

**United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism
The Fix Gun Checks Act: Better State and Federal Compliance, Smarter Enforcement**

November 15th, 2011

Statement of Patricia Maisch

Good morning Chairman Schumer, Senator Hatch and distinguished members of the Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

It is an honor, and humbling, to speak about what has become a very personal issue for me – fixing our great country’s firearms background check system and keeping illegal guns away from dangerous persons.

January 8 of this year - a beautiful, crystal clear Saturday morning in Tucson - my life and the lives of so many people changed forever. Words cannot describe the horrific acts I witnessed that morning, or the sorrow we all suffered. Luck was with me that day – I survived, physically uninjured.

Six other innocents were not as fortunate that day -- their lives ended violently in a matter of 30 seconds. I want you to know who they were.

Dorothy Morris

Wife of George Morris, he was shot and survived the day;
High school sweethearts married more than half a century;
Mother of two daughters.

Dorwin Stoddard

Died shielding his wife Mavy;
Mavy and Dorwin, friends in high school also, found each other again after both their spouses had passed away.
Mavy tells me that the last 15 years have been a wonderful journey and that she misses Dorwin every waking minute.
Mavy, who was wounded that day, is here today with one of her daughters.

Phyllis Schneck,

Widow with three adult children, grandchildren and one great-grandchild;
Tucson snowbird from New Jersey; avid crafter;
Cherished winter member of North Minster Presbyterian Church.

Judge John Roll,

Husband, father, grandfather;
Attended mass daily;
Served the great State of Arizona for over thirty years;

Friend of Congresswoman Giffords.

Gabe Zimmerman

Loved Tucson, hiking, and social concerns;
Fiancé to Kelly O'Brien,
Son of Emily Nottingham and Ross Zimmerman,
Brother to Ben,
Friend to everyone he met, I am told.
I am so sorry I didn't get an opportunity to be his friend.

Christina-Taylor Green

And, of course, beautiful little Christina-Taylor Green.
Only 9 years old, born on the day of our National tragedy - 9/11 2001.
Newly elected to the Mesa Verde Elementary School student council – potential for future political service – gone!
Loved butterflies;
Budding artist;
Loved playing baseball with the boys in Little League;
Doting sister of Dallas;
Cherished daughter of Roxanna and John.

Thirteen more were physically injured that morning, and untold numbers emotionally hurt. Colonel Bill Badger, Ken Dorushka, Randy Gardner and Mavy Stoddard were among those physically wounded, and they are here with us today.

Faith and Roger Salzgerber are also here today. They stopped by that morning to talk to Gabby. Roger volunteered many hours to help re-elect Gabby. It's incredible that they escaped physical injury that day. Faith covered Christina-Taylor to keep her warm and comfort her while waiting for medical assistance to arrive.

That morning, January 8, Roger had the courage to chase in behind the shooter, joined by Bill Badger, who suffered a bullet graze wound to the head. Together they took the shooter down. Their courage and heroism gave me the opportunity to take an ammunition magazine from the shooter.

Nurse Nancy Bowman is here today, too. She and her husband, David Bowman, a doctor, were buying Brussels sprouts at Safeway that morning. They provided triage service and immediate life-saving care to the wounded. I shudder at the thought of what might have happened had they been absent that day.

Tucson, unfortunately, is not the only tragedy represented here today. Joining us are more than 50 other survivors from across our great land, whose lives are forever altered by gun violence. Mass murders with guns garner the most headlines, but each gun murder holds its own horrific details. Different places, different names, different circumstances: each somewhat different, but each all too similar – all tragic, all so unnecessary.

Chairman Schumer, I am definitely here to remember the names of those we lost, as well as to honor each survivor. But my primary mission today is to remind all of you that Tucson is yet another extremely tragic example of what is at stake each and every time a gun falls -- or is placed -- in the wrong hands.

Changing the past is impossible, no matter how desperately we want it to change, but it would be a pitiful shame if no action were taken to change the future.

You can take action to improve our broken gun background check system, and I truly believe, with all my soul, that your actions can save lives.

If I can make this as personal to you as it is to me, I feel that together we can make progress. So forgive me if you find this offensive, but I want you to take a moment to do something. Imagine the headlines you've seen, but now with the name of a loved one instead of the names of Dorothy Morris, Dorwin Stoddard, Phyllis Schneck, John Roll, Gibe Zimmerman or Christina-Taylor Green.

So, that's why I am here today – to ask that you pass the Fix Gun Checks bill, which will save lives, maybe the life of someone you love.

Your support for this important legislation would help families and communities across our great country be more hopeful that they will be spared the pain, the sorrow, the tragedy that our community, Tucson, has suffered.

Since the day of the shooting, I have been sincerely touched by the outpouring of prayers and good wishes that Americans from across the county have shared with the victims' families as well as with my fellow survivors, our community and myself. These offerings continue to comfort and sustain me during this emotionally difficult time.

Their outpouring of support reminds me of our fundamental unity as a country. We all know that polarized debates that stifle policy-making prevent us from solving real-life problems. And when it comes to guns, the majority of Americans, the majority of Tucsonans, want common-sense laws that protect Second Amendment rights, and that protect us by helping stop the supply of illegal guns to dangerous people.

This law will do that.

Hopefully the debate we have today will be different. I am here – we are here – to ask you to recognize the common ground we share, and to take two common sense steps.

First – make sure that the records of all persons who should not be allowed to buy guns are in the background check system.

Second – require every gun buyer to pass a background check, no matter where he or she buys the gun, or whom he or she buys it from. Background checks are simple, quick and inexpensive.

The American people support these proposals. According to a recent poll, 90 percent of all Americans and 90 percent of gun owners support fixing gaps in the background system. 86 percent of all Americans and 81 percent of gun owners support universal background checks.

Please, take these two steps by enacting the Fix Gun Checks bill. This bill could help prevent the murders of some of the 34 Americans killed with guns each day.

34 Americans killed every day with guns! Five times the number of people murdered in Tucson! I will not sit idly by while that happens each day, and I know that you won't either.

The shooting in Tucson brought Americans together. Please honor that unity by putting politics aside and working together to fix our broken background check system.

Please take action.

Please help prevent the next mass shooting.

Please pass the Fix Gun Checks Act.

I want to thank you, again, all members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today, and I just have one last question to ask you:

How much more pain, how much more sorrow, how many more deaths by guns must we endure before we do something?