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Coalition Response to Proposed Gun Legislation Packages

The Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and League of Women Voters of Florida appreciate that Gov. **Rick Scott** and state legislators are addressing gun reform in the wake of another massacre in our state.

However, we have serious concerns regarding their proposals and offer to meet with Gov. Scott and incoming Senate President **Bill Galvano** to discuss better ways to move toward meaningful gun safety measures.

- We do not support a three-day waiting period before someone can purchase a semiautomatic assault rifle.
- We do not believe raising the age for buying a semiautomatic assault rifle from 18 to 21 years of age goes far enough.

These two courses of action do not address our goal — and students' pleas — of banning the sale of semiautomatic assault weapons and high-capacity magazines in Florida. And it's important to remember that in many mass shootings committed with these killing machines — Aurora, San Bernardino, Pulse, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs — the murderers were well over the age of 21.

"While we applaud our lawmakers for addressing the need for policy changes in the wake of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, we believe the proposals do not go far enough," said **Patricia Brigham**, Co-Chair of the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and 1st Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Florida. "Raising the age limit to 21 to purchase a rifle in Florida does not address the main problem: semiautomatic assault weapons. Many recent mass shooters were over the age of 21 when they wreaked havoc, death, and destruction. The Pulse shooter was 29. The Las Vegas shooter was 64. The list goes on. The fact is we need a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons and large-capacity magazines. Anything less is woefully inadequate."

"We heard many proposals today from the Governor and legislative leaders that they strongly felt would address school safety in Florida," said **Andy Pelosi**, Executive Director of the Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus and Co-Chair of the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. "However, the common denominator in mass shootings was noticeably absent — taking large-capacity magazines and assault weapons off our streets."

Joe Saunders, Senior Political Director of Equality Florida, takes issue with the Governor's assertion that gun safety advocates are calling for a mass takeaway of 2nd Amendment rights for all Americans. "That is a gross misrepresentation of the students from Parkland, survivors of Pulse, and this Coalition," he said. "The vast majority of Americans believe if you're purchasing a firearm you should be subject to a background check, without exception, and the vast majority believe assault rifles have no place in the hands of civilians. These packages are incomplete until those common sense policies are included."

Forensic psychiatrist Dr. **Julie Kessel** added, "We need more mental health services available to those in distress, and I applaud that intervention. However, projecting blame onto those with mental illness will have no meaningful impact on mass shootings. People with serious mental illness are far more likely to be the victim of violence rather than the cause of it."

In addition to calls for enacting a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons in Florida, the Coalition has the following reaction to proposals heard today:

- We ask that our Legislature expand the scope of background checks to include private sales.
- We support removing weapons from domestic violence abusers and banning those with restraining orders from purchasing a firearm.
- We are strongly opposed to any arming of teachers. They do not have the tactical training to respond to an active shooter, nor should they be expected to undergo such training. We applaud Gov. Scott for taking this position as well.

"The Florida PTA believes the safest day-to-day school climate to be gun-free. Only actively trained law enforcement officers should be allowed to carry guns on our school campuses. Our sole purpose should be to educate our youth," said **Angie Gallo**, Legislation Chair of the Florida PTA.

The Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence was created by the League of Women Voters of Florida after the Pulse shooting to promote smart gun legislation. It has grown to include more than 120 local, state, and national organizations and includes such diverse groups as the Hispanic Federation, Florida PTA, Equality Florida, the Interfaith Council of Central Florida, Anti-Defamation League, and Doctors for America. ###