



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

## Senator Hassell-Thompson and Assemblyman Camara reintroduce resolution designating June as Gun Violence Awareness Month

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON March 11, 2014

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### **ASSEMBLYMAN KARIM CAMARA AND STATE SENATOR RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON ANNOUNCE THE INTRODUCTION OF A 2014 RESOLUTION TO DESIGNATE JUNE AS GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH IN NEW YORK STATE**

*“A Black or Latino youth has a 56% increased likelihood of being injured by gun violence than a motor vehicle accident, this is akin to a public health crisis”*

Albany, NY- Today New York State Assemblyman Karim Camara, Chair of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus, and New York State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson announced the re-introduction of a resolution that designates June as Gun Violence Awareness Month in New York State. The goal of Gun Violence Awareness Month is to concentrate annual heightened attention to the issues of gun violence and gun safety in our communities. Typically, June is the month each year when gun violence rises.

Last year a similar bi-partisan resolution successfully passed through the Senate and Assembly, naming June as Gun Violence Awareness month as part of a five year plan to reduce gun violence across New York State. The 2013 resolution received wide support across the state and was accompanied by similar resolutions and proclamations in Buffalo, Albany,

Syracuse, Rochester, Yonkers, Hempstead, Ulster County, Westchester County, Suffolk County, Oswego County, Bronx County and New York County.

“Gun violence, especially among youth, must be treated as the national epidemic that it is. We have too many kids killing kids. This is a problem that disproportionately affects communities of color but it’s important to understand that gun violence is something that can affect any neighborhood in any city. That’s why I’m proud to be joined by a diverse coalition of colleagues and activists who want to make our streets safer. It is my hope that our resolution declaring June as Gun Violence Awareness Month in New York will inspire other states to join us in our efforts to eradicate this scourge of gun violence nationwide,” said **Chairman Assemblyman Karim Camara**.

This year the initiative has been expanded to invite other cities and states across the country to participate in this historic effort to curb gun violence. The expansion also includes more varied community activities in New York State during the month of June, such as courses on advocacy strategies, including gun-safety education programs, community arts and political engagement events, and entertainment activities. There are also plans to launch a statewide PSA campaign.

“Last year, New York was the first state in the country to introduce a resolution declaring June as Gun Violence Awareness Month. This initiative galvanized a movement in communities that brought citizens and community leaders together to develop ways to end gun violence. Now we are building upon our efforts by inviting other cities and states across the nation to join with us in our fight to eradicate these senseless crimes,” said **Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson**.

Gun violence remains a devastating crisis throughout the state; according to the Department of Criminal Justice Services, in 2012, 57% of all murders in the State of New York were

homicides by firearm. Summer months are correlated to an increase in gun violence activity, which impacts New Yorkers of all ages, races, and genders. Representative of this increase, in June 2013 there were an alarming 25 shootings in the span of 48 hours in NYC—5% of the year's total shootings.

#### **QUOTES:**

“Every homicide and every shooting affects the lives of countless numbers of family members and friends of the men, women and children who are shot - and the pain and grief is immense,” said **City of Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown**. “Bringing continued awareness to gun violence is an important step to ending it. I’m proud to support this statewide initiative to designate the month of June as ‘Gun Violence Awareness Month’ in New York. You can count on me, and the residents of Buffalo, to do our part to make sure we bring attention to this critically important issue.”

“Gun violence is a plague that we as elected officials and we as a society need to combat. I am proud to join my colleagues from around the State with a strong message, that every community deserves and has the right to feel safe,” said **City of Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan**. “We as leaders must also take the next step of fighting the root causes, like joblessness, poverty and lack of opportunity, that result in too many of our youth turning to gun violence.”

“Raising awareness of gun violence needs to be a top priority for all New Yorkers,” said **City of Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner**. “When we create broad coalitions of law enforcement, civic advocates, faith leaders, and elected officials, we can work together to address this critical issue in our cities. I applaud the legislature for once again pushing this resolution. I hope it can continue to spur conversation on this important subject.”

"As a city mayor, the responsibility to reduce gun violence is very real, said **City of Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren**. "We must partner with our police chiefs to decrease the availability of illegal guns, and to educate young people about the dangers of misuse."

**Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, Co-Chair of State Legislators Against Illegal Guns**, said, "I join Assemblymember Camara and Senator Hassell-Thompson in this important effort to get the message out that all New Yorkers have a role to play in reducing gun violence."

"Gun violence has reached epidemic levels, and we all need to work together to prevent and halt gun-related deaths in New York City," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer**. "We need changes to our gun laws, improved background checks, more gun buyback programs, and of course greater awareness overall. 'Gun Violence Awareness Month' shows we are united in our resolve."

"Gun Violence awareness month is about raising attention to this issue and engaging the public in community based education and programming," said **Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone**. "Whether it is Attorney General Schneiderman's collaborative agreement with local organizations to help ensure background checks at gun shows, or an effective gun buyback program to remove unregistered guns here in Suffolk County, continuing effective community based programming is an important step toward stopping unnecessary and gratuitous gun violence."

"We in Madison County do not condone any violence against others in any form." said **John Becker, Chairman of Madison County Board of Supervisors**. "Whether it is domestic gun violence, violence against women or even work place violence, society needs to be aware of all violence and needs to prevent it whenever possible. Citizens have the right to be free safe anywhere in our great state and nation."

"I am proud to join my colleagues across the State in joining the efforts to eliminate gun violence across our nation," said **Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano**. "Unfortunately, too many times, cities and local communities are being plagued with gun violence affecting our way of life. Recognizing June as Gun Violence Awareness Month is a step in the right direction in promoting awareness and preventing the tragedies that are often the result of illegal guns on our streets."

"Gun violence is a daily epidemic in our nation and state. Gun violence rips apart communities and destroys families. As long as children and innocents are murdered with illegal guns, we cannot stop our advocacy. Our moderate voices for sensible gun laws cannot and will not be silenced," said **Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, Co-Chair of State Legislators Against Illegal Guns (SLAIG)**.

"I as well as the residents of the Bronx support this statewide initiative to designate the month of June as 'Gun Violence Awareness Month,' in New York. Gun violence continues to be a national issue and in order to prevent this senseless act of violence we must continue to have an open dialogue within our communities to educate our residents while also stand against those who continue to terrorize our neighborhoods. I applaud Assemblymember Karim Camara and State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson for introducing this important resolution that will help make sure that we continue the discussion and bring annual attention to gun violence," said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.**

"Violence is like an epidemic that spreads like a disease," said **Clarence Jackson, Director of Albany Cure Violence**.

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