FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 6, 2013

Contact: Michael Marriott
Manager, Communications & Public Affairs
Michael_Marriott@AANnet.org
202-777-1174

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING SUPPORTS ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

WASHINGTON, DC—February 6, 2013—The American Academy of Nursing supports efforts by Congress and the White House to curb gun violence. The Academy endorses the swift passage of the Assault Weapons Ban of 2013, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Access to a firearm increases a battered woman’s odds of being killed by her abuser by more than 5 times. In 2007, more preschoolers under age 5 died by gunfire (85 children) than law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty (57 officers).

Nurses and doctors see the horrific and tragic effects of gun violence everyday. In the US, gun related violence is a significant public health problem with over 30,000 deaths per year, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. And, the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre is another tragic reason for better regulation of guns and preventing dangerous people from accessing them.

The Academy believes a ban on assault weapons is a step in the right direction; however, it recognizes more must be done. Lawmakers are urged to empower health care professionals to identify and counsel individuals with high-risk danger behaviors and to restrict gun purchases to individuals with dangerous histories using a national database.

“From Tucson, to Aurora, Sandy Hook and every day violence, we must not sit idly by and allow gun violence to continue. The Academy’s Fellows are ready to stand with lawmakers to ban these dangerous weapons and to prevent people with high-risk danger behaviors from obtaining them,” says Joanne Disch, president of the Academy.

In a letter to Senator Feinstein (http://bit.ly/Xg7dCj), the Academy outlines eight necessary steps to reduce gun violence:

1. Creating a universal system for background checks designed to highlight an applicant’s history of dangerousness and require that all purchasers of firearms complete a background check.
2. Strengthening laws so that high-risk individual’s, including those with emergency, temporary, or permanent protective or restraining orders or those with convictions for family violence, domestic violence and/or stalking are prohibited from purchasing firearms.
3. Banning the future sale, importation, manufacture, or transfer of assault weapons, incorporating a more carefully crafted definition of the term “semiautomatic assault weapon” to reduce the risk that the law can be evaded.
4. Banning the future sale, importation, manufacture, or transfer of large capacity (greater than 10 round’s) ammunition magazines.
5. Ensuring that health care professionals are unencumbered and fully permitted to fulfill their role in preventing firearm injuries by health screening, patient counseling, and referral to mental health services for those with high risk danger behaviors.

6. Focusing federal restrictions of gun purchase for persons on the dangerousness of the individual and fully funding federal incentives for states to provide information about dangerous histories to the National Instant Check System for gun buyers.

7. Supporting enriched training of health care professionals to assume a greater role in preventing firearm injuries by health screening.

8. Researching the causes of and solutions to firearm violence.

##

Nursing Fellows are available to discuss health care professionals role in the gun control conversation.

The American Academy of Nursing serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy's 2,000 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice and research. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and health care.