

Guest Column to The News-Star  
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City of Monroe, LA

## **Gun Crimes: Prayers, Prosecution and Prevention**

We are all concerned and appalled by the recent mass shootings in California, Texas, and Ohio, which claimed the lives of men, women, and children. Likewise, we are equally concerned and appalled with the recent local homicides which have occurred in Monroe and Ouachita Parish. Our prayers and thoughts are with the friends and family members of loved ones whose lives ended way too soon.

I want the victim’s families and all residents of Monroe to know that we have a zero-tolerance policy for this type of criminal behavior. Chief Eugene Ellis and the men and women of our Monroe Police Department, in concert with other local law enforcement agencies, will do all they can to prosecute, to the fullest extent of the law, those responsible for these heinous acts. The overwhelming majority of the homicides that have occurred in our city, this year, have involved people who knew each other. Among other factors, these deadly encounters have involved ongoing beefs, drugs, and domestic-violence situations. Thanks to investigative efforts and the testimony of witnesses, some have already been arrested. Because we want to bring justice, we won’t be satisfied until we can identify and eventually prosecute all guilty parties.

Although no crime is 100% preventable, we must all work together to do what we can to prevent tragic situations. Multiple recent print, digital and broadcast news stories pinpointed both the difficulty and necessity of recognizing and reporting “red flags” about people who pose a potential threat to themselves, specific individuals or the public at-large. Contrary to what some might say, you are not being a “snitch”. You are being responsible. You are helping save lives and prevent heartbreak and tragedy when you report dangerous behavior, threatening signs, and situations of concerns. Our P3 Campus School Safety App, launched in partnership with Monroe City Schools during the spring semester of 2019, has already helped save the life of at least one student. We encourage all parents and students in Monroe City Schools to download the free app to your Apple and Android phones.

This column started off talking about mass shootings and gun-related homicides. I want to be perfectly clear. I fully support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment and the right to legally bear arms. However, I believe we can do more to improve gun safety. In 2019, an estimated 250 mass shootings have already been reported in the United States. Thousands of people have been killed or injured. Last week, I joined hundreds of mayors across the nation and signed on to a letter submitted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors President Mayor Bryan Barnett (Rochester Hills, MI) addressed to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) urging the United States Senate to take action, now, by passing H.R. 8 and H.R. 1112 gun safety legislation.

H.R. 8 passed the U.S. House of Representatives on February 27 on a bipartisan vote of 240-190. It would close serious loopholes in the background check system by requiring all firearm purchases to undergo a NICS background check. H.R. 1112 passed the House on February 28 on a bipartisan vote of 228-198. This bill would extend the background check review deadline from three to ten business days, to help ensure that background checks are completed before weapons are sold and that dangerous individuals who should not have them are unable to purchase them. Some believe that if this bill had been law in 2015, the tragedy that occurred at the Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston (SC) might have been avoided.

I commend the U.S. House of Representatives for acting. Now, we need the U.S. Senate to come back to Washington, D.C. and do the same. This is not about party affiliation – it's about people. This IS America in 2019. We need prayers, prosecution and prevention. We must continue working together. We are making a difference. Monroe is one city, with one future!