Opposition to AB 49/SB 35
Lifting the 48 Hour Waiting Period for Hand Gun Purchases

NASW-WI urges state legislators to oppose AB 49 and SB 35 which would lift the 48 hour waiting period for handgun purchases. We oppose these bills in order to protect the lives of Wisconsin citizens across the state. The members of NASW-WI, who work across various fields, realize first-hand the impact of family violence and suicide when firearms are more easily accessible. Lifting the 48 hour waiting period would allow an individual, contemplating taking their own life or the life of another, to walk into a store, pass a background check and impulsively purchase a firearm, leaving no time for the individual to contemplate his actions or for victims to protect themselves. In any situation where gun violence is a possibility, social workers know that prevention is our best tactic.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "In 2013 (the most recent year for which full data are available), 41,149 suicides were reported, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for Americans. In that year, someone in the country died by suicide every 12.8 minutes. In addition, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for a little more than half (51.4%) of all suicide deaths." In Wisconsin, the age-adjusted suicide rate was 14.31. Adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had a suicide rate of 10.9. Lifting the 48 hour waiting period would allow an 18 year old, still considered an adolescent in terms of brain development, to purchase a handgun on impulse. In addition, individuals who are clinically depressed or suffering from another mental illness would have easy access to a firearm. In these instances, rash decisions may be made leaving no time for contemplation of other options. There is significant evidence to support that individuals who attempt suicide and fail, are relieved afterwards.

Family and intimate partner violence is also a growing concern for gun laws. According to information obtained by the End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, "Family and intimate assaults with firearms are 12 times more likely to result in death than non-firearm assaults and an abused woman living in a home with a gun is 5 times more likely to be killed than an abused woman who does not have a gun in her home." The current 48 hour waiting period allows for some protections when a domestic dispute occurs. Often times, perpetrators of violence will act in the heat of the moment. Lifting the waiting period would fail to allow for a cool down period. The most critical moments for a victim of domestic violence are immediately after she leaves. The waiting period lift would rob her of her ability to make a safety plan for herself and her children in due time.
We recognize that Wisconsinites, pending a background check, have the right to purchase and bear arms; however this right comes with great responsibility. Prior to this legislation, which was passed in 1976, there were many documented cases of impulsive killings. *Wisconsin State Journal* references various cases of crimes of passion where guns were readily available.\(^4\) The negative side effect of this bill could be an increase in suicide and violence within the home, given that an individual would not have time to contemplate their actions. For this reason alone, NASW-WI is opposed to AB 49 and SB 35. The life of even one Wisconsin man, woman or child is too valuable to risk.

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