

## Press Releases

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### **Advocates, survivors support bill to keep guns from domestic abusers**

STATE HOUSE – Rep. Teresa Tanzi and Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne were joined by public safety advocates today in support of their legislation to prohibit gun possession by those subject to domestic violence protective orders and to allow courts to ban domestic abusers from having guns.

Members of the Rhode Island chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, part of Everytown for Gun Safety, joined the sponsors in a news conference on the legislation and lobbied lawmakers to support the legislation (2015-S 0503, 2015-H 5655).

The bill would require courts to order the surrender of firearms by those who are subject to a restraining order for domestic abuse for as long as the restraining order is in effect. It would also prohibit a restrained person from purchasing, receiving, or attempting to purchase or receive a firearm during that time. Additionally, it would allow the courts to prohibit domestic abusers from having guns. The bill also tightens up the language of existing law, requiring specifically that guns be surrendered to the Rhode Island State Police, local police departments or a licensed gun dealer.

“During my two decades working in Rhode Island law enforcement, like all police officers, I saw the terrible toll of domestic violence,” said Senator Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), who is a retired state trooper. “It is common sense that victims are much, much safer if their abusers do not have guns. In fact, research shows that women in domestic violence situations are five times more likely to be killed if a gun is present. This is something we need to address. And we need to address it now.”

Said Representative Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett), “I’ve been an advocate for the safety of Rhode Island women for a long time. The most important thing we can do to help domestic violence victims is to keep guns out of the hands of their abusers. It is time for Rhode Island to join the list of proactive states that have addressed this problem—we need to pass H 5655 and S 503.”

In April, Everytown for Gun Safety Action fund and Rhode Island Moms Demand Action released a [poll](#) showing that four out of five Rhode Islanders support the change the bill would make.

“This legislative session, Rhode Island has the chance to take a big step to help women in our state who are at risk,” said Jennifer Smith Boylan, volunteer chapter leader of the Rhode Island Chapter of Moms Demand Action. “Thankfully we have nearly 10,000 Rhode Island Everytown supporters behind us, and the overwhelming support of the public—four out of five people in our state agree domestic abusers should not have access to guns.”

At the news conference in support of the bill, the sponsors and the organization were joined by Lieutenant Governor Daniel McKee as well as Barrington resident Laura Hastings, a survivor of domestic violence.

“Take it from someone who has experienced domestic violence firsthand — the last thing needed in a domestic violence situation is a gun,” said Hastings. “Rhode Island continues to lag behind our neighbors in Connecticut and Massachusetts in denying domestic abusers access to guns. Let’s fix that by passing these bills.”

Recently, five Rhode Island mayors from cities representing hundreds of thousands of Rhode Islanders signed a [letter](#) urging lawmakers to pass the legislation. The letter stated that, in passing the bill, the state could “both support the Second Amendment and do more to protect victims of domestic violence.”

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is a grassroots movement of American mothers started after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School to fight for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment and protect people from gun violence. Everytown is the

largest gun violence prevention organization in the country with more than 2.5 million supporters and more than 40,000 donors including moms, mayors, survivors and everyday Americans.

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