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Moms Demand Action Applauds Major Moves by Facebook, Instagram to Prevent Illegal Gun Sales on Their Sites

New Policies Follow Moms' Campaign – 230,000 Supporters Call On Companies to Stop Facilitating Illegal Sales to Minors, Felons and Other Dangerous Prohibited Gun Purchasers

*****Media Conference Call with Facebook at 1:00 PM EST – Details Below*****
www.DemandAction.org/Facebook

(Indianapolis, IN) March 5, 2014 – Facebook announced today that the company and its popular photo-sharing subsidiary Instagram will take significant steps to block potentially illegal firearm sales through their platforms. For the first time, the sites will delete reported posts offering to buy or sell guns without background checks – a key indicator that users may be seeking to avoid the life-saving checks that bar minors, felons, the seriously mentally ill and other dangerous people from buying guns. The sites will also block users under the age of 18 from viewing reported private gun sales posts from individual sellers and any pages used primarily for private gun offers.

The Facebook announcement follows a month-long campaign by Moms Demand Action that quickly drew more than 230,000 supporters who urged Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom to address the growing number of illegal gun sales facilitated by their networks. Direct discussions took place between officials of Facebook and Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a bipartisan national coalition founded by former Mayors Michael Bloomberg and Thomas Menino. The moms and mayors' groups merged in December 2013 to form the largest gun violence prevention organization in the United States. This is the second corporate victory for Moms Demand Action, which last year mounted a campaign on Starbucks that resulted in a statement by CEO Howard Schultz that guns were no longer welcome in his stores.

In response to [the announcement](#), Moms Demand Action founder Shannon Watts and Mayors Against Illegal Guns chairman John Feinblatt issued the below statements **and will speak on a media conference call today with Facebook's Head of Global Policy Management Monika Bickert and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman at 1:00 PM EST to discuss the policy changes – please email press@maig.org for details on the call.**

Watts: "American moms are gratified that Facebook and Instagram have agreed to take meaningful steps to prevent illegal gun sales to children and dangerous people on its platforms.

"Our campaign showed how easy it is for minors, felons and other dangerous people to get guns online – that's why moms and more than 230,000 Americans signed our petition, tweeted and used social media to ask Facebook and Instagram to do something about gun sales facilitated on their networks. We are happy that these companies listened to American mothers and we believe these changes are a major step toward making sure people who buy or sell guns on their platforms know the law, and follow it. Moms are particularly pleased that Facebook will block minors from seeing posts about gun sales or trades, and that we can be confident that these social networks will be safe spaces for our kids.

"There's still so much to be done – by corporations, by Congress, and by local leaders – to keep guns out of dangerous hands. Moms have momentum and we're moving the country toward a culture of gun safety one company, one legislator, one law at a time. We're going to keep applying pressure to corporations and political leaders until they do more to reduce the gun violence that plagues our country. We're not going away, and we will not stop until we've done everything we can to keep our children and communities safe."

Feinblatt: "Our campaign exposed how simple it is for dangerous people to get their hands on guns, no questions asked – not only on Facebook and Instagram – but across the Internet. Unfortunately, the 'private sale loophole' allows anonymous parties to sell guns without background checks, and there are simply too many ways for criminals, minors and other prohibited gun purchasers to get them easily – with just the click of a mouse. We are grateful that Facebook and Instagram are making major moves to prevent these sales from happening via their platforms. We will remain vigilant in our efforts to draw attention to these critical safety issues and hold corporations and political leaders accountable to do their part to prevent gun violence."

Among the significant policy changes Facebook and Instagram have agreed to implement to prevent easy access to guns on its platforms are the following:

- Facebook will block all children (under 18) from viewing reported posts from individual gun sellers or gun pages where guns are sold or traded.
- Facebook will allow users to report posts that may facilitate or promote

- potentially illegal gun activity.
- Facebook will delete reported posts that indicate that the seller will not conduct a background check or that a buyer is seeking to avoid a background check.
 - Facebook will delete reported posts that indicate that a seller is willing to sell across state lines.
 - Facebook will continue to report to law enforcement any gun-related posts that may pose a threat to public safety.
 - Facebook will require private sellers who are reported for offering a gun for sale to acknowledge the relevant laws that apply to them – including that background checks may be required before completing a sale. These sellers will be blocked by Facebook from continuing to the site until they acknowledge this policy.
 - All Facebook Pages and groups must prominently state that sellers and buyers must comply with all applicable laws, including conducting a background check where required. Facebook will take down reported pages and groups where guns are sold until the owner of the page acknowledges this policy and includes this information prominently at the top of the page. Facebook’s Help Center will remind sellers that they may conduct background checks for safety purposes even where not legally required.
 - When someone searches on Instagram for a hashtag related to gun offers (e.g. #guns4sale) they will be required to acknowledge the relevant laws that apply to them in this area before they see search results.
 - Facebook will provide public education ad space targeted at users interested in firearm-related content to ensure they know about the laws related to gun sales. Moms Demand Action and Mayors Against Illegal Guns will provide content for these ads.

Facebook and Instagram’s policy changes were made in response to a [campaign by Moms Demand Action launched on January 27](#), which was joined by partner organization SumOfUs and promoted on Change.org. As part of the campaign, Moms released a "closer look" video to riff on Facebook’s 10th anniversary “look back” videos to explain how Facebook’s previous policies made it easy for guns to be bought and sold online without criminal background checks. [The video](#) has been viewed nearly 400,000 times.

Moms also brought to light cases of [minors](#) and [felons](#) buying guns on Facebook. Previous research by [Mayors Against Illegal Guns](#) found that criminals are flocking to the internet to buy guns – on one site, one in 30 prospective gun buyers on online had committed crimes that prohibited them from possessing firearms.

About Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Much like Mothers Against Drunk Driving was created to change laws regarding drunk driving, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America was created to

build support for common-sense gun reforms. The nonpartisan grassroots movement of American mothers is demanding new and stronger solutions to lax gun laws and loopholes that jeopardize the safety of our children and families. In just one year, the organization has more than 140,000 members with a chapter in every state in the country. The group recently joined forces with [Mayors Against Illegal Guns](#), the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country. For more information or to get involved visit www.momsdemandaction.org. Follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/MomsDemandAction or on Twitter [@MomsDemand](#).

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