

Legislation Introduced To Stem Gun Trafficking

Bill by Reps. Maloney, Cummings, McCarthy empowers law enforcement to keep firearms out of criminal hands--

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WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Ranking Member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) introduced the “Stop Gun Trafficking and Strengthen Law Enforcement Act.” The legislation establishes a dedicated firearms trafficking statute to empower law enforcement to keep high-powered firearms out of the hands of dangerous criminals, including Mexican drug cartels.

“This legislation gives law enforcement the tools they need to do their job,” Rep. Maloney said. “It prohibits the transfer of a gun when an individual knows the gun will be transferred to a person who is prohibited by law from carrying a gun or to a person who intends to use the gun illegally. This is a sensible solution to a severe problem and will ensure that weapons do not end up in the hands of criminals-- and drug cartels-- by specifically prohibiting firearms trafficking in the criminal code.”

“We have to move beyond the all-or-nothing rhetoric of the current gun debate and work toward common-sense measures to help our law enforcement authorities combat the Mexican drug cartels without infringing on anyone’s right to own a firearm,” Cummings said. That’s exactly what this bill does.”

“Straw purchasers represent a significant problem in the United States. It is long past time that we take concrete steps to fight back against these individuals who funnel weapons into the hands of criminal and terrorist organizations. I’m proud to join Representative Maloney in taking this step to make our country safer,” **Rep. McCarthy** said.

“This legislation will provide Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms with the tools to keep illegal firearms from making their way into the hands of convicted felons who move guns across the southern

border, utilizing a network of straw purchasers in the United States. These straw purchases act as an intermediary party for organized crime networks and the cartels by purchasing guns on their behalf", according to **Chris Schoppmeyer**, FLEOA's Vice President for Agency Affairs. The Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA) is the largest professional police organization that represents over 26,000 federal agents and officers from 65 agencies in the United States Government, including the ATF.

"This legislation would give law enforcement a strong, new tool to fight the gun trafficking that feeds lethal violence in Mexico, and American communities as well. There is no Second Amendment right to supply drug gangs with the firepower of an army," said **Dennis Henigan**, Acting President of the Brady Campaign. "Mexican families, and American families, have the right to live in peace. That's what this valuable legislation is all about."

"The U.S. civilian gun market is stocked with military-grade weapons—both domestically manufactured and imported—and has extraordinarily weak controls on their sale. This has transformed the United States into a virtually unregulated bazaar of military-style firearms. Traffickers can stock up on their weapons of choice: AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles and pistols, 50 caliber sniper rifles, and high-capacity armor-piercing pistols. The 'Stop Gun Trafficking and Strengthen Law Enforcement Act of 2011' is a crucial step in meeting the United States' responsibility to address cross-border gun trafficking," said **Kristen Rand**, legislative director of the Violence Policy Center, a national non-profit gun violence prevention organization.

The Members released testimony by Acting Director of ATF, Ken Melson, which was obtained as part of the Oversight Committee's investigation of ATF's Operation Fast and Furious, stating that law enforcement officials "absolutely" need a firearms trafficking statute to effectively attack these criminal trafficking rings. Additionally, the Members released a letter from the Mexican Ambassador to the United States that stated his support for firearms trafficking legislation.

As a part of the Oversight Committee's investigation of ATF's Operation Fast and Furious, law enforcement agents on the ground have warned Congress that the lack of a dedicated firearms trafficking statute means that criminals who supply Mexican drug cartels with weapons of war are typically charged with mere paperwork violations – dealing in firearms without a license – and often only receive a sentence of probation.

This legislation is narrowly tailored to fill that void and help law enforcement stop illegal firearms

trafficking.

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A copy of the legislation is viewable [here](#) . (PDF)

A [section-by-section explanation of the bill is here](#) . (PDF)

The OGR minority staff report, [“Outgunned: Law Enforcement Agents Warn Congress They Lack Adequate Tools to Counter Illegal Firearms Trafficking”](#) is viewable here.

A New York Times editorial on the topic is [viewable here](#) .

Read the [Thank You letter from Mexican Ambassador Sarukhan](#) to Congressman Cummings, thanking Cummings and Maloney for authoring this legislation.