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**TEN YEARS AFTER 101 CALIFORNIA STREET TRAGEDY
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION REMAINS A KEY ISSUE**

Bay Area-based group founded in response to the 101 California Street shooting continues to empower communities to prevent gun violence.

San Francisco, CA. Ten years ago today the Bay Area and the nation were horrified by the assault weapons massacre at 101 California Street. The July 1, 1993 shooting, which began in the offices of the Pettit & Martin law firm, resulted in the deaths of nine people and injured five others. For many, the shooting was a wake-up call, spurring the Bay Area legal community to add its voice to the gun violence prevention movement. Led by founder Charles G. Ehrlich and co-founder John R. Heisse, II (both partners at Pettit & Martin at the time of the shooting), law firms, other businesses and individuals came together to focus their talents and financial resources on preventing future gun deaths and injuries. From anger and grief, San Francisco-based nonprofit Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV) was born.

“Since July 1, 1993, more than 300,000 Americans have lost their lives to firearms – and as many as a million or so more have been injured,” stated Sue Ann Schiff, Executive Director of LCAV. “This is a critical time for gun violence prevention in our country. The 1994 federal assault weapons ban, in large part a response to the 101 California Street shooting, expires a little more than a year from now. It must be renewed and, ideally, strengthened. This will not be easy. In fact, if the Bush Administration and the gun lobby have their way, one of the most important vehicles for imposing discipline and responsibility on the gun industry – the ability to challenge gun manufacturers, distributors, and dealers in court because of their negligence or recklessness – will be all but eliminated. The House already has passed the gun industry immunity bill and in the Senate the bill has 54 co-sponsors. We must rally to stop it.”

Opinion polls consistently show that most Americans want stricter gun laws. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein – and many of California’s members in the House – are among the strongest advocates for effective gun laws. Nevertheless, because of the

power of the gun lobby, there has been no major federal legislation to prevent gun violence since the assault weapons ban was adopted in 1994.

Over the past 10 years, there has been significant progress at the state and local level. “While it is extremely important to remain vigilant and push reform in Washington, D.C., the best opportunities lie at the state and local level,” added Schiff.

The history of LCAV illustrates how much can be accomplished outside the federal legislative arena. LCAV began in California – contributing to hundreds of locally enacted firearms ordinances, many creating momentum for state legislation that now provides California some of the most progressive and rigorous gun laws in the country. In 1999, the organization added new focus states and now pursues its local ordinance initiative in Illinois and Ohio, as well as in California. In 2001, LCAV further expanded its services and launched its project, the Firearms Law Center, and web site, to provide legal assistance nationwide. Today, the organization serves public officials, law enforcement and activists in all 50 states. LCAV provides legal analysis and information, drafting assistance, and other legal support to advance gun violence prevention measures. LCAV is the only organization whose sole purpose is to provide legal assistance in support of gun violence prevention.

“Now, possibly more than ever, we need to stay focused and united,” said James T. Fousekis, President of the Board of Directors of LCAV. “We will never forget the friends, family and colleagues we lost on July 1, 1993. Indeed, they are an inspiration for our relentless efforts to provide public officials, activists and others the legal expertise and information they need. Our first ten years have demonstrated the important role that lawyers and legal resources can play in empowering effective action to prevent gun violence. We are proud to carry on this tradition as long as is necessary.”

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Legal Community Against Violence is the only organization exclusively dedicated to providing legal support services to those seeking regulatory solutions to gun violence. Our project, the Firearms Law Center, is a leading resource for information on federal, state and local regulation of firearms. The Center provides free legal assistance to communities, groups and individuals working to advance gun violence prevention measures. The Center’s web site, www.firearmslawcenter.org, is the most comprehensive site for information on firearms regulation in the U.S.