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STATEMENT FROM THE GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP ON THE REPUBLICAN FAILURE TO RESPOND TO THE GUN VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC

Washington — Today, the leadership team of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force released the following statement in the wake of the mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine.

The heartbreaking shooting in Lewiston, Maine, is a devastating reminder of the epidemic of gun violence. 18 innocent lives were stolen and 13 others were injured by a mass shooter. People were bowling with their families, out to dinner, or simply at work and were faced with a barrage of bullets.

This is not normal.

Under the Republican-led House of Representatives, there have been ZERO votes on bills that would protect our communities from the impact of gun violence. Worse yet, after months of inaction on the gun violence epidemic, Republicans outrageously put a bill on the floor to make it easier for criminals to turn easily concealable weapons into much more lethal short-barreled rifles. They have also proposed major cuts to the ATF which would mean fewer federal agents working with local law enforcement to stop the worst of the worst gun traffickers.

In his first full day as Speaker of the House, Speaker Johnson said *“this is a dark time in America, we have a lot of problems. We are really, really hopeful and prayerful. Prayer is appropriate in a time like this, that evil can end and this senseless violence can stop.”*

Mr. Speaker, we agree that these are dark times for our nation’s children. Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children and teenagers in America. Our children, God’s children, are more likely to be killed by a bullet than in a car accident, by cancer, or in

any other way. That is not true of any other wealthy country. This is not a failure of prayer, this is a failure of leadership. Gun violence impacts families of all faiths from the Covenant School in Nashville to the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

It is outrageous that Republican leadership has stonewalled Democrats as we work to address the gun violence crisis. Following the 2022 election, when Republicans took control of the House, Democrats called on then-Republican Leader McCarthy and then-Whip Scalise to commit to putting gun violence legislation on the calendar.

The Gun Violence Prevention Task Force again called on former Speaker McCarthy to bring gun violence prevention legislation up for a vote should the floor schedule fall apart, as it had multiple times under his leadership. We received no response. The prayers of the victims of gun violence again went unanswered by Republican leadership.

The Gun Violence Prevention Task Force called on Speaker Johnson immediately upon his election to work with us to vote on gun violence prevention legislation. In the time that the House went without a speaker from October 3rd to October 25th, over 1,000 people died from gun violence, including 15 children and 60 teenagers. In that time, our country was traumatized by 33 mass shootings – not including Wednesday’s mass shooting in Maine – which were ignored by Republican leadership and the national media.

This year, the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, along with House Democratic Leadership, have introduced four discharge petitions for measures that are overwhelmingly supported by the American people — and not a single Republican has signed up to help us save the lives of innocent Americans.

Republicans in Congress are sitting on their hands and letting innocent Americans get mowed down by gun violence. It’s inexcusable, it’s heartless, and it ignores the will of the American people.

In the last Congress, House Democrats passed 11 gun violence prevention bills ranging from the Bipartisan Background Checks Act and a federal Red Flag Law to an Assault Weapon Ban and stronger safe storage laws. House Democrats have been tirelessly working to keep our communities safe.

The major gun violence prevention bill that was signed into law, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was opposed by 193 House Republicans, including former Speaker McCarthy, Speaker nominee Scalise, Speaker nominee Jordan, Speaker nominee Emmer, and Speaker Johnson. **Not a single Republican who voted for this law lost their seat in the 2022 elections because of this vote.** That law was the first major gun safety law passed in nearly 30 years and is already saving lives. The ATF has used the new authorities in the law to bring charges against over 200 defendants who were trafficking firearms or using straw purchases to avoid background check laws.

Mr. Speaker, our constituents have been praying for Republican leadership to act. It's time for Republicans to join Democrats in advancing legislation that helps to keep our communities safe. As the leadership of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, we are prepared and ready to work with any Republican who is ready to stand up as a shepherd, to do everything they can to address the gun violence epidemic.

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