

Resolution establishing "National Gun Violence Awareness Day" introduced in House, Senate

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To bring attention to the issue of gun violence, Americans are encouraged to wear orange on June 2nd – what would've been Hadiya Pendleton's 19th birthday

– At least sixteen U.S. Senators and eleven U.S. Representatives joined together to introduce a resolution in the House & Senate establishing June 2nd as “National Gun Violence Awareness Day” and designating June as “National Gun Violence Awareness Month.” Every day in America, an average of 297 men, women and children are shot, 91 of them fatally. Establishing a day to bring attention to the issue of gun violence honors the thousands of Americans who are victims of gun violence every year,

including Hadiya Pendleton who was shot and killed in Chicago, Illinois on January 29, 2013.

The resolution sponsored by U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) in the Senate and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL) in the House also urges citizens and community leaders to concentrate heightened attention on gun violence during June, when gun violence typically spikes at the start of the summer months, and to work together to make our communities safer from this violence.

“June 2nd would have been Hadiya Pendleton’s 19th birthday. To honor her and the tens of thousands of people who are killed by gunfire each year, I will be proud to wear orange on that day,” said Durbin. “Wearing the color orange was an idea inspired by Hadiya’s family and friends in Chicago. Because orange is a color that hunters use when they are in the woods to make sure no one shoots them, they decided that it could represent support for a simple goal: keeping our kids safe. That should be something everyone can get behind.”

In addition to promoting awareness of the deadly toll of gun violence, Durbin has urged Congress to pass legislation to close dangerous loopholes in federal law that allow guns to fall into dangerous hands. Durbin has advocated for legislation to reduce illicit gun trafficking and straw purchasing; promote the tracing of crime guns; close the gap that allows foreign guests on the Visa Waiver Program to buy guns in the United States; close the “terror gap” that allows known or suspected terrorists to buy guns; and require universal FBI background checks for gun sales.

“We wear orange on June 2 to honor on that day the people whose lives are affected everyday by gun violence in America. We have communities where parents are afraid to let their kids outside to play, to sit on their own front porches or even walk to the corner store. No one in America, no matter your region or zip code, should ever have to live this way,” said Kelly. “The determination of Hadiya’s family and friends to find purpose in their pain in working to make all communities safer is an inspiration to me and to all who believe in the right of every child to live free from the threat of gun violence.”

Kelly has introduced the most gun violence prevention legislation in Congress, including bills to keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous individuals and to recognize gun violence as a public health epidemic. She recently launched the Urban Progress (UP) Initiative to reduce gun violence through economic development and community reinvestment.

Senators cosponsoring the resolution include: U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Edward Markey (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Al Franken (D-MN), Chris Coons (D-DE), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Patty Murray (D-WA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Jack Reed (D-RI) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

Representatives cosponsoring the resolution include: U.S. Representatives Hakeem Jeffries (NY), Charles B. Rangel (NY), Mike Thompson (CA), Brenda Lawrence (MI), Joyce Beatty (OH), Tammy Duckworth (IL), Alcee Hastings (FL), Barbara Lee (CA), Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ) and Marcia Fudge (OH).

Gun violence is an issue that affects communities in every state across the country. Each year more than 32,000 people in America are killed and 80,000 are injured by gunfire. On June 2, 2016, people across the nation will join together in the second annual “National Gun Violence Awareness Day” and will wear the color orange to bring attention to the issue of gun violence.