 2007, in order to prevent the personal and private information of Americans from being shared to non-law enforcement agencies. This restriction also protects law enforcement investigations, and the Department of Justice has actively pursued protecting this information from release in the courts. The amendment prohibits the ATF from sharing firearm trace data for use by cities, states, researchers, litigants, and members of the public. What position do you or does the National African American Gun Association take regarding sharing this sensitive data outside of law enforcement?

First, I'd like to clarify my statement made during the hearing regarding the ability to research trace data. Crime has a significantly larger impact on Black communities, and I think that research that goes toward looking at the root causes of violence in our communities is a good thing. With respect to ATF trace data, I think what is important to consider is the reason why this data should be researched. If it's to vilify federally licensed firearms retailers who lawfully sold the firearm and have done nothing wrong, I don't see how that helps getting to the root causes of violence. I also don't support releasing this law enforcement sensitive data if it has the possibility to paint a target on the back of law enforcement or witnesses involved. The reality is there are bad people intent on doing harm and illegally using firearms. We need to get them off the streets. If publicly releasing this trace data jeopardizes ongoing law enforcement investigations that could place the lives of law enforcement and witnesses at risk, I'm not sure again how this helps address the root causes of violence. It is my understanding that law enforcement has access to this data for their community and that the information can be shared by one law enforcement agency with other law enforcement agencies. In addition, ATF has access to all this data nationwide and does analyze it to try to identify patterns and trends in the data that could aid investigations. It is also my understanding that ATF regularly shares this information with state and local law enforcement. I support this research and use of the data by and for law enforcement purposes.

3. It was mentioned several times during the hearing the AR15 has no place in, and is not a preferred weapon for, hunting. Based on your experience and the experience of your organization, is the assessment of the AR15 not being a useful firearm for hunting an accurate statement?

No. I know that modern sporting rifles are commonly purchased and used for hunting game. Modern sporting rifles come in a variety of calibers commonly used for hunting game, everything from small game like prairie dogs and coyotes to larger game feral hogs, deer, elk and moose. It is for individual hunters to decide which rifle platform they prefer to use to hunt game.

4. Why is the AR15 so well suited and preferred by millions of Americans for lawful self-defense purposes?

Firearms, including the AR-15, help enable me and law-abiding members of my community the ability to protect our communities, our loved ones, and ourselves. As I stated during the hearing, I believe that the modern sporting rifle is a value add to my family. For me, the AR-style pistol is my gun of choice for self defense because in my opinion it protects my family better than every other firearm I have. The Second Amendment gives me and other Americans the right to select the firearm we believe best meets our needs including for self defense. It is estimated that at least 14 million in the Black community currently have firearms in their homes. What is happening is that our community has “awoken”, and we are taking steps to protect ourselves legally. Self defense is one of the main reasons, but not the only one, why our members exercise their Second Amendment rights and lawfully purchase firearms. The modern sporting rifle has been the most popular selling rifle in American for many years. According to recent estimates, Americans, including many NAAGA members, have lawfully purchased over 24.4 million MSRs just since 1990 through 2020. Modern sporting rifles are well suited for self defense because they are light weight, semi-automatic firearms that are very accurate and reliable, have a pistol grip that allows the user to be more accurate, and they are easy to operate. They also have low felt recoil which is a particularly desirable feature for accuracy and follow up shot if necessary to defend oneself or their family. In addition, they are modular, adjustable and customizable. For example, the stock is typically telescoping and can be adjusted to fit the person using the firearm whether it is for target shooting, hunting or self defense, and the owner can place optics and flash lights on the firearm. Self defense is one of the main reasons law abiding Americas purchase these firearms.