

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 16, 2007

Contact: Jackie Kuhls (917) 587-4108 cell

(212) 679-2345 office

Virginia Tech Experiences Worst Campus Shooting Massacre in US History just 4 days before our nation marks the 8th Anniversary of the Columbine High School Massacre

Advocates Cite Our Nation's Deplorably Weak Gun Laws and Demand Action by Congress

(New York, NY): The deadliest shooting on a campus in the history of the US occurred today at Virginia Tech. So far reports are that 33 have been killed, including the shooter, and at least 29 injured. Our hearts go out to the families, the students and the school.

Jackie Kuhls, Executive Director, New Yorkers Against Gun violence (NYAGV) said, "It is discouraging to listen to the news as they talk about SWAT teams and security checks but not about the ease with which almost anyone in this country can obtain firearms. Our reporters and our lawmakers need to focus on where and how the shooter got the gun. We can and we must fix our pitiful patchwork of gun laws in this country that allows virtually unfettered access to all types of firearms by all individuals.

Since the Columbine shooting tragedy it has become even easier to obtain guns. Many states have passed pre-emption laws that have undermined the attempts of local governments to set stricter gun laws. Conceal/carry laws have multiplied. In addition, the US Department of Justice has required the destruction of gun background check records after just 24 hours, a measure that has prevented a comprehensive review of those who have purchased guns.

Currently:

- Most of our states do not require gun owners to be licensed and guns to be registered.
- Most of our states have not closed the gun show loophole, so thousands of guns are purchased without background checks.
- Many of our states do not update criminal history databases in a timely manner, making it easy for criminals to obtain firearms.

Roger Hayes, the Chair of the NYAGV Board, said, "The Congress just called for a Moment of Silence. Indeed a moment of silence is appropriate for such a devastating tragedy with such pain for families and students. But we also want a moment of noise. We want Congress to look hard at the gun issue and the fact that our country has such a high homicide rate compared to other developed countries. We want them to act on sensible laws and stop being afraid of the gun lobby."

When other countries suffer such tragedies, they act in a way that makes a difference. They address easy access to guns. Jackie Kuhls concluded, "Until we are willing to talk about the guns – the common denominator is all such tragedies, all the security and all the SWAT team techniques will not prevent such terrible shootings.

About New Yorkers Against Gun Violence

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence is New York State's leading grassroots organization committed to reducing gun violence in our communities through advocacy and education. www.nyagv.org

###