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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Joan Peterson, Protect Minnesota spokesperson, (218) 428-6570.

ST. PAUL, MN -- Today the Supreme Court issued a predictable ruling overturning Chicago's handgun ban. The court had overturned Washington, D.C.'s handgun ban in 2008; today's decision said the DC ruling applies also to Chicago and all U.S. cities and states.

***NOTE FOR MEDIA: At 12:30 p.m. CST, Legal Community Against Violence is holding a conference call explaining the implications of the *McDonald* case. Police Chief Scott Knight of Chaska, MN, chair of the International Association of Chiefs of Police Firearms Committee, will be on the call. Conference Line: 888-601-4774

Event Title: *McDonald v. Chicago* Media Teleconference ***

"We disagree with both the 2008 *Heller* decision overturning the Washington, D.C. handgun ban and today's *McDonald* decision applying it to Chicago," said Heather Martens, Executive Director of Citizens for a Safer Minnesota and Protect Minnesota. "We've never advocated a handgun ban in Minnesota, but the *McDonald* decision is a slap in the face to all communities that are trying to do something about gun violence. *McDonald*, like *Heller*, fails to take into account that a handgun in the home does not make the home safer." A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used in a criminal, accidental or suicide-related shooting than it is to be used in a legally justified shooting.

Despite their deep flaws, the rulings do not seem to immediately jeopardize existing Minnesota gun laws, or any bill that Protect Minnesota and Citizens for a Safer Minnesota have supported. No Minnesota city has a handgun ban, nor has one ever been proposed in Minnesota.

The Supreme Court specifically upheld gun control laws in *Heller*. "Like most rights, the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited," the court wrote in *Heller*. "Nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms." (Pp. 54-55)

The Supreme Court decisions clarify that today's debate about gun violence is not a "pro-gun" vs. "anti-gun" discussion. Among gun owners and non gun-owners alike, the policy differences center on whether gun ownership comes with responsibilities. The meaningful contrast is between the "prevention" position, based on the idea that gun violence is preventable, and that gun owners have responsibilities, vs. the "saturation" position, based on the idea that gun

violence is inevitable, that the only defense against it is to saturate society with guns. The “saturation” position holds that gun owners, manufacturers and dealers are responsible to nobody but themselves.

Gun owners overwhelmingly favor measures like closing the gun show loophole, which is the gap in the law that allows anyone to sell a gun at a gun show without requiring a background check on the buyer. A bill to close the loophole was introduced in 2010 in Minnesota. In a poll in late 2009, 69 percent of National Rifle Association members said they supported closing the loophole. In Minnesota, 82 percent of the public supports background checks before all gun purchases, according to a 2006 University of Minnesota survey.

Citizens for a Safer Minnesota and the Protect Minnesota Campaign hold that effective prevention is achieved by going after illegal trafficking, requiring background checks before gun purchases, and by storing guns securely to prevent theft and unintended injury. (See Protect Minnesota resolution, www.protectmn.org).

Background checks have stopped over 1.6 million gun purchases since federal law began to require federally licensed gun dealers to conduct background checks on potential gun buyers. New York City, which has aggressively gone after gun trafficking and is in a region where gun laws are relatively consistent, has seen falling rates of crime, including gun violence, for two decades. New York City is now safer than Minneapolis. Washington, D.C., a tiny area in the middle of states with gaping loopholes in their gun laws, has been unable to achieve the same results as New York.

European nations, whose gun ownership laws are considerably more consistent and stringent than in the United States, have a small fraction of the number of gun deaths that the United States does. The United States has an average of 80 gun deaths a day, 32 of the 80 being murders. “Eighty gun deaths a day is disgraceful, and it is an unacceptable cost that we all pay as a society,” said Joan Peterson, a spokesperson for Protect Minnesota.

There is nothing in the Supreme Court decisions to prevent the passage of anti-trafficking laws like background checks and one-gun a-month purchase limits, or pro-enforcement laws like the requirement of “microstamping” technology to aid the tracing of crime guns, Martens said. Currently in the United States, 40 percent of murders are unsolved, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

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