

LOS ANGELES – Representative Xavier Becerra (CA – 31) told reporters today that a national gun fingerprinting system would be one of his top legislative priorities during the 108th Congress. “As we fight against international terrorists, we cannot forget about the terror we face here at home on our streets,” Rep. Becerra said. “The time to act is now.”

At the start of the 108th Congress on Tuesday, January 7, Rep. Becerra introduced H.R. 24, the “Bullet Tracing Act to Reduce Gun Violence.” A leading congressional proponent of a national gun fingerprinting system, Rep. Becerra authored similar legislation during the 107th Congress. Rep. Becerra’s first legislative efforts towards creating a national gun fingerprinting system came years before the snipers in the Washington D.C. metro area confounded local and national law enforcement officers for weeks, bringing heightened attention to the need for this crime fighting tool. Rep. Becerra’s new bill charges the Department of Justice with establishing a system where every gun sold in the United States is first test fired to records ballistics data that is then stored in a database that local law enforcement authorities can access when investigating gun-related crimes.

To underscore the benefits of this potential system, Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn, Police Chief William J. Bratton and Councilmember Nick Pacheco (14th District) joined Rep. Becerra today in Boyle Heights at the site of a February 2002 unsolved gun crime and murder scene. The local leaders highlighted how pre-recorded ballistics data can help stem the spike in gun violence that Los Angeles has experienced over the last year. To further show his support for a national gun fingerprinting system, Councilmember Pacheco has authored a resolution that, if passed, would make supporting Rep. Becerra’s plan for a national system the official position of the City of Los Angeles.

Mayor Hahn indicated that a national program like the one Rep. Becerra is proposing could go a long way to help reduce gun-related crime in Los Angeles. “With the introduction of the Bullet Tracing Act, Congressman Becerra continues to be a leader on important public safety issues, offering policy solutions that are both practical and can help law enforcement do their job more effectively,” Mayor Hahn said. “It is my hope that Congress will act swiftly on this bill, giving law enforcement yet another tool in their arsenal to track down those individuals who commit violent crimes with firearms.”

Rep. Becerra spoke on the importance of making this a national system, rather than relying on states to set up their own programs. “If a gun can cross state lines, and if a killer can cross state lines, then we need a system that can cross state lines as well,” Rep. Becerra said.

Councilmember Pacheco discussed the benefits that a national gun fingerprinting program could create. “Our criminals now need to think twice before using a firearm, because our chances of identifying them and locating them will increase with this system,” Councilmember Pacheco said. “Let’s get out there and use every type of law enforcement tool we have to take back our streets and deter our criminals.”

Numerous representatives from a number of gun control advocacy organizations, including the Brady Campaign to Reduce Gun Violence, Million Mom March and Women Against Gun Violence, joined the four Los Angeles leaders to show their support for Rep. Becerra’s

legislation.

“A single car has numerous markings to allow authorities to know who owns and operates it,” Rep. Becerra said. “Why should a gun be any different? Let’s not wait until after crimes have been committed to record ballistics data. Let’s know the genealogy of a weapon – by doing so, we have a much better chance of catching criminals and stopping a weapon from being used for violent purposes.”

Photos from this morning’s press conference will be available on-line beginning Tuesday, January 14. To download the photos, please go to www.house.gov/becerra/congress.htm and click on the on-line version of this press release.