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Cummings pushes gun trafficking legislation

April 3, 2013 | By Bob Weiner and Rich Mann | weinerpublic@comcast.net

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Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md, the ranking member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, urged “action” on gun legislation in Congress at an April 2 Newsmaker.

He underlined the current dangers associated with gun trafficking and made the case for tough federal penalties aimed at “straw purchasers.”

Cummings said, “Most Americans already think gun trafficking is a federal crime — but it’s not. They have no idea that there is no federal law targeting firearms traffickers who commonly use ‘straw purchasers’ to buy guns for convicted felons and other dangerous criminals who cannot legally buy guns on their own. Laws to prevent trafficking are toothless, like a traffic ticket.”

Cummings, a former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, is one of the prime sponsors - along with Reps. Patrick Meehan, R-Pa., Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y. and Scott Rigell, R-Va. - of the bipartisan Gun Trafficking Prevention Act of 2013, which has over 100 co-sponsors in the House. Cummings believes the bill should have wide ranging support. The bill would make trafficking and straw purchases federal crimes with 20-year penalties.

“There are only two groups who should oppose this bill: criminals and people who want to buy guns for criminals,” Cummings said.

The congressman lost his nephew Christopher in what he called “a senseless act of gun violence.”



Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md

Cummings said that he hopes these types of tragedies, including Sandy Hook Elementary, become “transformative moments.” He added, “If twenty children do not cause us to act, I do not know what will.”

“Part of the healing process, for me and countless other families, is to prevent other senseless deaths from gun violence from occurring again.”

Cummings continued, “We in Congress must be vigilant and put party politics and rhetoric aside, and make protecting American families and future generations a priority.”

Cummings also threw his support behind other gun control measures. “I believe fixing the background check system is one of the most common-sense actions we can take to prevent criminals from getting guns. And I think it would complement our gun trafficking legislation very well,” Cummings said.

“Background checks would prevent many criminals from obtaining guns, and the anti-trafficking legislation would impose strong new criminal penalties on those who try to get around the system.”

Cummings was asked how the NRA leadership can block bills when there are more parents who care about the lives of their children than NRA leaders, whose members support gun safety legislation.

Cummings said that was an excellent question that media should ask the NRA. The Congressman asserted, “I do not want to bash the NRA. The question is do we do something or don’t we.”

He quoted NRA leaders who supported limits on trafficking two weeks ago but now are circulating draft language that he says “waters down the bill.” He said, “I hope the NRA will reconsider.” Otherwise, “Congress could do nothing,” holding up a zero with his fingers.

The event was titled, “A Reality Check on Congressional Gun Legislation.” Cummings said that “the reality is looking at autopsies and mothers and fathers going through this—the murders of their children.” He said now something might get done “because we are talking about children.”