

**GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: UNDERSTANDING  
AND REDUCING THE COSTS OF FIREARM INJURIES  
AND DEATHS**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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# **GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA: UNDERSTANDING AND REDUCING THE COSTS OF FIREARM INJURIES AND DEATHS**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**

UNITED STATES CONGRESS,  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:21 p.m., in Room 210, Cannon House Office Building, the Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Vice Chair, presiding.

**Representatives present:** Maloney, Schweikert, Beyer, Beatty, Frankel, and Trone.

**Senators present:** Lee, Heinrich, Cassidy, and Hassan.

**Staff present:** Melanie Ackerman, Robert Bellafiore, Barry Dexter, Sol Espinoza, Harry Gural, Amalia Halikias, Colleen Healy, Christina King, Wells King, Vijay Menon, Michael Pearson, Hope Sheils, Kyle Treasure, Jim Whitney, Scott Winship, and Randy Woods.

## **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY, VICE CHAIR, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK**

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The meeting will be called to order, and I thank all of my colleagues for joining me. And thank you to the moms, and everybody else that is here for this important hearing. And certainly we thank all of our panelists.

I especially want to thank the witnesses, some of whom have lost family members to gun violence. And as we talk about the costs of gun violence, let us never forget that the biggest, most tragic cost of all is the loss of a human life.

I believe that Congress must act to stem the gun violence epidemic in our country. In 2017 alone, almost 40,000 people were killed by guns in the United States. Firearms are now the leading cause of death in young people. Our gun homicide rate for teens and young adults is nearly 50 times higher than other high-income countries. And 90 percent of all the women killed by firearms in high-income countries are killed in the United States.

In August alone, more than 50 lives were taken in a series of horrible massacres. So far this year there have been 301 mass shootings. That is more than one per day. And yet, unbelievably, some people say that the real problem here is that we do not have enough guns. They say that the only thing that will make America safer is more guns. But the fact of the matter is if guns made us

safer, we would be the safest Nation on Earth, and we are far, far from it.

In the United States there are more guns in civilian hands than in any other country in the world. An American is seven times more likely than someone in Canada to die from a gun, eight times more likely than someone in France, and almost 20 times more likely than a person in Germany, and almost 40 times more likely than someone in the U.K., Australia, or New Zealand, and nearly 200 times more than someone in Japan, where they do not have guns, the police do not even carry guns, and they have had zero deaths from guns in their country. More people in the United States died from firearm-related injuries from 2003 to 2012 than the entire number of combat fatalities in World War II. That is an astonishing statistic.

There is no way to estimate the cost of a human life. The loss is absolutely—you cannot determine what the cost is. But there is also economic cost: a lost breadwinner's income, astronomical medical costs, costs to employers, schools, police, hospitals, and the criminal justice system. In order to help people better understand those costs, I have asked my staff to produce a report that compiles data on the economic cost of gun violence in all 50 States. And the report finds that rural States have the highest gun violence measured as a share of their economies.

States with high rates of gun ownership have the highest rates of gun suicide. The three largest States suffer the largest absolute costs, and the high youth death rates from gun violence extend across regions. In contrast, my home State of New York, which has stricter gun laws, including an assault weapons ban, has one of the three lowest costs of gun violence as a share of its economy, along with Hawaii and Massachusetts.

There are three people in this room today who have suffered heart-wrenching losses as a result of gun violence. One of our witnesses, Tina Meins, lost her father in the mass shootings in San Bernardino, California, in 2015. Dr. Suzanna Hupp, who also is testifying, lost both her parents in a mass shooting at a restaurant in Texas in 1991. And Sheneé Johnson from New York, seated in the first row, lost both a fiancé and her son to gun violence. We must fight to lower the risks so that other families are not forced to bear such suffering.

Other countries have drastically reduced gun violence because they found the courage to act. In Australia in 1996, after a man with an assault rifle killed 35 people, the parliament responded by banning automatic and semiautomatic weapons, and created a buy-back program that resulted in over 650,000 weapons being turned in. In New Zealand in 2019, after 51 people were killed in the Christchurch mosque, the parliament acted quickly, voted nearly unanimously to outlaw automatic and semiautomatic weapons.

That is the kind of leadership that the U.S. Congress has lacked for many years. In fact, in 1996, the Congress of the United States made matters worse. It passed legislation that effectively blocked all Federal funding for gun violence research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I would say that there is no issue that cannot be discussed and debated and studied, and the fact that this was blocked is out-

rageous. It was changed recently, and that is important, but we have gone more than 20 years without deepening our knowledge about gun violence prevention and about what we can do to end this epidemic. We do so much research on cars and how to make them safer. We should be doing the same type of research with guns.

This year the Democratic House acted to address this crisis. We passed the first gun safety reforms in 25 years. The bill requires universal background checks, closes the gun show loophole, and gives the FBI more time to conduct lifesaving background checks. This summer the House passed another bill, one that I have spent years fighting for, to invest millions, \$50 million, to conduct research on how to reduce gun violence. And last week the House Judiciary Committee sent to the full House a ban on high-capacity magazines, red flag legislation, and a bill to prohibit those who commit misdemeanor hate crimes from obtaining a gun.

These are common-sense measures that the vast majority of Americans strongly support. It is time for change. I look forward to a day when our children do not have to be afraid to go to school, when our teachers do not have to treat gunshot wounds, when nearly half of Americans are not worried about being a victim in a mass shooting, and when those who hold the reins of power move forward beyond hollow offers of thoughts and prayers.

Let us honor the victims of gun violence and their families by working to prevent more victims. Let us, like other countries in the developed world, turn tragedy into bold action. And may all Members of Congress, especially those in the Senate, find the courage to act. Their inaction is literally costing lives. And I look forward to our witnesses' testimony this afternoon.

Before I turn to our distinguished Chairman for his comments, I just want you to look at this chart. The red line is the United States and you can see how that compares to the gun violence in other countries, some of which is zero. But the next country is Canada that is similar to ours. There is a lot of gun violence in those countries that are having civil wars, but even there, their gun violence is less than what we have in the United States.

Anyway, thank you all for coming, and thank you, Chairman Lee, for allowing this hearing. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Vice Chair Maloney appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 32.]

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, CHAIRMAN, A U.S.  
SENATOR FROM UTAH**

**Chairman Lee.** Thank you, Vice Chair Maloney. And I join you in thanking our witnesses for coming today, and thanking those, some of whom are witnesses and some of whom are in the audience, who have endured firsthand the grieving loss associated with gun violence.

Over the past few weeks, Americans have watched in horror again and again as our fellow beings, young and old, have been murdered in high-profile mass shootings on American soil. As lawmakers, it is not enough for us to grieve with them, although we certainly do. It is our responsibility first to understand what might be causing these horrific events, as well as the many other tragic

deaths that are the result of gun violence that take place in our country every year.

And then it is our responsibility to find policies that may help prevent tragedies like these in the future, so long as these policies are faithful to the Constitution and so long as they do not inadvertently harm the very citizens that they are supposed to protect.

Mass shootings, of course, attract our attention for a number of reasons, including the fact that they have the ability to inspire great fear. When innocent people get gunned down at random in public, it makes us wonder. It makes us think, will I be next? Will my child be next? Will my spouse, my mother, my father, be next?

And our media, obsessed with their click and count viewership, shamelessly too often choose to fan those fears rather than to portray the truth about the terrible problem of gun violence in this country. Studies have suggested that this irresponsible media coverage, and I do not hesitate in calling it irresponsible and morally bankrupt, may actually increase the number of mass shootings by encouraging potential killers in their sick desire for attention.

The reality of gun violence in America is less sensational than that what we see in the media, but no less horrible. Six in 10 gun deaths are suicides. In 2017, for every victim of a mass shooting, there were 88 victims of gun suicide, and another 52 victims of another form of gun homicide.

Mental illness, spiritual emptiness, and a breakdown of the family and community life are at the heart of the underlying causes of much of our gun violence epidemic, including even mass shootings. Mass shooters seek to inflict on others the pain, the fear, the inner torment that they are already suffering themselves.

They too often come from broken homes and distressed neighborhoods. The Joint Economic Committee's Social Capital Project has ranked American counties by the health of family and community life, and has found that half of identified mass shooters came from the bottom quarter of counties.

The evil committed by these murderers must be stopped. In order to do that, we have to seek to uproot its causes. Millions of law-abiding citizens use guns to protect themselves and their families and their communities, just as our founding document protects them in their right to do that, and just as our Founding Fathers intended.

The Constitution protects our right to bear arms because if that right were abridged, we would become more dependent for security on our police and on our military, necessary but limited and finite resources. And it is no criticism of our police and our military to say that this would ultimately make us less secure as a people—less secure, not more.

Some Americans have suffered tragedy precisely when they were prevented their right to bear arms, as we will soon hear from the personal story of Dr. Suzanna Hupp, who is here to share that story with us today. Dr. Suzanna Hupp met this firsthand and can identify the infringement of her right as being connected to the tragedy that she suffered.

And when we do enact gun control laws, we know that criminals are in many instances all too happy and eager and willing and able to ignore them. One study found that 79 percent of guns recovered



from crime scenes were possessed unlawfully. This does not mean that we do not have any ways to keep guns out of the hands of criminals in America, and especially the mentally ill.

Our State governments have proposed several worthwhile innovations, including those that make it easier for local law enforcement to act swiftly on reports of suspicious activities that often precede mass shootings. There is room for reform in our Federal statutes as well. For example, we could improve local agencies reporting to our National Instant Criminal Background Check System for firearms purchases.

Many Americans, including some of our witnesses, have borne in their own lives the unspeakable, unbearable costs of gun violence. It is important for Congress to listen to their voices. I hope that this committee can present to the rest of the country a model of respectful conversation about some very difficult topics so that we can work together to reduce the number of lives tragically and needlessly lost to gun violence.

Madam Vice Chair, I have just been informed they have called some votes in the Senate. There are a couple of us who are in the Senate who will have to bounce back and forth. And I appreciate—thank you.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Lee appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 33.]

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. And people will be leaving to vote. And Senator Hassan, I want to recognize that you are here.

But we now are going to our panelists. Tina Meins is a gun violence survivor and a member of the Everytown Survivor Network. Her father, Damian Miens, was shot and killed by one of his co-workers during the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, in 2015; 14 people were killed in the attack. And since then she has advocated for changes to our gun laws. She was a guest at President Obama's 2016 State of the Union address. She recently completed her graduate degree from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

Adam Skaggs is chief counsel and policy director at the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Before joining Giffords in 2016, Mr. Skaggs was a senior counsel at Everytown for Gun Safety, where he led their litigation efforts. He previously served as senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice. He also has worked as a law clerk to Judge Stanley Marcus. He has a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School.

Suzanna Hupp served as a Republican member of the Texas House of Representatives from 1997 to 2007. Dr. Hupp is a survivor of the Luby's Cafeteria mass shooting in Killeen, Texas, in 1991, where 24 people, including both of her parents, were killed. Dr. Hupp has spoken across the country in support of concealed handgun laws, and wrote a book about her experience entitled, "From Luby's to the Legislature: One Woman's Fight Against Gun Control." She attended the University of Texas in El Paso and Texas Chiropractic College.

John R. Lott, Jr., is president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, which conducts research on the relationship between laws regulating the ownership or use of guns, crime, and public safety.

Dr. Lott has held a research—or teaching positions at various academic institutions, including the University of Chicago, Yale University, Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Stanford University, UCLA, and Rice University. Been a lot of places. Dr. Lott has published over 100 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals and written nine books, including three editions of “More Guns, Less Crime.” He holds a Ph.D. in economics from UCLA.

We welcome each of you to the committee today. And we will begin with Ms. Meins. And I would just remind all witnesses to limit your testimony to five minutes. And we look forward to hearing from all of you. Thank you so very much, all of you, for coming. Thank you. Ms. Meins.

**STATEMENT OF MS. TINA MEINS, MEMBER, EVERYTOWN  
SURVIVOR NETWORK, WASHINGTON, DC**

**Ms. Meins.** Good morning, Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Maloney, and members of the Joint Economic Committee. It is an honor to appear before you to testify on the important topic of gun violence in America. My name is Tina Meins and I live in Washington, D.C., but I grew up in California. Today I am here as a daughter, a sister, a fiancée, and a recent graduate from McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

Today I represent the 58 percent of Americans who have said they or someone they care for has experienced gun violence in their lifetime. I am here in honor of my father, Damian Meins, who was shot and killed. He was my travel buddy and my best friend, and today I am my father’s voice.

My dad, mom, sister, and I were all extremely close. He was intelligent, hardworking, had a great sense of humor, and loved to make people laugh. He lived his life in service to others. It did not matter if he was mowing a neighbor’s lawn, helping a friend move, or taking care of a sick relative. He was always generous with his time. He loved his family deeply, and our lives have not been the same since he was taken.

I will never forget the shock, panic, and heartbreak when I learned my dad was killed, along with 13 of his coworkers, on December 2, 2015, in San Bernardino, California. That day my dad, Damian, was attending a mandatory work training event for the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health at the Inland Regional Center.

My dad was standing by the Christmas tree during a break when another coworker and his wife, who had pledged allegiance to the terrorist group ISIS, burst through the doors and began shooting. In seconds, my dad was shot five times, and his life was over.

There are no words to express the profound loss we experienced with my dad’s death. As for the economic impact, our family had access to financial support because the shooting occurred during a work event and was also deemed a terrorist attack. We received critical resources from workers’ compensation funds, life insurance, and the victim compensation fund.

Additionally, the Nation came together, and many people were incredibly kind and generous enough to donate to the victims of the San Bernardino attacks through different GoFundMe efforts. With these funds, we were able to hold the funeral for my father and

make sure his family could attend. However, because of the complex laws surrounding taxation of these varying types of monies, my mother has also faced ongoing IRS issues since 2016.

She cites lost future earnings from my dad as the biggest financial burden, but points out that this cannot in any way compare to the emotional toll of losing your high school sweetheart and husband of 36 years in such a horrific fashion.

I was fortunate that my own workplace at the time was very supportive and allowed me to stay off work for two months. However, I had to use all my bereavement, sick time, and vacation time, and after that was exhausted, I went unpaid in order to be with my family as we grieved.

Unfortunately, most Americans who experience gun violence do not have the same access to financial support and donations or flexibility with their employment to pick up the pieces when their lives are shattered by a bullet. Although my dad did not survive the shooting on December 2nd, there were dozens of people who did, and still bear the emotional and physical scars.

I have permission to share the experience of Julie, who is special to my family because she was able to relay the last seconds of my dad's life to us. She was actually standing next to him, next to the Christmas tree, when the shooting occurred.

Julie was 50 years old at the time of the shooting. She was shot twice, and has had five surgeries that have left her with significant scar tissue, causing problems of its own. She has a tremendous amount of bullet fragmentation still left in her body, and will forever be concerned about lead poisoning.

Though Julie loved her job and her coworkers, the shooting effectively ended her career, and she was never able to return to work. Across the country, survivors of gunshot wounds experience difficulties ranging from psychological trauma, loss of work, and steep medical costs.

One study estimated that between 2003 and 2013, there was an annual average of 30,617 hospital admissions for firearm injuries in the United States. For each admission, average costs ranged from approximately \$19,000 per handgun injury to over \$32,000 for assault weapon injury.

Even after the immediate hospital costs, survivors of gunshot wounds face a lifetime of medical care costs, including readmission to the hospital and nursing care. Several studies have shown that the lifetime costs of providing care following a gunshot wound are more than twice the costs of providing acute care. One study put the cumulative lifetime costs of treating gunshot wounds incurred in a single year in this country at \$2.3 billion.

I have been living with grief and loss for nearly four years since my dad was ripped from our lives, but I have not been standing by silently. As a member of the Everytown Survivor Network, I share my story to put a human face to our Nation's gun violence crisis. We advocate for change to help ensure that no other family faces the type of tragedy that we have experienced.

We should all be free to live without the fear of being shot. No one law can stop all gun violence, but there is so much more we must do to keep our families safe. The House of Representatives has already passed bipartisan legislation to require background

checks on all gun sales and is considering a strong red flag law. Now the Senate must act on background checks and pass a strong red flag bill.

I am not alone supporting stronger gun safety laws. Ninety-five percent of Americans support background checks on all gun sales, and 85 percent support red flag laws. And every day, 100 Americans are shot and killed, and hundreds more are wounded. This is not a right or left issue; this is a life or death issue.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Meins appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 42.]

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Thank you so much.

Mr. Skaggs.

**STATEMENT OF MR. ADAM SKAGGS, CHIEF COUNSEL AND  
POLICY DIRECTOR, GIFFORDS LAW CENTER TO PREVENT  
GUN VIOLENCE, NEW YORK, NY**

**Mr. Skaggs.** Thank you, Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Maloney, and all the other members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today and for your attention to this critically important issue. My name is Adam Skaggs. I am chief counsel and policy director at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. That is the gun safety organization that is led by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords.

As we have already heard today, gun violence in America has an enormous human cost. Approximately 36,000 people in this country are fatally shot each year, and another 100,000 are shot and wounded. In 2017, gun deaths reached their highest level in over four decades. And while it is the mass shootings that often get the most media attention, day-to-day gun violence in this country that often does not make the news claims nearly 100 lives and injures almost 300 more every single day.

But as we discuss today, beyond the devastating toll that gun violence imposes on American families and communities, it imposes extraordinary costs on the American economy. Researchers at the nonpartisan Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation estimate that gun violence costs the American economy at least \$229 billion annually. And those calculations were completed in 2012. The increasing levels of gun violence since then mean that today, the costs are surely even more.

That includes direct costs, like emergency transport, medical and mental health treatment, as well as law enforcement, court, and prison expenses. It also includes indirect costs, like lost wages and the reduced quality of life for those who live with permanent injuries and pain. Notably, however, that \$229 billion figure does not take into account a whole host of other additional costs that are harder to measure, costs like lost business opportunities, lowered property values, neighborhood flight, and the reductions in tax bases of communities across this Nation.

These costs fall on each and every one of us as taxpayers. Eighty-seven percent of the direct costs of gun violence are borne by taxpayers, to the tune of roughly \$700 per American per year. Law enforcement, many court costs, incarceration, are publicly funded, as

is a large portion of the medical expenses associated with treating gunshot victims.

A 2017 study on the costs of hospitalizations of gun injuries found that 40 percent of the expenses are covered by Medicare and Medicaid, and the average costs per admission for a gunshot victim to a hospital, an average cost for Medicaid patients, more than \$30,000. That is \$30,000 just for the initial admission to the hospital. Obviously, if gunshot victims require ongoing, long-term care, the costs are much, much higher.

These numbers are staggering, yet they do not even capture the total costs of American gun violence. A 20-year lack of Federal investment in gun violence research has prevented scholars from answering more complex, more complicated questions about the toll that this violence extracts from our economy, like the differences in lifetime healthcare costs for different types of gunshot wounds, or the ways and manners in which gun violence stifles economic development and growth.

We may not have exact answers to all of these questions, but we know two things for sure. First, gun violence is not inevitable. And second, there are policy solutions proven to save dollars and to save lives. For example, community violence intervention programs have been proven effective in reducing gun homicides and nonfatal shootings that are disproportionately concentrated in underserved communities of color in our cities.

In recent years, violence reduction stages deployed in communities from Connecticut to Oakland, California, have been proven to cut rates of shootings in half. They have reduced shootings by 50 percent. And studies in Connecticut and in Massachusetts have shown that for every dollar invested in these kinds of programs, \$7 are saved.

Congress should fund these programs. And Congress should fund support to States that have adopted extreme risk laws, laws that allow courts, upon a showing of serious danger that a person poses to themselves or to others, allow them to be temporarily disarmed.

Congress should fund States that are moving forward. Seventeen States and the District of Columbia have now moved forward with these laws, signed into law by Republican governors, Democratic governors, often with broad bipartisan support.

Congress should also require a background check on every gun sale to prevent dangerous people from acquiring guns. That is common sense. It has backing of 90 percent of the public. And the House has already passed it this year. The House has also allotted \$50 million for research by the CDC and the NIH, and it is currently debating policies to disarm people convicted of hate crimes and to restrict the large-capacity magazines that make mass shootings so deadly. As I said, these policies would save dollars and they would save lives, and the Senate should follow the House's lead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Skaggs appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 47.]

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Thank you so much.

Dr. Lott.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JOHN LOTT, JR., PRESIDENT, CRIME  
PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER, ALEXANDRIA, VA**

**Dr. Lott.** Thank you very much. I appreciate being invited here, Chairman Lee and Vice Chair Maloney, for the opportunity to speak.

Guns make it easier for bad things to happen. But they also make it easier for people to protect themselves and prevent bad things from happening. Are the slides going to be up? Yes. All right.

Anyway, so we hear discussions about the costs of guns, but what we need to do, it makes no more sense to only count people killed or people injured than it is to say lives that were saved by guns or injuries that are prevented. The question is: What is the net cost?

And all the different costs that we hear in terms of hospitalization or lost work time or lost business opportunities apply just as well to people who are hurt by guns as well as to lives that are saved. And again, the question is: What is the net effect?

And one simple question to go and ask is: We can look around the world in places that have banned guns. If our net guns are bad, you would think that murder rates would go up. And yet in every single place, not just Washington, D.C., and Chicago, which have tried gun bans, but every country, even island nations that have tried gun bans, murder rates have gone up, usually dramatically, after gun bans have been in place. There is not one place that one can point to where guns are banned where murder rates stayed the same or even fell. Next.

One way of kind of measuring the costs and benefits of having guns is to look at the rate that guns are used in commissions of crime versus the rate that guns are used to go and stop crimes. And what you find is that surveys indicate that people use guns about four to five times more frequently to stop crimes than they are used to go and commit them.

We heard the comment earlier about how many guns we have in the United States, and if we only had so many guns, we should be the safest country in the world. There is a distinction here between having guns and being able to have guns with you.

So, for example, 94 percent of the mass public shootings that we have had in the United States have taken place in those areas where we have people banned from being able to go and have guns for protection, so-called gun-free zones, where law-abiding citizens are not able to go and protect themselves.

These killers, these mass public shooters who want to go and get attention, like Senator Lee was pointing to earlier, want to go to places where they can kill as many people as possible. You cannot do anything but read the diaries or other statements that these killers have left and not come away with the fact that they purposely picked those places where people cannot defend themselves precisely because they want to kill more people than you would be able to go and kill otherwise.

If you think gun control, extremely strict gun control, would lower crime, one need only look at Mexico. Since 1972, Mexico has had only one gun store in the country. It is run by the military. Extremely extensive background checks and psychological screen-

ing. Only about 1 percent of Mexicans legally own a gun. And yet it looks like, this year, Mexico will again have a murder rate that is going to be about six times higher than what we have here in the United States.

One thing that is included in a lot of the numbers that have been discussed so far is suicides. In fact, if you take out justifiable homicides, about two-thirds of the deaths, or 70 percent of the deaths, involve suicides in any given year. The assumption seems to be if we take away guns, you are going to eliminate suicides. In fact, the vast majority of academic research by economists and criminologists shows that, in fact, there are very close substitute ways, and you do not see changes in the total numbers of suicides. Next slide.

So just as an example, in terms of the success rate for committing suicides, I have data here from a number of different types of things—shotguns to the head, cyanide, gunshot to the head, explosive, being hit by a train or a truck, jumping from a height, hangings—all of them have relatively similar success rates in terms of committing suicides. Next.

Now, I could tell you, I think, a pretty quick, few, very reasonable changes that could be made in the universal background checks bills that would get them passed very quickly. One is dealing with the false positives. We frequently hear that there are three and a half million dangerous, prohibited people who have been stopped from owning guns because of background checks. That is simply false. Virtually all of those are mistakes, and it is very simple to correct that.

All you have to do is have the Federal Government, when it does criminal background checks or other background checks on gun buyers, meet the exact same rules that the Federal Government requires that private companies do. If private companies had an error rate that the Federal Government has, they would be sued out of existence. And it overwhelmingly hits minorities. The costs are also extremely great, too. You could fix these things just by having the government pay for this out of general revenue. Last—skip two slides. One more.

Here is a survey that has recently been completed of academics—economists, criminologists, and public health researchers. And you can basically see, with the exception of economists, with regard to gun-free zones and eliminating them, all the other groups are pretty relatively skeptical of different types of gun control.

This is the largest survey that has been done of academics. Even the public health people, which are relatively more favorable towards gun control, there is no category where they are really much different than the midpoint in terms of, then, for other things, and particularly for criminologists and economists. They are much more skeptical.

I greatly appreciate your time, and I look forward to the questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Lott appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 50.]

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Thank you so much.

Dr. Hupp.

**STATEMENT OF DR. SUZANNA HUPP, FORMER MEMBER OF  
THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, LAMPASAS  
COUNTY, TX**

**Dr. Hupp.** Good afternoon. My name is Suzanna Hupp, and I am representing myself. I believe you have been supplied with my written testimony, which goes into a lot more detail than I can in five minutes.

You titled this hearing, "Gun Violence in America: Understanding and Reducing the Cost of Firearm Injuries and Deaths." I am here to just make sure that you also consider the high cost of gun control in your discussions.

In 1991, my parents and I were at a Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas. We had just finished eating when a madman crashed his truck through the floor-to-ceiling window and then methodically began executing people. I reached for the gun in my purse on the floor next to me, but then realized that a few months earlier I had made the stupidest decision of my life. My gun was 100 yards away, dutifully left in my car to obey the law because at that time in the State of Texas, carrying a handgun was illegal. We did not have any type of concealed carry.

I cannot begin to get across to you how frustrating it was sitting there waiting for it to be your turn like a fish in a barrel with no meaningful way of fighting back. When my father saw what he thought was a chance, he ran at the guy, but the guy just shot him after he covered about half the distance. As I escaped, my mother stayed behind with her husband of 47 years, cradling him until the gunman got back around to her.

To shorten the story up for this, 23 people were killed that day, including my parents. It was the largest mass shooting in our country at that time. I want you to understand that the only thing gun control did that day was to prevent me from being able to protect myself and my family.

By the way, law enforcement was one building away in a conference, and in an odd twist of gun control fate, the manager of the conference hotel had asked them to store their weapons in their vehicles so as not to offend the other hotel patrons. They told me later—several of them were patients of mine—that it took precious minutes for them to retrieve their guns from the trunks of their cars before they could run to the scene.

Then all they had to do was fire a shot into the ceiling. This guy rabbited to the back bathroom alcove area because they are, by nature, chickens; they exchanged some gunfire with him, and he put a bullet in his own brain.

I have got to tell you, can you imagine being in that position today, but instead of having your parents with you, what if you have your children or your grandchildren with you? Even if you have chosen not to have a gun, do you not hope the guy behind you has one and knows how to use it?

I can tell you that the cost of gun control on October 16, 1991, was my parents and 21 other innocent lives, several of whom, like the cops, had dutifully left their guns in their cars.

So we have seen so many of these mass shootings since then—restaurants, post offices, schools, day cares, dance clubs, theaters—but nearly every one of them had a sign depicting a red circle with



a line through a gun. So explain this to me. If guns are the problem, why have we not seen any of these mass shootings at NRA conventions, or skeet and trap competitions, or the dreaded gun show, places where there are thousands of guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens?

So I understand—having been a politician, I understand the need to do something. So if you want to make a difference, I think you should start by speaking truthfully and accurately, without any misleading rhetoric. I have found that the average reporter and, quite frankly, a lot of your own staffers have no idea what a semi-automatic is. They think it is essentially a rapid fire machine gun-type weapon. Those are automatics, and they have been illegal in this country without a special license since the 1930s. So I carry a semiautomatic. Every woman I know that carries, carries a semi-automatic. So yes, you are talking about our guns.

I think Representative O'Rourke finally said out loud what many have obfuscated for years. He essentially said he does want to take away the guns that are designed to kill. And let me assure you that if someone threatens me or mine, that is exactly what I want it to do.

Universal background checks are not the answer. Existing background checks have failed miserably, and I am a firm believer that this just becomes a de facto registration. And honestly, if you look at history, registration always, always, always leads to confiscation.

So if you want some common-sense legislation, rid us of public gun-free zones. Spree killers want to go where they can rack up a high body bag count. That again is the cost of gun control.

The next positive change could be fleshed out through a task force implemented at the State level. I will tell you, my husband is a criminal psychologist who provided a description of how we could prevent many if not all of these shooting sprees, and that is in my written testimony.

In the end, again, the title given to the hearing, in part, is, "Reducing the Cost of Firearm Injuries and Deaths," and while attempting to reduce violence as a whole is a worthy cause, I find it pointless to focus on the tool. A gun can be used to kill a family. A gun can be used to protect a family. It is just a tool. And by the way, an estimated 350 million guns in America did not hurt anybody this year, and that is a staggering statistic.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Hupp appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 78.]

**Vice Chair Maloney.** I want to thank all the panelists.

I have a question for you about the prevalence of gun violence in the United States. I would like to get your perspective on it. But first I would like to show a brief video from Steve Kerr, coach of the Golden State Warriors. His father was shot and killed when serving as president of American University of Beirut.

[Video played.]

Mr. Skaggs, is what he says true? Is the United States in a "league of its own?"

**Mr. Skaggs.** I think, unfortunately, what Coach Kerr just shared with us is absolutely right. As I said at the outset, Ameri-

cans are 25 times more likely to be killed in a gun homicide than are residents of other high-income countries. With 100 people being shot and killed every day, with 300 more Americans suffering gunshot wounds, I find it hard to argue that this is not a crisis.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Ms. Meins, I appreciate very, very much your testimony and your courage today. And you have given us an insight into the high personal and economic costs associated with gun violence. But the cost your family has suffered did not end on that day that your father was killed. How has the San Bernardino attack affected the way you think about your own plans and your own future?

**Ms. Meins.** Everything changed for my family after that day. I had a nice career in procurement and purchasing services, and after that I decided that I needed to be more dedicated to trying to stop this so that other families do not have to face these kinds of tragedies. I am very sorry for anyone that has suffered from any kind of loss due to gun violence.

But I decided that it was important for me to try to speak on behalf of my family and put a face to the tragedy so that other survivors could have a voice so that people truly understood what the toll of violence is. So everything changed. Our psychological and emotional well-being changed. Our life plans changed. Our finances were affected. Everything changed.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Mr. Skaggs, it has been reported that a man who carried out the massacre in Odessa and Midland had failed a background check because of a previous offense, yet because of loopholes in current background checks laws, he was able to buy an AR-style gun in a private transaction from an unlicensed seller who was not required to run a background check.

Would H.R. 8, the background check legislation passed by the House earlier this year, have applied to this gun purchase? Would it have made a difference?

**Mr. Skaggs.** Absolutely. Absolutely. That is exactly the type of scenario that H.R. 8 is designed to prevent. We have heard that since its inception, the National Criminal Background Check System has stopped 3.5 million prohibited persons from obtaining guns through sales by licensed dealers.

But in the vast majority of the country, someone who fails a background check, is denied a gun purchase, can just simply turn around, go online to one of many websites that advertise millions of guns for sale without any background checks whatsoever and meet someone in the parking lot of a McDonald's or outside another store and buy that gun for cash with no questions asked, no background check whatsoever.

That just defies common sense, that somebody who fails a background check because of a criminal record, because they have been convicted of domestic abuse or otherwise subject to a domestic abuse restraining order, these people should not be allowed to turn around after failing background checks and simply buy guns without any security whatsoever.

So that is exactly what H.R. 8 would address, and that is why it is so critically important that after the House's leadership on this issue, that the Senate follow suit.

**Dr. Lott.** Could I make a correction?

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Thank you.

**Dr. Lott.** Because the person that sold the gun to the Odessa killer actually was committing a crime because he was selling a ghost gun, something that he had made himself, and was punishable by five years in Federal prison. He did not have a manufacturer's license to go and do that. So it is not clear, if he was already committing that crime, which was a five-year felony under Federal law, why the additional law would have made any difference in that case.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Well, I tell you, we have had hearings in the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, on which I serve, where the law enforcement, Border Patrol along the U.S.-Mexico border, testified that the gun laws are so lax on selling illegal guns that they do not even bother to arrest people because it is not even a Federal felony now to sell illegal guns.

And they have asked us to correct that, and we have bills in to correct that, to make selling illegal guns a felony. And the others have complained, from law enforcement, about these straw purchasers who buy guns and give them to other people, that the penalties are not preventing them from acting.

**Dr. Lott.** But it is not—

**Vice Chair Maloney.** But right now, my time is up, and I am recognizing my colleague, Representative Schweikert.

**Representative Schweikert.** Thank you, Vice Chair Maloney, though I think what you just described was a felony.

This is actually a subject I have had intense interest in. And I am going to say one of those things I think will instantly offend everyone: I fear we often have absolutely the wrong discussion. And let me walk through some of the mechanics.

We have data sets that show, if I take the last 30 years, which is probably the appropriate sample size, why have some communities in our country gotten dramatically safer, and why have others not? We see some interesting data coming out of my home, Phoenix, Arizona, where statistically, divided by the 100,000, substantially safer than 30 years ago.

What did a community like that do? Was it mental health services? Was it community policing? Was it just age demographics? And what—concealed carry. There is lots of inputs, and I believe we treat each other almost intellectually dishonestly when we say it is going to be this shiny object or that shiny object. Complex problems require complex understanding.

What do some communities do that are working, and what are other communities do that do not work? And then could we all just agree we are going to do less of this and more of this? The most precious thing in my world is I have a four-year-old little girl. And damn it, I worry about this because something we as elected officials do not talk enough about is we are the inbound to a lot of hate, and we think about this a lot.

And I am going to break some protocols, and I am going to ask us to be very brief. Mr. Skaggs, I should also disclose I have known Gabby Giffords for a very long time, and I have considered her one of the people I was close to in Arizona. And we have—some of the staff around you, we have had this very conversation.

I was fascinated. You pointed out that there are some violence intervention programs. Could you specifically just talk about, quickly, what is working on those?

**Mr. Skaggs.** Sure, absolutely. And I appreciate your remarks. I think you are absolutely right. There is no one simple solution to this incredibly complex and serious problem. But let's just take a look at those community violence interruption programs.

There are multiple different models. There are some that are based in hospitals that use the moment of intervention when somebody is wounded, either in a gunshot or a stabbing, to intervene and break the cycle of violence. There are others that engage stakeholders across the community.

But these require adequate funding. They require adequate resourcing, and there has not been the kind of Federal support for these successful, proven models. And in cities where these have had a temporary effect but then have not had sustained success, it is because there has not been sustained resourcing.

**Representative Schweikert.** But even a temporary effect is statistically significant.

Dr. Lott, I have read bunches of your material. I appreciate the data. Back to my scenario: Why have some communities gotten dramatically safer in the last three decades and others have not? What has worked? What has not?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, I think if you look at the research by economists, you will find about 50 percent of the variation of crime rates can be explained by law enforcement generally. Places that you have more effective policing, being able to increase the arrest rate per crime that is committed, is extremely important.

Other things—just making it costly and riskier for criminals to go and commit crime has a very important impact on that. Longer prison sentences also played an important role. I do not think policing solves everything and I do not think guns do, either. I mean, concealed carry may only explain about 5 percent or so of the variation that you see over time. I think it produces a beneficial effect, but I think it has to be part of overall policies.

**Representative Schweikert.** Dr. Hupp, now—and Dr. Lott, you can correct me—now, I have seen some things where there has been an attempt to normalize the data. This State chose a mental health program. This State chose community policing. This State chose a type of concealed carry or constitutional carrier.

Has anyone done some academic research where I can see pluses and minuses? Because we have a data set that says States have chosen concealed carrier have actually gotten substantially safer.

**Dr. Hupp.** The statistical evidence may be a better question to Dr. Lott. But I can tell you that the problem that I have seen, and I have testified in a lot of different States, is that we have a lot of mental health programs, and certainly I do in my own State, where if someone, let's say in school, is deemed a mental health question mark there—there is a question mark—they send someone in to do an assessment. But that's a mental health assessment.

And I do not want to go too far off the deep end here because I am not a mental health expert. But I can tell you that what we are recommending is a threat assessment, which is an entirely different thing, and we already have laws in place. We just—it is not

cohesive, and it is not cohesive across the board to where people know what to do with them.

**Representative Schweikert.** But that may be—and Vice Chair Maloney, thank you for your tolerance on the tyranny of the clock—I desperately wish we could have, actually, a more robust, intellectually honest—I know often we are blinded by our partisan shiny objects.

But we can see in our communities, there are those who have gotten safer. Let's do more of that.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Let's do more research there. And our Chairman of the committee, Mr. Lee, is recognized for five minutes.

**Chairman Lee.** Thank you, Vice Chair Maloney.

Dr. Hupp, in your testimony you mentioned a surprisingly common misunderstanding about guns, the difference between semi-automatic guns and those that are not. Are there any other common misconceptions that you find as you visit with Americans?

**Dr. Hupp.** Yes. I think something that always jumps out to me that has frankly been a frustration for me for a very long time is that in many of the States that allow carry—and I do not care if it is concealed carry or open carry, just that allow carry—why is it that you all will trust the teacher across the street at a grocery store walking around with families and strollers, and then the moment she comes across the street into her place of work, the school, where we know the schools are targets, why are we saying, suddenly, we do not trust her? We do not trust her to protect herself or her students.

I am not saying arm the teachers. I have never said that. But those that already have jumped through the hoops to be able to arm themselves should be trusted in those places that we know are targets. That is a big one for me.

And again, the ridding ourselves of gun-free zones—again, those are targets. And let me clarify that I do not think my gun is a guarantee. It is not a guarantee. It just changes the odds in many circumstances. I do not think we should be focusing on the tool; I have had people say, “Well, your gun would not have made a difference in the Las Vegas situation.”

But I think that just lacks a little imagination. The guy had two planes a mile away. All he had to do was fly one of them into the crowd; he would have killed hundreds if not thousands that way.

**Chairman Lee.** Thank you.

Dr. Lott, some of your fellow witnesses have referred to poll numbers regarding universal background checks. Are you familiar with those polls?

**Dr. Lott.** Yes.

**Chairman Lee.** And what is your opinion on them?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, people have mentioned polls showing 90 percent, 95 percent, 97 percent support. These are usually one-sentence questions that really do little more than ask people whether they want to try to stop criminals from going and obtaining guns.

If you actually looked at ballot initiatives that have been put on the ballot, most recently in 2016 in Maine and Nevada. Michael Bloomberg would outspend his political opponents by ratios of 6 to 1 or 3 to 1, but still lost. There is a reason why he is not putting ballot initiatives on for these background checks.

If it really was 90 percent or 80 percent or 70 percent support for these things, it would not be necessary for him to outspend the other side just to be able to try to get near 50 percent in terms of the results there. And I think if they really thought that there was this huge support, he would be putting more initiatives on the ballot, and we are not seeing that.

**Chairman Lee.** We have heard a lot of talk today about different kinds of research that have been conducted. Is there a type of research you would like to see more of when it comes to firearms?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, there is a huge amount of research that is done anyway. The Federal Government, from 2015 through 2018, spent \$43 and a half million. You have people like Michael Bloomberg, who is literally spending hundreds of millions of dollars on this; George Soros; the Joyce Foundation. Others are spending tremendous amounts of money. Rand is spending \$20 million, apparently; hopefully it gets up to \$50 million on this.

The interesting thing to me is that this vast amount of refresh is almost all—the funding is being concentrated on public health. There are huge differences, as I showed in the survey that we had. Economists and criminologists, who have not been getting this type of government funding are much, much more skeptical of any of these different types of gun control laws that work.

The funding for the CDC and the—90 percent of the \$43 and a half million that the Federal Government spent went to public health research.

**Chairman Lee.** In the time we have remaining, I was reading your written testimony. You have some charts and some analysis that discusses the relationship between gun-related homicides and gun ownership rates in different countries. Can you walk us through those really quickly?

**Dr. Lott.** Sure. Well, I mean, we have homicide data for different countries as well as firearm homicide. I will just mention one thing since we have had a little bit of discussion.

Only about half the countries in the world even report firearm homicide data. We are kind of spoiled with all the data that we have here. One of the reasons why the United States looks relatively high in terms of firearm homicides is that the countries with the highest homicide rates do not report homicides.

But if you look at either homicides or firearm homicides, the countries with the highest gun ownership tend to have the lowest homicide rates. And that is also true for mass public shootings. The United States ranks about 65th out of 90 countries that we have data for on mass public shootings, and it is just that we do not recognize that because attacks in the rest of the world, except for maybe New Zealand or a couple other ones, usually do not get that much attention. But the countries that tend to have the most gun ownership tend to have the fewest mass public shootings.

**Chairman Lee.** I see my time is expired. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Okay.

Mr. Beyer.

**Representative Beyer.** Thank you. Thank you all for being here today to discuss America's gun violence epidemic.

I want to recognize that September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Suicide is a leading cause of death across all age groups and suicide deaths have increased 33 percent since 1999. In 2017 we lost 47,000 people to suicide in the United States, and about half of those deaths are gun deaths. In Virginia it is 57 percent of suicides are by guns. I believe in every single State that has universal background checks, the suicide rates are lower than those that do not.

And data shows there are several useful mechanisms to deter people from hurting themselves in moments of crisis, including restricting access to lethal means, which is what the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act and red flag bills do. We have three suicide prevention bills moving their way through the House right now, and I am really looking forward to them.

By the way, I want to correct just a few things. I was ambassador to Switzerland for four years. They have had registration for decades and decades, and no one has confiscated their weapons. I believe we can do many other things.

My dad used to—one of his favorite aphorisms was, “Lies, damn lies, and statistics.” I was looking at those charts and they were just making me more and more uncomfortable. To my friend Mr. Schweikert’s shiny objects, more guns, less crimes. Let’s make it really simple. We have 350 million-plus guns. Firearms-related death rates per 100,000. Fifty-nine states that I wrote down. And I am going to use some of my time just to make the point.

These are the states that have—the countries that have a lower firearm death rate per 100,000 people than we do: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, U.K., Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. At least 59 countries have a lower homicide and suicide rate by firearms than does the United States with its 350 million weapons.

Ms. Meins, thank you for bravely sharing your experience with the death of your father. Too many times after the loss of life during a mass shooting, we see death by suicide of victims’ family members. We saw it a number of times after Florida. Can you talk for a minute about this connection and how research might help policy-makers address it?

**Ms. Meins.** I think I would like to share—I mean, I would like to save the harder policy questions for perhaps possibly Adam. But I will say that we know of at least one person involved in the San Bernardino shootings that was a family member that did commit suicide. And I know that there is ongoing trauma that the survivors, their family members, their friends, their communities face as a result of shootings.

And so I think that further policy research into those—into what could help with that is really important. But I think that a red flag law, those extreme risk protection orders that you spoke of, would

be highly beneficial in making sure that people that are at risk for hurting themselves and others could get some sort of intervention.

**Representative Beyer.** Yes. There is a growing body of evidence to the people who go to a gun shop to buy a weapon to kill themselves, and are turned away, end up not killing themselves at all. They do not go then to look for a bridge or some pills.

Mr. Skaggs, we lose a person by suicide by gun in Virginia every 14 hours. We have a bunch of different policy considerations. But do you think making guns more readily available would help the suicide epidemic in the United States?

**Mr. Skaggs.** I do not. I think you are right. There are a number of tools—excuse me. I do not think that making more guns available will reduce suicide in Virginia. I think there are, however, a variety of policy tools that legislators in Virginia could enact that would be likely to reduce the rate of suicide in Virginia.

We have already heard about extreme risk laws. Those are the law in 17 States now. Two of the States to have adopted them on the earlier side, Connecticut and Indiana, leading researchers at Duke University have shown that those had a demonstrable reduction in suicide in those States.

And I think as the other States gain more experience implementing these extreme risk laws, we will see suicide rates come down there. Waiting period laws that allow for somebody who is in a period of immediate crisis to take a breath and have a cooling-off period, those also can reduce suicide.

And finally, I want to flag a policy that has just been pursued in Washington State, which allows somebody who is going through a personal crisis to put themselves on a “Do not buy” list, so to put themselves on a list that prevents them from purchasing a gun. And of course they can go through steps to restore the right to buy a gun.

But this is not something that anybody else is preventing them from buying a gun. It is a tool that empowers individuals dealing with suicidal ideation to stop themselves from taking a risk that is very heavily associated with suicide.

I do not list all those policies to suggest that any one of them would be a panacea and would solve all suicides, or that there is any law that would solve all gun deaths at all. But I list them because the experimentation that is possible is something that we should all be pursuing. We should all be trying to find new solutions to these ongoing and persistent problems.

**Representative Beyer.** Could I make a quick follow-on comment, please?

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentleman’s time is expired.

Representative Beatty.

**Representative Beatty.** First of all let me just say to you, Madam Chair, and to our Chairman on the Senate side, thank you for conducting this hearing. It is quite difficult to sit here today and listen to the stories. It does not matter what our opinions are in how we get to some resolve. I think we are all saying, we need some resolve.

How it affects not only the economy, which seems appropriate in this hearing, but when you hear all of the countries, Congressman Beyer, that you read off, when I look out here and I see the “Moms



Demand Action,” let me just say thank you. There are not enough words I can say to you for what you have gone through and what you represent.

Today for me is listening. There are no words for how we are anchored at this table, Doctor, for you and what you had to go through, or Ms. Meins, what you had to go through. I do not have words, and I cannot imagine my children and grandchildren or parents. But thank you for your testimony. I think today it helps us move the needle. Mr. Skaggs, thank you.

I support much of what you have brought in information and data. I was born in Dayton, Ohio. I witnessed sitting in that funeral of one of the nine victims. I was there and went to the funeral of the nine individuals who were shot in that church with Congressman Clyburn in Charleston. So for me, from afar it is a heavy heart.

I have read part of the excerpts from your book. I know like me you served the State House in Texas, and I served in the Ohio State House. So I say today for us, when we look at all the lost wages and what that is like, not only to be suffering from the economics, which some can survive it and many cannot, that for me, the end of it is we have to do something.

And we have to listen to see, how do we bridge what Republicans and what Democrats together are saying? Because this should not be a partisan issue. This is about real people and real lives and the economy. And I don’t know how we get Madam Chair to the economy part without struggling through how we save lives. I am not for anybody taking away a person’s Second Amendment right. My father carried a gun. So I understand that.

But what I do know is that we have to have some different laws. And it will not, Mr. Lott, probably save everyone from every shooting. But I do not know how we cannot do something for those who are irresponsible. And in many of those cases that we have witnessed, there has been some alarming fact that some light bulb should have gone off.

And that does not mean to take away your gun and not let you have your bullets. Maybe on that day I am wishing you had it. But here is what I do know. I know we have to have some action before we get to the economics of the lost wages and the economy that speaks to having some common-sense laws.

Everybody should not, nor do they have the education that you have, to carry a gun. We should not be able to have loopholes. If it is that important for me or you or anyone to have a gun, then you should wait through the period for somebody to do that background check. If you cannot get on an airplane and fly with me every week because you are on a list, you ought not be able to go and just buy a gun. I am really talking about some common-sense things.

We have many people. Do we need to put more money into mental health? Yes. But all of this is not the answer. So I am here today to listen. But I want real facts. I do not want fraudulent data. I do not want people out there pontificating and saying things because they get paid to do it or that they are just wanting to have their facts out there.

I want to hear from the people like you, and I want to hear from the people like you. And I have to be big enough to bridge the gap of both sides of the aisle and what helps us. So I am going to be around in and out. I am on another committee. But I want to make sure that we listen and we hear from you.

Thank you, and I yield back.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The lady's time is expired.

Representative Frankel.

**Representative Frankel.** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I thank the panelists for being here, all of you. And Ms. Meins and Dr. Hupp also, please accept my deepest feelings of sympathy for your loss. I know you interpret what might have been the cause, but I know it was deeply sad for all of you.

And I also want to thank Moms Demand Action. And I will start with a story. A couple weeks ago I went to the home of a woman who leads the Moms Demand Action in Del Ray Beach, Florida. And I sat with a group of young moms, and had their kids running around. And it had just been the first day of school.

And one of the moms said to me that her five-year-old came home from school and the mother said, "Well, how was school today?" And the little girl said, "Oh, it was very bad." And she said, "Why?" She said, "They are making me sit at the seat closest to the door." These kids are so stressed out with the Code Reds and all.

And I had a conversation with these young people who work for me, the internships this last summer. And they were all teenagers. And I asked them, I said to them, "What is your biggest worry in life today?" And I was sure they were going to say climate change.

You know what they told me? They are afraid of being shot at school. And I was talking to a very devout Jew the other day, and he told me he is afraid to go to temple this year. And my friends are telling me they do not even want to go to the movies. Come on. Let's face it. Getting shot is on everyone's mind right now.

And I know we have to do a lot of—I just want to say one thing. People said, "Well, this won't work and that won't work." I am just going to use an analogy. We talk about healthcare, those of us who have children. You get your child a measles shot. It may not prevent the chicken pox or tuberculosis, but the fact of the matter is, you do not say, "I am not getting the measles shot because it is not preventing every other disease." There are just certain steps that we have to take to try to reduce this gun violence.

Mr. Skaggs, you testified before Dr. Lott and Dr. Hupp testified. I would like to ask you to respond to some of their assertions, including that banning guns caused more violence, having less semi-automatic weapons caused more homicides, that gun regulations lead to more carnage. There were all kinds of assertions. And I would just be interested in your——

**Dr. Lott.** Could I just say what I said? What I said was, you cannot name one——

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Excuse me, sir.

**Representative Frankel.** Well, I——

**Vice Chair Maloney.** This would be the time——

**Representative Frankel.** Yes. And let me just have Mr. Skaggs——

**Mr. Skaggs.** I am happy to answer your question.

**Representative Frankel.** I think Mr. Skaggs knows what I am getting at with that. I do not want to be—I am not trying to misstate. But he heard what you said.

**Mr. Skaggs.** Yes. I do not think it is going to be good for anybody here to tit for tat on everything that everyone has said. But there are two points that I really think critically need to be responded to that have been made by some of the other witnesses.

The first is that the 3.5 million people prevented from buying guns by failing background checks, that those were all false positives and that indeed it is a 100 percent failure rate. That is just simply false. That is just simply not true. The FBI's audits have found that about 99 percent of those are proper, and the Office of Inspector General also confirmed that 99 percent of those denials were accurate. So I just need to correct the record on that point.

**Dr. Lott.** That is not what we said.

**Mr. Skaggs.** The other point—please do not interrupt me; excuse me—the other point I would like to respond to is the notion that States that have flooded more guns into more public places with more concealed carry have seen dramatic drops in assaults or in crimes or in homicides.

In fact, the most credible research, what they call the gold standard of current research methodology—it is called synthetic control method—has found that States that relaxed their concealed carry laws and moved to a permissive concealed carry regime saw violent crime increase by 13 to 15 percent. When looking specifically at gun homicide, the sciences at those States that relaxed their standards for concealed carry have seen firearm homicide rates go up by 10 percent.

So I agree entirely. If we want to have an informed discussion here, we need to talk about reliable data, reliable facts. And I would suggest that the best way to get that data is to fund the Federal Government, the CDC and the NIH, to conduct the kind of research that we need so we can have uniform data that we can all look to and we can all come up with solutions based on that data.

**Representative Frankel.** Thank you. Thank you.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentlelady's time—

**Dr. Lott.** Could I respond to his comments, please?

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentlelady's time has expired.

**Dr. Lott.** Can I respond to—

**Vice Chair Maloney.** We have rules about how the committee is conducted. Each member has five minutes. We are following that.

**Dr. Lott.** But he directly attacked my work, and it just seems like I should be able to respond briefly to it.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** You can put it in writing at the end of the hearing. I will allow you to respond to it. But we are following regular order. Each member has five minutes, and they are entitled to their five minutes.

Senator Heinrich.

**Senator Heinrich.** I am going to try to get to questions as quick as I can. But I do want to make a point, and that is that as some-

body who owns a lot of firearms and has two kids in school, it has been really instructive to just talk with them because they do not carry all this baggage the rest of us carry. Some of their absolute best memories in life have involved the responsible use of a firearm. And yet they go through these active shooter trainings, and it is incredibly hard on them. So I think we could all benefit from some of that common sense that they can bring to these discussions.

Mr. Skaggs, I was hoping you would touch on how the economic impacts from gun violence are just not evenly distributed across demographic groups. Can you drill down on that a little bit?

**Mr. Skaggs.** Well, absolutely. And I just think the comment about your children, our children—we talk about costs of gun violence today. Our children are going through these Code Red drills. There is a trauma that they are experiencing without having any school shootings, just going through the preparations and the anxiety and the fear that I think may not be quantifiable, but I think cannot be forgotten.

You have got to a very important point because it is absolutely correct that gun violence is not evenly distributed. Mr. Schweikert earlier today was talking about the fact that some communities have made great strides in reducing gun violence. Others remain beset upon by unacceptable levels of gun violence.

And of course there are fundamental socioeconomic forces that have driven some of this. And these problems are thorny, and the solutions are not simple. But what we do know is when we have the data, when we research the program, when we commit the resources, even those hard-hit communities that continue to bear the brunt of the gun violence problem, we can bring rates of gun violence down.

I talked previously about Oakland, California, which reduced its gun shooting rate by 50 percent—the same interventions, the same strategies in Connecticut, in the three biggest cities in Connecticut with the three worst gun violence problems. The same results in aggregate is about a 50 percent reduction in those cities.

So we have seen investments. Some State legislatures have begun dedicating targeted funds to these programs. What we need is for Congress to step up and dedicate funds to fund these programs, these lifesaving programs that have been shown time and again to bring some of the hardest-hit communities up to levels where their gun violence rates are more consistent with some of the more fortunate communities in the country.

**Senator Heinrich.** Thank you.

Dr. Lott, at one point the Crime Prevention Research Center website printed that your research had been published in *Economic Journal Watch*. Now, that is a peer-reviewed journal. The editor came out and said, no, that is not the case. Why the discrepancy? How did that happen?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, it was originally accepted. And then he decided he wanted to make changes in it, and we could not agree on the changes. And so then it did not get published. But it was originally accepted, and I have email and correspondence to go and show that was the case.

**Senator Heinrich.** Published is a past tense for—would it not be wise to wait until something to actually publish the statement?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, I think it was listed as “forthcoming.”

**Senator Heinrich.** Okay. Dr. Lott, who was Mary Rosh?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, it was basically the family email account that we had, basically based on the names of my four sons at that time. It was an account that the family used.

**Senator Heinrich.** Madam Chair, I would ask unanimous consent to enter an article into the record from the Washington Post called, “Scholar Invents Fan to Answer his Critic.”

[The Washington Post article referred to appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 82.]

**Senator Heinrich.** And I will just read one quick quote from this article. Now, this is under the name Mary Rosh, but it is speaking to various online publications, and was, I believe, authored by Dr. Lott.

“I had him for a Ph.D.-level empirical methods class when he taught at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania back in the early 1990s, well before he gained national attention, and I have to say he was the best professor I ever had.”

Does it show good judgment for a researcher to comment that way with regard to your own research under a name that is clearly not transparent—

**Dr. Lott.** Well, first of all, I did not write that.

**Senator Heinrich** [continuing]. And fraudulent? But—

**Dr. Lott.** First of all, I did not write that. It was a family account. And there was somebody else in my family who was responding to attacks that were on me. Okay? So I do not police everybody in my family when they go and do things like that. And I had members of my family who wrote a couple reviews on my books and other things like that. I am not going to go and tell—

**Senator Heinrich.** You are quoted in this article as saying, “I probably should not have done it.”

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentleman’s time has expired.

**Dr. Lott.** Well, there are two different issues here. Did I use that account myself sometimes? And I did, mainly because when I had originally participated in these internet chat rooms—

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentleman’s time has expired.

**Dr. Lott.** Can I please respond to this?

**Vice Chair Maloney.** We are following regular order. The Chairman—excuse me.

**Dr. Lott.** Look. When I have been attacked on other committees, I have been allowed to respond.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The Chairman—the Chairman and I have agreed that at the end of the hearing, we will each have five minutes to allocate. He will allocate five minutes for you to respond to various attacks or various things that you want to say.

**Dr. Lott.** Just two sentences.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** At the end of the hearing.

**Dr. Lott.** All right.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** I am following—people have schedules.

**Dr. Lott.** All right. Thank you.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** They have other places they have to go.

**Dr. Lott.** All right. Thank you.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Representative Trone, you are recognized for five minutes. And then I will recognize Chairman Lee and he can give his five minutes to you.

**Representative Trone.** Thank you, Chairman.

First of all, I want to thank the witnesses here today, especially Dr. Hupp and Ms. Meins for the tragedy and difficulty you have been subjected to. It is just heart-wrenching to see what has happened. It is unbelievable.

I also want to thank the Moms Demand Action, and for willingness to stand up and just be relentless and be focused and just never quit. And you saw the same thing from the Parkland students were here a few months ago. I met with them. And when you think about it, the adults in the room, we failed. We failed and failed and failed and failed. And it is just the failure has never, never ended. It is continuing.

And I am not a politician. I come out of a business background. This is my first term here. And it is just absolutely mind-boggling that something that 90 percent of the American people—so many things we all agree on, and I am not against having a Second Amendment. I grew up on a farm, and I hunted the pheasants and rabbits all my life. I taught my son how to hunt pheasants. And we understand about gun safety and being thoughtful and understanding that.

But the carnage that we have allowed to happen throughout America—and now it is raining on our children, our most important asset—is just unconsolably disappointing that we cannot come together in a bipartisan fashion and get a couple damn things done.

I think the one that really bothers me the most is the suicides. I mean, 33,000 people die, roughly, of suicide by gun. I read a stat the other day, and it said that when they were able to stop that person from making that final fatal decision, and intervene, and go back and subject that person to their friends, their family, their therapists, et cetera, 90-plus percent of those never, ever attempted that again.

But the fact that that gun was there and available at that moment, in a moment of supreme despair and anxiety—and yes, we are facing a mental health crisis here, we absolutely agree—but if that weapon was not there, those folks, the vast majority, would still be here with us. A lot of those, of course, are children.

So we have passed two bills this year. Everybody up on this side I know has been sponsors, H.R. 8 and the Charleston loophole. And we have got to figure out a way to get this before the Senate. And it is just supremely, though, disappointing.

Let's talk a second about the money in that, we passed \$50 million for research. Mr. Skaggs, to look at firearm morbidity, mortality prevention, if the Senate did that, what kind of prevention impacts do you see this investment in research would do? And how can this Federally funded money inform us as policy-makers to stop failing?

**Mr. Skaggs.** Well, I think it is—in a couple of ways. First of all, it is going to allow for comprehensive data to be collected. The CDC has something called National Violent Death Reporting System. It

has only been funded so it could collect data on a small percentage of the States.

When we have mechanisms in place to get comprehensive data that can allow folks in your position to craft a successful and well-tailored policy solution, we should have uniform data across the whole country. So first of all, it is collecting the data.

Secondly, it is analyzing the patterns of gun violence. It is analyzing the patterns of gun trafficking. How do guns move from States with very lax laws that allow them to be bought by straw purchasers and trafficked to States with stricter laws, stronger laws? We need to understand gun trafficking better.

So there are a whole host of questions that researchers at NIH and CDC can undertake that can give the tools that policy-makers need to craft evidence-based solutions. This crisis is such that we should be trying more than one solution. We should not stop with just one policy and hope that it will solve everything because it will not.

But what we need to do is experiment based on informed analysis of what works, what does not, and what the nature of the problem really is. And that is going to allow us to make more progress.

**Representative Trone.** It has got to get off the dime and do something. And if some things do not work, so be it. We move on. We fail fast and we go. But I am totally with you, and thank you for your testimony.

**Mr. Skaggs.** Thank you.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentleman's time is expired.

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Lee, is recognized for five minutes.

**Chairman Lee.** Thank you, Madam Vice Chair.

Dr. Lott, I would like to invite you to respond to some of the points made particularly with regard to the false positives on background checks and anything else mentioned during that exchange.

**Dr. Lott.** Sure. Well, there is a series of things. So I would just say if you look around the world, not just in the United States and places like Chicago and Washington, D.C., that have banned guns, every single time, murder rates have gone up, and they have gone up by a lot. You would think out of randomness one time, when either all guns have been banned or all handguns have been banned, you would see the murder rates fall or even stay the same. But every time, it has gone up.

With regard to the background checks, what was being referred to was a small sample of about 400 cases out of the 76,000 that were sampled. And of that 400 non-random sample—you would think if you are going to test something, at least you are going to have a random sample. But they did not even use a random sample, and it was after a couple stages of review that had already removed a lot of the false positives there. So the report that was put out by the Obama administration I think was pretty much useless on that.

If you go through and look at the last annual report that was put out on NICS in 2010, there were 76,000 initial denials. The first stage of review, which is done by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the national office, no discretion. Basically just

checking to make sure paperwork and everything is okay. No lawyers looking at it. Ninety-four percent of the cases were dropped at that stage.

When Congress in 2004 did a 10-year review of the Brady Act, they did an audit of the second stage of review, which is done by the BATF field offices. At that point, another two percentage points of the cases—again, no discretion. So just the first two stages of review, you have 96 percent of the cases there with no discretion.

You can talk to people who actually run these things. Reagan Dunn, who is the first director of Project Safe Neighborhoods, he was in charge of enforcing these things. He tells you, and he has been quoted in the New York Times and other places, saying that they would have loved to go after these cases. The reason why in 2010 you have 76,000 denials and only 28 prosecutions and 13 convictions is because the others are not real cases.

Unfortunately, it is primarily minorities that are overwhelmingly hurt. When you look at things like roughly phonetically similar names and similar birthdays, people tend to have names similar to others in their racial groups. Hispanics have names similar to other Hispanics. Blacks have names similar to other blacks.

Thirty percent of black males in the United States are legally prohibited from owning guns because of past criminal history. It discriminates overwhelmingly against minorities. They are the ones who are hurt by these mistakes.

And with regard to the concealed carry statistics, I will just mention, there are dozens of studies. One is pointed to in this case. But there are other studies that have used synthetic controls, the same data, the same types of specifications, and showing that tiny changes, they actually get the opposite results of what was claimed. And those were published in peer-reviewed journals even before the one that was referenced earlier.

**Chairman Lee.** In constructing the non-random sample selection mechanism, why would one do that? When you are trying to research data, isn't the random sample selection mechanism—

**Dr. Lott.** It is sort of—you have to do it.

**Chairman Lee** [continuing]. The meat and potatoes of that?

**Dr. Lott.** You have to do random.

**Chairman Lee.** Why would one choose not to do that?

**Dr. Lott.** I don't know. And I have asked the FBI multiple times. I have contacted people there, and they will not provide an answer for why they picked a non-random sample.

**Chairman Lee.** In the minute I have got left, I would like to hear, either Dr. Lott or Dr. Hupp, it was mentioned earlier what States might be able to do. I think it is important for States to be able to act. States are, in fact, designed to be the laboratories of republican democracy within our system. Is there anything in your State, your respective States, that you wish you would see passed into law?

**Dr. Lott.** Well, I will just mention one thing that has come up a couple times, and that is school shootings. At the Crime Prevention Resource Center, we just finished a report recently where we looked at all school shootings from accidents through 2018. And there is not one attack, one shooting of any type where anybody



has been injured or killed, in any of the schools that allow teachers to carry.

You have 20 States that, to varying degrees, including Utah and Hassan's New Hampshire, where basically any teacher who has a concealed carry permit is able to go and carry. You have other States, Texas, you have over a third of the school districts by last fall allowed people to carry. Not one attack at any of these places where anybody, one person, has been injured by a shot or killed.

And it should tell you something there. The types of fears that people have about people—students getting hold of guns or a teacher accidentally shooting somebody, or they're shooting a bystander, people shooting bystanders at mass public shootings, simply do not occur.

It is easy for people in these debates to talk about things that might possibly happen. But in this case, with 20 States actually experimenting with this, and Utah has had it for 20 years, we do not need to go and guess about what the experience is in these places.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** The gentleman's time has expired.

I recognize myself for five minutes, and first would like to thank the Chairman and all of my colleagues for being here and working on this issue; and the panelists, all of you for participating, particularly Sheneé Johnson and Ms. Meins and Dr. Hupp, who shared very personal, painful stories with us, and their actions to work for a safer America.

I want to thank the moms for being here today, and really being at meetings all around the country, speaking out for bipartisan solutions and for ending this.

I would like to ask unanimous consent—I will grant it to myself—to put in the record a chart prepared by the Joint Economic Committee which tells you everything you need to know about gun violence in our country compared to other countries. And again the red line in this chart is America.

And next to it is Canada, and people are eight times less likely to be killed by a gun if you live in Canada or France. Japan has zero deaths from guns, absolute zero. Iceland, zero. And the United Kingdom, we are 40 times more likely to be killed by a gun in the United States than in the United Kingdom.

The stats speak for themselves. And when you see numbers like that, we stand alone. We stand alone in mass murders. We stand alone in the number of deaths.

[The chart titled "Rates of Violent Death by Firearm" appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 41.]

I would like to address my question to Mr. Skaggs and Ms. Meins. If you have good data, you have good policy, and both of you have indicated our data is not good. For years we were prevented from studying gun violence. What can we do—what are the steps we have to take—steps that are very clear from the data?

One of the problems is that you are hearing different data mentioned, and we need to have a uniform standard. Could you address that? And I just want to say that this issue should be bipartisan. We should all be working together to have some solutions to make this country safer.

Mr. Skaggs and Ms. Meins.

**Mr. Skaggs.** Well, first, look. I think we have heard a lot about peer-reviewed journals and so forth. I think we need to look at the highest quality research that we can, and I think we need to look to peer-reviewed journals. We need to look to studies that meet the highest levels of credibility. That is the first thing.

I think we are at a moment where we have seen the action in the House. We have seen progress. We have seen political progress that we have not seen in years. And I think this is a moment where the country is crying out and demanding that folks here in Congress do something.

We have got policies with 80 percent, 90 percent of public support. They have either made it through the House already or they are on the way to the House floor. We need to bring that pressure on the Senate. I think I will stop there.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Ms. Meins.

**Ms. Meins.** I would echo everything that Mr. Skaggs just said. And I would also say that in January of 2016, my family wrote an article advocating for providing more funding to the CDC to do research.

And I think that is critical, as well as, again like Mr. Skaggs said, really relying on peer-reviewed journals that have a lot of academic integrity, trying to come up with the best solutions. It is going to be a comprehensive set of laws that we need to put in place in order to really hit home and be where we want to be on this issue. But I think it is really important to make those first steps.

**Vice Chair Maloney.** Okay. Without objection, I would love to put your family's article into the record.

[The January 2016 Meins family article titled "Honoring San Bernardino victims means tackling gun violence" appears in the Submissions for the Record on page 45.]

Again I thank everyone who participated in this hearing. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:58 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

## **SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD**

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY, VICE CHAIR, JOINT  
ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Thank you all for being here today.

And I'd especially like to thank our witnesses, some of whom have lost family members to gun violence. And as we talk about the costs of gun violence, let us never forget that the biggest, most tragic cost is the loss of human life.

I believe that Congress must act to help stem the gun violence epidemic in our country.

In 2017 alone, almost 40,000 people were killed by guns in this country. Firearms are now the leading cause of death in young adults. Our gun homicide rate for teens and young adults is nearly 50 times higher than other high-income countries. And 90 percent of all the women killed by firearms in high-income countries are killed in the United States.

In August alone, more than 50 lives were taken in a series of horrible massacres. So far this year, there have been 301 mass shootings—that's more than one per day.

And yet—unbelievably—some people say that the real problem here is that we don't have enough guns.

They say that the only thing that will make America safer is more guns. But the fact is that if more guns made us safer we already would be the safest country in the world.

In the United States, there are more guns in civilian hands than any other country in the world. An American is nearly seven times more likely than someone in Canada to die by a gun, eight times more likely than someone in France, almost 20 times more likely than a person in Germany and almost 40 times more likely than someone in the UK, Australia or New Zealand, and nearly 200 times more than someone in Japan.

More people in the United States died from firearm-related injuries from 2003 to 2012 than the entire number of combat fatalities in World War II.

There is no way to estimate "cost of a human" life. The loss is incalculable.

But there is also economic cost—a lost breadwinner's income, astronomical medical costs, costs to employers, schools, police, hospitals and the criminal justice system.

In order to help people better understand those costs, I've asked my staff to produce a report that compiles data on the economic costs of gun violence in all 50 States.

The report finds that:

- Rural States have the highest costs of gun violence measured as a share of their economies.
- States with high rates of gun ownership have the highest rates of gun suicide.
- The three largest States suffer the largest absolute costs.
- High youth death rates from gun violence extend across region.

In contrast, my State of New York, which has stricter gun laws, including an assault weapons ban, has one of the three lowest costs of gun violence as a share of its economy, along with Hawaii and Massachusetts.

There are three people in this room today—who have suffered heart-wrenching losses as a result of gun violence.

One of our witnesses, Tina Meins, lost her father in the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, in 2015. Dr. Suzanna Hupp, who also is testifying, lost both her parents in a mass shooting at a restaurant in Texas in 1991. And Sheneé Johnson, seated in the first row, lost both a fiancée and her son to gun violence.

We must fight to lower the risk that other families are forced to bear such suffering.

Other countries have drastically reduced gun violence—because they found the courage to act.

In Australia, in 1996, after a man with an assault rifle killed 35 people—the parliament responded by banning automatic and semiautomatic weapons and created a buyback program that resulted in 650,000 weapons being turned in. That's political courage.

In New Zealand, in 2019, after 51 people were killed at the Christchurch mosque—the parliament acted, voting nearly unanimously to outlaw automatic and semiautomatic weapons. That's guts ... the kind that the U.S. Congress has lacked for many years.

In fact, in 1996, Congress made things worse.

It passed legislation that effectively blocked all Federal funding for gun violence research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That is why we have gone more than 20 years without substantially deepening our knowledge about gun violence prevention and about what we can do to end this epidemic.

This year the Democratic House acted to address this crisis.

We passed the first gun safety reforms in 25 years.

The bill requires universal background checks, closes the gun show loophole, and gives the FBI more time to conduct life-saving background checks.

This summer, the House passed another bill, one that I have spent years fighting for, to invest \$50 million to conduct research on how to reduce gun violence.

And last week, the House Judiciary Committee sent to the full House a ban on high-capacity magazines, “red flag” legislation, and a bill to prohibit those who commit misdemeanor hate crimes from obtaining a gun.

These are common sense measures that the vast majority of Americans strongly support.

It’s time for change.

I look forward to a day when our children don’t have to be afraid to go to school. When our teachers don’t learn how to treat gunshot wounds. When nearly half of Americans aren’t worried about being a victim in a mass shooting. And when those who hold the reins of power move beyond hollow offers of “thoughts and prayers.”

Let us honor the victims of gun violence and their families by working to prevent more victims. Let us—like other countries in the developed world—turn tragedy into bold action.

And may all Members of Congress, especially those in the Senate, find the courage to act.

I look forward to our witnesses’ testimony this afternoon.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE, CHAIRMAN, JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us for this hearing of the Joint Economic Committee.

Over the past several weeks, Americans have watched in horror, again and again, as our fellow human beings—young and old—have been murdered in high-profile mass shootings on our soil. As lawmakers, it is not enough for us to grieve these losses.

It is our responsibility, first, to understand what is causing these horrific events, as well as the many other tragic deaths by gun violence that take place in our country every year. And then, it is our responsibility to find any policies that may help prevent tragedies like these in the future—so long as these policies are faithful to our Constitution, and do not inadvertently harm the very citizens we are trying to protect.

Mass shootings attract our attention because they have such power to inspire fear. When innocent people are gunned down at random and in public, we wonder whether we could be next. And our media, obsessed with their click count and viewership, too often choose to fan these fears rather than portray the truth about the terrible problem of gun violence in this country. Studies have suggested that this irresponsible media coverage may actually increase the number of mass shootings by encouraging potential killers in their sick desire for attention.

The reality of gun violence in America is less sensational than what we see in the media, but no less horrible. Six in ten gun deaths are suicides. In 2017, for every victim of a mass shooting, there were 88 victims of gun suicide and another 52 victims of other forms of gun homicide. Mental illness, spiritual emptiness, and a breakdown in family and community life are the underlying causes of much of our gun violence epidemic—including even mass shootings.

Mass shooters seek to inflict on others the pain, fear, and inner torment that they are already suffering themselves. They often come from broken homes and distressed neighborhoods. The JEC’s Social Capital Project has ranked American counties by the health of their family and community life, and has found that half of identified mass shooters come from the bottom quarter of counties. The evil committed by these murderers must be stopped, but we must also seek to uproot its causes.

Millions of law-abiding citizens use guns to protect themselves, their families, and their communities, just as our founders intended. The Constitution protects our right to bear arms because if that right were abridged, we would become more dependent for security on our police and our military. And it is no criticism of our police and military to say that this would ultimately leave us less secure, not more. Some Americans have suffered tragedy precisely when they were prevented from exercising their right to bear arms, as we will soon hear from the personal story of

Dr. Suzanna Hupp. And when we do enact gun-control laws, we know that criminals are all too happy to ignore them. One study found that 79% of guns recovered from crime scenes were possessed unlawfully.

This does not mean that we have no ways to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and, especially, the mentally ill. Our State governments have proposed several worthwhile innovations, including those that make it easier for local law enforcement to act swiftly on reports of the suspicious activities that can precede a mass shooting. There is room for reform in our Federal statutes as well: for example, we could improve local agencies' reporting to our National Instant Criminal Background Check System for firearms purchases.

Many Americans, including some of our witnesses, have borne in their own lives the unspeakable costs of gun violence. It is important for Congress to listen to their voices. I hope that this committee can present to the rest of our country a model for respectful conversation about some very difficult topics, so that we can work together to reduce the number of lives lost to gun violence.



## Firearm Suicide in the United States

Claiming the lives of over 22,000 Americans every year, including over 1,000 children and teens<sup>1</sup>, firearm suicide is a significant public health crisis in the US.<sup>2</sup> Nearly two-thirds of all gun deaths in the US are suicides, resulting in an average of 61 deaths a day.<sup>3</sup> And the problem is getting worse: Over the past decade, the US firearm suicide rate has increased by 19 percent.<sup>4</sup> This trend has been of particular concern for children and teens, whose firearm suicide rate has increased by 82 percent over the past 10 years;<sup>5</sup> and for veterans, who have a firearm suicide rate 1.5 times higher than non-veteran adults.<sup>6</sup>

In a recent poll, 16 percent of respondents—or roughly 40 million American adults—reported that someone they care for attempted or died by suicide with a gun.<sup>7</sup> Addressing firearm suicide is an essential element of any strategy to reduce gun violence in this country. Given the unique lethality of firearms as a means of suicide, policies and practices that limit or disrupt access to firearms have been shown to save lives.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### **The US firearm suicide rate is 10 times that of other high-income countries.<sup>8</sup>**

Americans should be aware of the prevalence of firearm suicide, how having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide, and steps they can take to mitigate risk. A review and statistical analysis of 14 different scientific studies concluded that having access to a firearm triples one's risk of death by suicide. This elevated risk applies not only to the gun owner, but to everyone in the household.<sup>9</sup> People who live in US states with high rates of household gun ownership are also almost four times more likely to die by gun suicide than those in states where fewer households have guns. This relationship remains strong even when controlling for other factors associated with suicide, like poverty, unemployment, serious mental illness, and substance abuse.<sup>10</sup>

#### **While firearms are used in less than six percent of suicide attempts, over half of suicide deaths are with firearms.<sup>11</sup>**

There is a popular misconception that suicide is inevitable, that suicidal ideation is a permanent condition. But most people who attempt suicide do not die—unless they use a gun. Across all suicide attempts not involving a firearm, less than 5 percent will result in death.<sup>12</sup> But for gun suicide, those statistics are flipped: Approximately 85 percent of gun suicide attempts end in death.<sup>13</sup> And the vast majority of all those who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that a reduction in suicide attempts by firearm would result in an overall decline in the suicide rate.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Firearm suicides follow sharply divergent demographic patterns.**

Men, white Americans, and those living in rural areas are disproportionately affected. Men represent 86 percent of firearm suicide victims; they are six times more likely than women to die by firearm suicide.<sup>16</sup> For men, firearm suicide rates largely increase with age, and are especially high for males 65 and older.<sup>17</sup> For women, firearm suicide rates are highest in the 40-to-60 age range.<sup>18</sup>

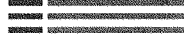


White Americans represent 87 percent of all firearm suicide victims, and have the highest rate of firearm suicide by race.<sup>19</sup> American Indians/Alaska Natives also have a disproportionately high rate of firearm suicide, with the second-highest rate of firearm suicide among the country's five major racial and ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup>

Americans living in rural areas experience far higher rates of firearm suicide than those living in urban areas.<sup>21</sup> The average firearm suicide rate increases as counties become more rural,<sup>22</sup> and the rate of firearm suicide in the most rural counties is 58 percent higher than in the most urban.<sup>23</sup>

*Learn more about firearm suicide and the proven solutions that can make our communities safer at <https://everytownresearch.org/firearm-suicide/>*





## Appendix

FIGURE 1. HEAT MAP OF GUN SUICIDE DEATHS<sup>24</sup>

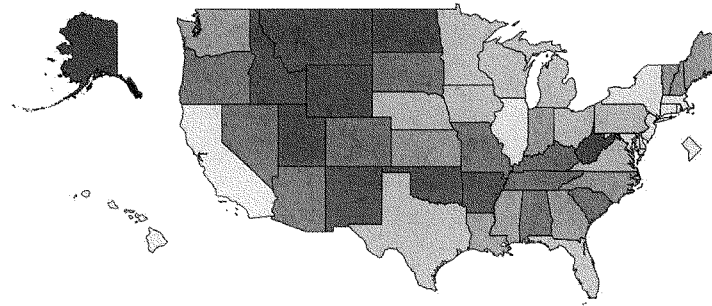
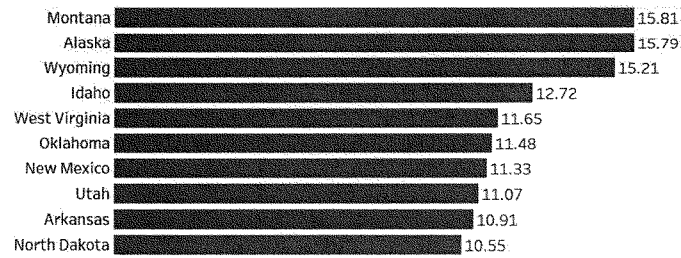


FIGURE 2. STATES WITH THE HIGHEST RATES OF GUN SUICIDE DEATHS<sup>25</sup>



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TABLE 1. FIREARM SUICIDE DEATHS BY STATE<sup>26</sup>

Firearm Suicide Deaths			
State	Deaths (#)	Avg. Deaths Per Year (#)	Age-Adjusted Rate
Alabama	2634	527	10.29
Alaska	590	118	15.79
Arizona	3592	718	10.03
Arkansas	1710	342	10.91
California	7917	1583	3.87
Colorado	2774	555	9.90
Connecticut	540	108	2.75
Delaware	289	58	5.65
District of Columbia	44	9	1.18
Florida	8129	1626	7.03
Georgia	4190	838	8.03
Hawaii	172	34	2.20
Idaho	1056	211	12.72
Illinois	2607	521	3.85
Indiana	2763	553	8.09
Iowa	1058	212	6.50
Kansas	1276	255	8.63
Kentucky	2387	477	10.29

Firearm Suicide Deaths			
State	Deaths (#)	Avg. Deaths Per Year (#)	Age-Adjusted Rate
Louisiana	2204	441	9.17
Maine	644	129	8.71
Maryland	1300	260	4.06
Massachusetts	652	130	1.75
Michigan	3436	687	6.52
Minnesota	1648	330	5.77
Mississippi	1385	277	9.02
Missouri	3100	620	9.72
Montana	845	169	15.81
Nebraska	600	120	6.27
Nevada	1557	311	10.28
New Hampshire	553	111	7.76
New Jersey	957	191	1.97
New Mexico	1245	249	11.33
New York	2283	457	2.12
North Carolina	3946	789	7.40
North Dakota	405	81	10.55
Ohio	4249	850	6.93

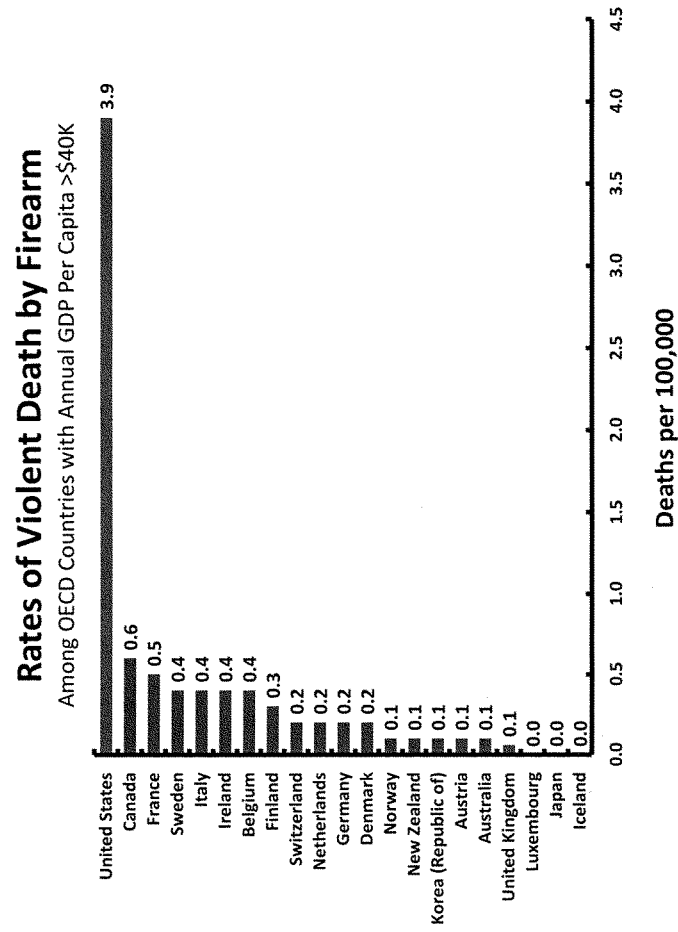
REDACTED

Firearm Suicide Deaths			
State	Deaths (#)	Avg. Deaths Per Year (#)	Age-Adjusted Rate
Oklahoma	2292	458	11.48
Oregon	2037	407	9.35
Pennsylvania	4716	943	6.75
Rhode Island	162	32	2.85
South Carolina	2474	495	9.55
South Dakota	387	77	9.22
Tennessee	3344	669	9.61
Texas	9737	1947	7.15
Utah	1539	308	11.07
Vermont	308	62	8.97
Virginia	3200	640	7.21
Washington	2725	545	7.22
West Virginia	1162	232	11.65
Wisconsin	2103	421	6.91
Wyoming	448	90	15.21
United States	111371	22274	6.57



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Source: Small Arms Survey and OECD

**Testimony of Tina Meins**

**On “Gun Violence in America:  
Understanding and Reducing the Costs of Firearm Injuries and Deaths”**

**United States Joint Economic Committee**

**September 18, 2019**

Good morning Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Maloney, and members of the Joint Economic Committee. It is an honor to appear before you to testify on the important topic of gun violence in America.

My name is Tina Meins and I live in Washington, DC but I grew up in California. Today, I am here as a daughter, a sister, a fiancée and a proud recent graduate from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

Today, I represent the 58% of Americans who have said they or someone they care for have experienced gun violence in their lifetime.

I am here in honor of my father, Damian, who was shot and killed. He was my travel buddy and my best friend. Today, I am my father's voice.

My dad, mom, sister and I were all extremely close. He was intelligent, hard-working, had a great sense of humor and loved to make people laugh. He lived his life in service to others. It didn't matter if he was mowing a neighbor's lawn, helping a friend move or taking care of a sick family member—he was always generous with his time.

He loved his family deeply. Our lives have not been the same since he was taken.

I will never forget the shock, panic and heart break when I learned my dad was killed along with 13 of his co-workers on December 2, 2015 in San Bernardino, California.

That day my dad, Damian Meins, was attending a mandatory work training event for the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, at the Inland Regional Center. My dad was standing by the Christmas tree during a break, when another co-worker and his wife, who had pledged allegiance to the terrorist group ISIS, burst through the doors and began shooting. In seconds, my dad was shot five times and his life was over.

There are no words to express the profound loss we experienced with my dad's death. As for the economic impact, our family had access to financial support because the shooting occurred during a work event and was also deemed a terrorist attack. We received critical resources from workers compensation funds, life insurance and the Victim Compensation Fund.

Additionally, the nation came together, and many people were incredibly kind, and generous enough to donate to the victims of the San Bernardino attacks through different Go Fund Me efforts. With these funds, we were able to hold the funeral for my father and make sure his family could attend. However, because of the complex laws surrounding taxation of these varying types of monies, my mother has also faced ongoing IRS issues since 2016. She cites lost future earnings from my dad as the biggest financial burden, but points out that this cannot compare to the emotional toll of losing your high school sweetheart and husband of 36 years in such a horrific fashion.

I was fortunate that my own workplace at the time was very supportive and allowed me to stay off work for two months. However, as an employee I had to use all my bereavement, sick time and vacation time, and after that was exhausted, I went unpaid in order to be with my family as we grieved.

However, most Americans who experience gun violence don't have the same access to financial support and donations or flexibility with their employment to pick up the pieces of their lives after having been shattered by a bullet.

And although my dad didn't survive the shooting on December 2, there were dozens of people who did and still have the emotional and physical scars.

I have permission to share the experience of Julie who was actually standing next to my dad, next to the Christmas tree, when the shooting occurred. She is special to my family because she was able to relay the last seconds of my dad's life to us.

Julie was 50 years old at the time of the shooting. She was shot twice and has had five surgeries that left her with significant scar tissue, which causes problems of its own. She has a tremendous amount of bullet fragmentation still left in her body, and will forever be concerned about lead poisoning.

Though Julie loved her job and her co-workers the shooting effectively ended her career; she was never able to return to work. Julie actually thinks she was one of the more fortunate survivors because her husband was the main breadwinner in her family. She knows of other shooting survivors that shouldered the financial responsibilities of their families or were unmarried, and have had far greater financial difficulties. We know of other victims and survivors who were forced to cover the costs of medications and counseling services when their requests for workers' compensation were not approved or were delayed in being approved. Many victims and survivors have taken medical retirement or are in the process of doing so. Some people just resigned because they could not take the ongoing stress as a result of the trauma. The trauma has affected survivors' family and friends, as well, with at least one family member dying by suicide since the attack.

Across the country, survivors of gunshot wounds experience difficulties ranging from psychological trauma, loss of work, and steep medical costs. One study estimated that between 2003 and 2013, there was an annual average of 30,617 hospital admissions for firearm injuries in the United States. For each admission, average costs ranged from approximately \$19,000 per handgun injury to over \$32,000 per assault weapon injury. Even after the immediate hospital costs, survivors of gunshot wounds face a lifetime of medical care costs including readmission to the hospital and nursing care. Several studies have found that the lifetime costs of providing care following a gunshot wound are more than twice the costs of providing acute care. One study put the cumulative lifetime costs of treating gunshot wounds incurred in a single year in this country at \$2.3 billion.

I've been living with grief and loss for nearly four years since my dad was ripped from our lives. But I have not been standing by silently. As a member of the Everytown Survivor Network, I share my story to put a human face on our nation's gun violence crisis. Our community of survivors advocates for change to help ensure that no other family faces the type of tragedy we have experienced.

We should all be free to live without the fear of being shot. No one law can stop all gun violence, but there's so much more we must do to keep our families safe. The House of Representatives has already passed bipartisan legislation to require background checks on all gun sales and is considering a strong Red Flag law. Now, the Senate must act on background checks and pass a strong Red Flag bill.

I am not alone in my support of stronger gun safety laws. We know 95 percent of Americans support background checks on all gun sales and 85 percent support Red Flag laws. And every day, 100 Americans are shot and killed and hundreds more are wounded. This is not a right or left issue, this is a life or death issue.

Thank you for your time and thank you for listening.



TINA MEINS: Honoring San Bernardino victims means tackling gun violence

Damien Meins' family members with their lit candles during the Riverside County vigil honoring the memory of Meins, one of the 14 shooting victims from the Dec. 2 mass shooting in San Bernardino.

By TINA MEINS | Press-Enterprise

January 23, 2016 at 12:00 am

Damian Meins was my dad, my best friend and my travel buddy who loved unconditionally and found a million small ways to show it. He was a perfect father to my sister, Tawnya, and me and an exceptional husband of 36 years to my mother, Trenna. He was the smartest, funniest, kindest, most tolerant and compassionate man I knew.

On Dec. 2, my dad was killed while at work in San Bernardino in a terrorist mass shooting. I do not wish my family's heartbreak on anyone.

I know that there is nothing that can be said or done to bring my father back. However, perhaps we can make changes so that no other family need suffer this sorrow in the future. This is the mindset we had when my mom, sister and I arrived in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 10. We went because my mother, very generously, had been invited to President Obama's State of the Union address as a guest of our congressman, Mark Takano. We spent the week talking with various people in Congress, as well as some advocacy groups, on the issue of gun violence prevention.

We know this is a contentious, multi-faceted issue that can be looked at through many different lenses. However, I believe there is room for compromise. Allow me to explicitly state that we are proud Americans who believe in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights it affords all citizens, including but not limited to the Second Amendment. That being said, we believe there is room to improve our gun violence prevention record, and our goal is to work hard to ensure that changes are made that help make America safer.

Surely, when over 30,000 people a year die because of gun violence, we can agree that there is a problem. Based on our own experience and our own research, we believe the following items need to be addressed:

- Background checks must be consistent and comprehensive across the United States. California has some of the strictest gun laws on the books, but they're of little use if someone can go to a gun show or go online and buy guns or gun parts to assemble, or drive mere hours across the border to a state with more lax gun regulations, all in order to circumvent background inspections. If everyone can agree that guns should only be in the possession of law-abiding citizens, why would we not support laws that do their best to ensure that's the case?
- Criminal offenses involving guns must be prosecuted. We cannot afford to be lenient when it comes to this.
- Reinstate an assault weapon ban. It was in place previously, and several bills have come up that again place a ban on assault weapons, albeit with one-feature tests, instead of two-feature tests. Assault weapons are not necessary for protection or hunting, and the rapid-fire capability of such weapons allows for little to no recourse for those targeted by them.

- Ammunition should be tracked. I must present my ID every time I purchase Mucinex (or any product with pseudoephedrine), because of concerns that I may be making methamphetamine. Why shouldn't there be the same level of concern for individuals stockpiling large quantities of ammunition? Syed Rizwan Farook had 4,000 rounds in his possession. I'm not suggesting that people should be prohibited from purchasing ammunition, but in the interest of personal and national security, shouldn't law enforcement be aware when individuals begin to rapidly accumulate thousands of rounds?
- Funds should be dedicated toward studying gun violence prevention. If nothing else, we should have accurate statistics about incidents: We should be able to understand where and why most incidents are occurring, what the underlying causes are and what can possibly be done to prevent future incidents. We should be able to glean and apply best practices across the country.

We implore Congress to work together on this. We know that many Americans share our desire to have commonsense reform. We know that many ordinary citizens share our dream of having a safer country, where people do not feel compelled to arm themselves daily for protection. There is room in this national debate for reason, for compromise and for compassion. Let us not accuse one another of naivety or a lack of patriotism. Let us find common ground. Let's not be paralyzed because proposed solutions will not be perfect. If one person can be saved, isn't it worth the effort to fix this? Let's work together, please, for the good of everyone.

Tina Meins is daughter of Damian Meins, who was killed by terrorist gun violence Dec. 2, 2015.

Link to article: <https://www.pe.com/2016/01/23/tina-meins-honoring-san-bernardino-victims-means-tackling-gun-violence/>

**Testimony of Adam Skaggs  
Chief Counsel & Policy Director  
Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence**

**Before the Joint Economic Committee hearing on**

**Gun Violence in America:  
Understanding and Reducing the Costs of Firearm Injuries and Deaths**

**Wednesday, September 18, 2019**

Thank you Chairman Lee, Vice Chair Maloney, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify here today, and for your attention to this critically important topic.

My name is Adam Skaggs, and I am Chief Counsel and Policy Director at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the legal arm of the gun safety organization led by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords.

Gun violence has an enormous human cost: approximately 36,000<sup>1</sup> people in this country are shot and killed each year, while an additional 100,000<sup>2</sup> are shot and wounded. In 2017, gun deaths reached their highest level in at least 40 years. Some of these shootings make national headlines and shock the nation, like the recent mass shootings in El Paso, Dayton, Odessa, and Midland. But the daily drumbeat of American gun violence receives far less media interest, despite the fact that gunfire claims nearly 100 lives,<sup>3</sup> and injures almost 300 more, every single day.<sup>4</sup> This is a uniquely American problem: our gun homicide rate is 25 times that of other high-income countries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Fatal Injury Reports," last accessed Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. Figures represent an average of the five years of most recently available data: 2013 to 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Nonfatal Injury Reports," last accessed Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. The CDC warns that its estimates of nonfatal firearm injuries may be "unstable and potentially unreliable." To increase reliability of the data, a five-year average of the most recently available data (2013 to 2017) was used.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Fatal Injury Reports," last accessed Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. Figures represent an average of the five years of most recently available data: 2013 to 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Nonfatal Injury Reports," last accessed Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. The CDC warns that its estimates of nonfatal firearm injuries may be "unstable and potentially unreliable." To increase reliability of the data, a five-year average of the most recently available data (2013 to 2017) was used.

<sup>5</sup> Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent Death Rates in the US Compared to Those of the Other High-Income Countries, 2015," *Preventive Medicine* 123, (2019): 20–26.

Beyond the devastating toll it imposes on American families and communities, gun violence imposes extraordinary costs on the American economy. Because of restrictions on meaningful data collection, the level of these costs is difficult to measure with precision. But according to research conducted by the non-partisan Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in 2012, gun violence cost the American economy at least \$229 billion annually.<sup>6</sup> Given increased gun violence in the intervening years, the current totals are surely even higher.

This totals includes direct costs like emergency transport, medical and mental health treatment, as well as law enforcement, court and prison expenses. They also entail indirect costs like lost wages, and the reduced quality of life for those who live with permanent injuries and pain.

Notably, the \$229 billion estimate does *not* take into consideration a range of other significant indirect costs — like lost business opportunities, lowered property values, neighborhood flight, reductions in the tax base of communities across the nation, and the trauma experienced by communities that fear mass shootings and live with chronic gun violence. Even if difficult to measure, the total costs of gun violence in America plain total hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

These costs fall on every one of us: 87% of the direct costs of gun violence are borne by taxpayers, to the tune of roughly \$700 per person per year.<sup>7</sup> Law enforcement, incarceration, and many court costs are publicly funded, as is a substantial portion of the medical expenses associated with treating victims. A 2017 study on the financial burden of *initial* hospitalizations for firearm injuries, published in the American Journal of Public Health, found that 40% of the costs are covered by Medicaid and Medicare,<sup>8</sup> and the average cost per gun-injury hospital admissions for patients on Medicaid is more than \$30,000.<sup>9</sup> And that is just the initial hospital admission; obviously, if ongoing long-term care is considered, the costs are much higher.

These numbers are staggering, but they fail to encompass the total costs of gun violence. A 20-year absence of federal investment in gun violence research has prevented scholars from answering more complex questions about the toll this violence extracts from our economy. What are the lifetime healthcare costs for gunshot wounds? What are the effects of trauma associated with gun violence on individuals and on the economy? How does gun violence stifle economic development and growth? Our nation's gun violence crisis has reached epidemic proportions,

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Follman, Julia Lurie, Jaeah Lee & James West, "The True Cost of Gun Violence in America," *Mother Jones*, April 15, 2015, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america/>.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Follman, Julia Lurie, Jaeah Lee & James West, "The True Cost of Gun Violence in America," *Mother Jones*, April 15, 2015, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america/>.

<sup>8</sup> Sarabeth A. Spitzer, Kristan L. Staudenmayer, Lakshika Tennakoon, David A. Spain & Thomas G. Weiser, "Costs and Financial Burden of Initial Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries in the United States, 2006–2014," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 5 (2017): 770–774.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

and policymakers would be better equipped to address this dire threat to public health and safety if we had clearer answers to these questions.

What we do know is that gun violence is not inevitable, and policy solutions exist that can save both dollars and lives. Community violence intervention (CVI) initiatives have proven effective in reducing gun homicides and nonfatal shootings that are disproportionately concentrated in urban areas, particularly in underserved communities of color. In recent years, effective violence reduction strategies have been implemented in a number of cities, including Oakland, California, which has seen a 50% reduction in shootings since 2012. In Connecticut, a state-funded violence intervention program has helped combined gun violence rates drop more than 50% in three major cities since 2011 -- at a cost of less than \$1 million per year. Research has shown that this modest investment generates an annual savings of \$7 million from averted shootings.

Simply put, the potential return on a nationwide investment in stopping gun violence would be huge in both lives and taxpayer dollars. One Harvard criminologist estimates that an eight-year federal grant program to fund community violence intervention programs would save more than 12,000 lives with an associated cost savings of \$120 billion.

Other smart public policy would further reduce costs. Easy access to guns fuels this epidemic, and criminals and dangerous people routinely exploit loopholes in the law to arm themselves. Requiring a background check on every gun sale to prevent criminals, domestic abusers, and other dangerous people from acquiring guns is common sense, and has the backing of 90% of the public. Thankfully, the House passed such a policy earlier this year, and the Senate should follow suit. Just last week, the CEOs of 145 companies, including Uber, Twitter, and Bain Capital, sent a letter to members of the Senate calling for such action.

The House has also allotted \$50 million for research by our premier public health institutes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes for Health (NIH). Again, the Senate must do the same. And in the coming weeks, the House will vote on bills to support extreme risk protection orders, to restrict the large capacity magazines that make mass shootings so deadly, and to prohibit those convicted of hate crimes from getting their hands on guns. These policies have broad public support, and they will save dollars and lives.

Data compiled by Giffords Law Center has made clear for years that states with stronger gun laws have lower rates of gun deaths and spend less on gun violence than states with weaker laws. But our federal laws remain porous and ineffective and gun violence continues to be a tremendous public health and safety crisis that costs hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

This crisis is neither inevitable nor acceptable. Congress should act immediately to stop it.

Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice Chair, members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. I look forward to your questions.

What type of gun control will actually make us safer?

John R. Lott, Jr.  
President  
Crime Prevention Research Center

Before the Joint Economic Committee of the United States House of Representatives  
and the Senate

September 18, 2019

It is important that something be done about mass public shootings, but much of the current public discussion isn't very serious. Proposals are constantly being put forward that would do nothing to stop these attacks, and those that would make a difference, despite wide agreement by academics, are ignored.

Universal background checks, meaning background checks on the private transfer of guns, have been mentioned for years by gun control advocates. It was by far the most frequently mentioned proposal by former President Obama.<sup>1</sup> But there has not been a single mass public shooting this century that such a law would have stopped.<sup>2</sup> These laws also have real costs. In Washington, DC, for example, it costs \$125 to do a background check on a privately transferred gun. That may stop the people who are most likely to be victims of violent crimes, often poor blacks who live in high crime urban areas, from being able to legally obtain guns for self-defense.

Assault weapon bans have been studied extensively, but even researchers funded by the Clinton administration, which enacted the 1994 federal ban, were unable to find evidence that such a ban reduced any type of violence.<sup>3</sup> It doesn't make any sense to ban so-called "military-style" weapons, when there are other functionally identical semi-automatic hunting rifles available.

There's also no evidence that crime rates were affected by the 1994 federal ban on magazines that hold more than 10 bullets. Even the Urban Institute, with funding from the Bill Clinton administration, was unable to find any such evidence.<sup>4</sup> In that report, criminologists Chris Koper and Jeff Roth concluded: "The evidence is not strong enough for us to conclude that there was any meaningful effect (i.e., that the effect was different from zero)." Koper and Roth found in a 2004 follow-up report: "We cannot clearly credit the ban with any of the nation's recent drop in gun violence. And, indeed, there has been no discernible reduction in the lethality and injuriousness of gun violence."

But while most of the discussion has been focused on policies that won't stop these attacks, we have generally ignored that since 1950 94% of the mass public shootings have taken place in areas where law-abiding citizens have been banned from having guns.<sup>5</sup> Many academics say

reducing the number of gun-free-zones – which can leave people as sitting ducks – is an important gun policy that could save lives.

Finally, the last three sections of this testimony address the concern that more guns mean more murder and homicide. In fact, as we will see the opposite is more clearly the case.

### **1. How to quickly pass Universal Background Checks**

While “universal background checks” – background checks on the private transfer of guns – are continually called for after mass public shootings, there’s just one problem with this prescription: it would not have stopped any of the mass shootings we have seen in this century. And given that drug dealers are a major source of illegal guns, these laws aren’t going to be any more successful in stopping criminals from getting guns than we have been in stopping them from getting illegal drugs.

That said, if gun control activists want to get background checks on private transfers passed, there are fixes that will attract widespread bipartisan support.

A frequent claim is: Background checks have stopped 3.5 million dangerous or prohibited people from buying guns.<sup>6</sup> That is simply false.

There have been 3.5 million “initial” denials, but at least 96%, and probably over 99%, of those denials are mistakes.<sup>7</sup> The system relies largely on identifying phonetically similar names, causing false positives that overwhelmingly discriminate against poor and middle-income blacks and Hispanics. It’s one thing to stop a felon from buying a gun.<sup>8</sup> But it’s quite another to stop someone from getting a gun because their name resembles a felon’s.

“This incredibly high rate of false positives imposes a real burden on the most vulnerable people,” said Reagan Dunn, the first national coordinator for Project Safe Neighborhoods, a Justice Department program started in 2001 to ensure gun laws are enforced.<sup>9</sup>

If politicians want background checks to stop criminals from getting guns, rather than create headline-driving, racially-biased false-positives, there is a simple fix: require that the government does background checks in the same way that the government forces private companies to do background checks on employees – make them use all the information available, including exact names and birthdates.

In New York City and Washington, background checks on private gun transfers cost at least \$125. These costs present a genuine obstacle to poor people living in high-crime, urban areas. It isn’t as though gang members are going to pay these fees, so the burden will fall to law-abiding Americans. Democrats who think that voter ID laws are unfairly onerous for poor minorities ought to appreciate the obstacles presented by background check fees.

Besides, if we sincerely believe that background checks reduce crime and save lives, we shouldn't effectively tax Americans for going through the process. If everyone benefits from background checks, then everyone should pay for them. They ought to be funded out of general revenue.

Under the Democratic House bill, actions that would be entirely reasonable could become criminal. Imagine a stalker threatens a female friend of yours, and she asks to borrow your gun. She is trained and has no criminal record. Should you let her protect herself? If Jerry Nadler has his way, you could land in prison for doing so. The only exception is "imminent danger," i.e., if she asks to borrow your gun while her stalker is charging at her.

The Trump administration has floated the idea of an App that could be used to check whether people are eligible to buy guns. People would be required to check the app or else face criminal consequences. That's one potential solution. Another: simply requiring a reasonable person standard: would a reasonable person believe that the woman being stalked is in danger?

An App would cut the costs of background checks and also solve problems for rural Americans. Private transfer background checks would require some Americans to travel for miles to do what could be accomplished instantly with a smart phone.

Many on the right are worried that universal background checks will be used to create a national registry. Ever since the National Instant Criminal Background Check System was set up in 1998, the federal government has been prevented from creating a national registry because background check information must be destroyed within 24 hours after the completing the check.

Universal background checks be a slippery slope, if, say, five years from now a Democratic president requires licensed dealers turn over all that information to the federal government, thus creating an instant national registry on all legally owned guns.

But again, there is a simple solution: just as with the Federal government now, put a time limit on how long the licensed dealers must keep this background check information.

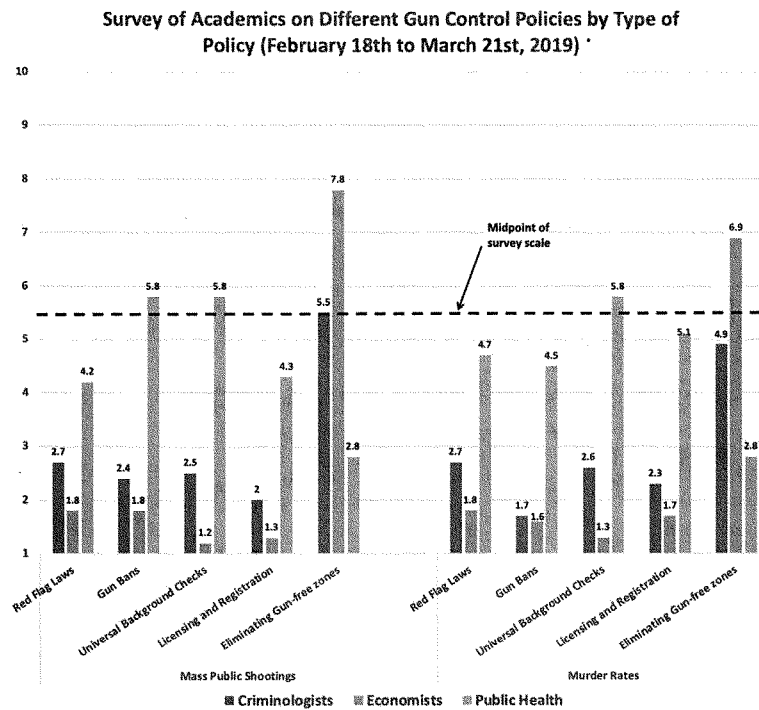
## **2. Survey of Academic Researchers**

Academic researchers broadly think that eliminating gun-free zones is a promising policy change that could save lives.

Criminologists and economists are the most interested in that solution, while public health researchers tend to favor traditional gun control methods. But outside of economists who favor eliminating gun-free zones, none of the groups are significantly above the midpoint (5.5) in supporting any type of gun control.



The following chart shows the results of a survey of researchers who had published peer-reviewed empirical publications on firearms policy were surveyed.<sup>10</sup> It was conducted from February 18<sup>th</sup> through March 21<sup>st</sup> 2019. The survey was the largest yet conducted, with a response rate of over 43%, or 120, from the 277 researchers. On a 1-to-10 scale, with 10 being very effective and 1 being not effective at all, criminologists, economists, and public health researchers were asked 33 different questions on gun control.



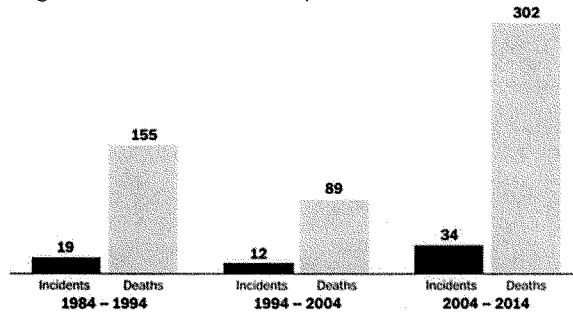
### 3. Assault Weapons Ban

One book titled *Rampage Nation* by Louis Klarevas has been cited by gun control advocates and politicians as showing that an assault weapon ban would work.<sup>11</sup> This book's analysis has not been published in any peer reviewed academic journals. A similar analysis by John Donohue and Theodora Boulouta has recently been provided in a New York Times op-ed piece.<sup>12</sup>

Here is a Washington Post graph that makes use of Klarevas' numbers. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) showed President Trump this diagram when she met with him shortly after the Parkland school shooting in Florida in February 2018.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Gun massacres fell during the assault weapons ban**

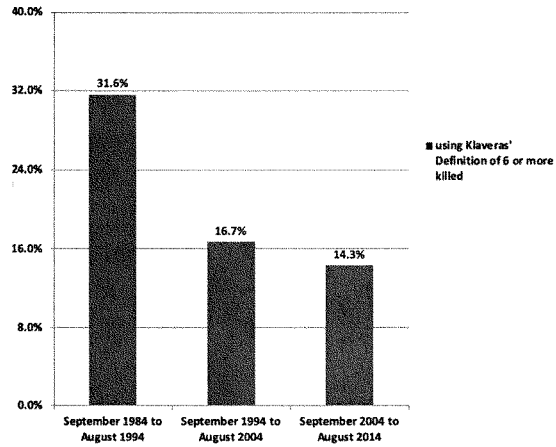
Gun massacre (6+ deaths) incidents and fatalities in the decades before, during and after the federal assault weapons ban of 1994



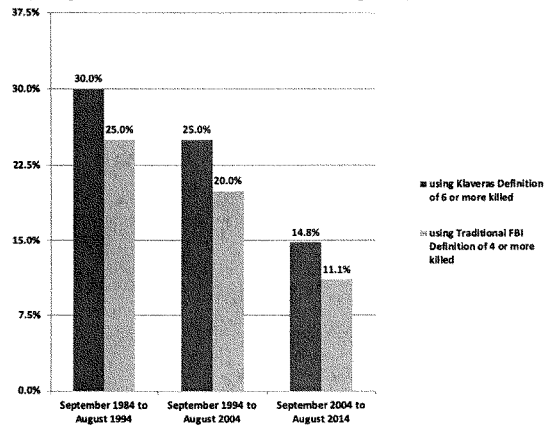
Source: Louis Klarevas  
WAPD.ST/WONKBLOG

There are major problems with that analysis. One problem is that these incident and death data lump together attacks using both assault weapons and other types of guns. The Assault Weapon Ban would only have caused the use of assault weapons to decline during the ban and then rise after the ban ended in 2004. In fact, the use of other types of guns would likely to be expected to rise during the ban. In fact, while the share of mass public shooting using assault weapons fell during the ban, they fell even further in the ten years after the ban ended.

**Percent of Mass Shootings with Assault Weapons  
(Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data )**



**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons  
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**



In addition, over time, the rate of mass shootings may rise or fall for many reasons unrelated to the assault weapons ban.

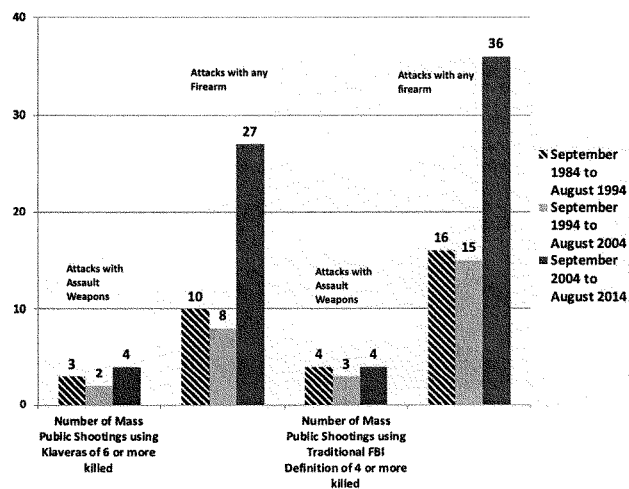
Because of that, few academics would make the types of comparisons that Klarevas makes.

If a national assault weapons ban had really reduced shootings, then one would expect it to have a bigger impact in states that previously lacked such a ban. States that already had a state-level ban, on the other hand, should see a smaller effect.

Rigorous, peer-reviewed academic studies compare the trends in these two types of states to determine whether the national ban had an effect. That is the way that Koper and Roth did their studies, and as I have done so in my own research. These studies did not find any impact from assault weapon bans.

But even Klarevas' simple methods are dependent on the exact dataset used. The next graph uses the Mother Jones data set on Mass Public Shootings to show the small insignificant changes in shootings using assault weapons. The Crime Prevention Research Center has a count of mass shootings, and that data indicates no reduction at all in mass public shootings.<sup>14</sup>

**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban  
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**



#### 4. How does the US Compare to other Countries in terms of Mass Public shootings?

We follow the FBI's definition of mass public shootings.<sup>15</sup> The list of all of our 2,818 cases from 1998 to 2017 is provided on our website. Of those, 61 occurred in the United States and 2,757 happened in the rest of the world. While the US had about 4.6 percent of the world's population during this period, it had just 2.16 percent of the mass public shootings.

Just as we compare crime rates across the United States by adjusting for different state populations, we report the population-adjusted rates across countries. It makes no more sense to compare the raw number of murders in Wyoming with the number in California than it is to compare raw numbers of murders from mass public shootings for the United State and India, a country with almost 4 times the US population.

The United States was host to a still smaller share of people killed in these attacks. Worldwide mass public shooting murders totaled 31,418 people, and the US accounted for 553 (1.8%) of these.

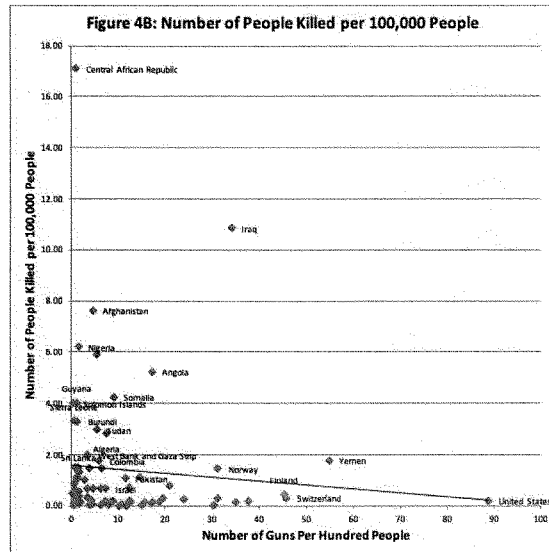
By both measures, the US is substantially below the world average. Per capita, mass public shootings occur with 53.9 percent less frequency and result in 32.2 percent fewer casualties.

The US ranks 66<sup>th</sup> in attack rate and 56<sup>th</sup> in murder rate. Norway, Finland, France, and Switzerland are major European countries with much higher rates of murder from mass public shootings than the United States. Indeed, France's rate is 49.7 percent higher than the US's. The rates in Pakistan and India are respectively 475% and 13% higher than the US rate.

#### **5. Gun ownership and Mass Public Shootings**

The Small Arms Survey<sup>16</sup> is regularly used by the press. We combine this estimate of gun ownership with the frequency and severity of mass public shootings.

Figures 4B show that the more guns owned in a country, the fewer people killed in mass public shootings.

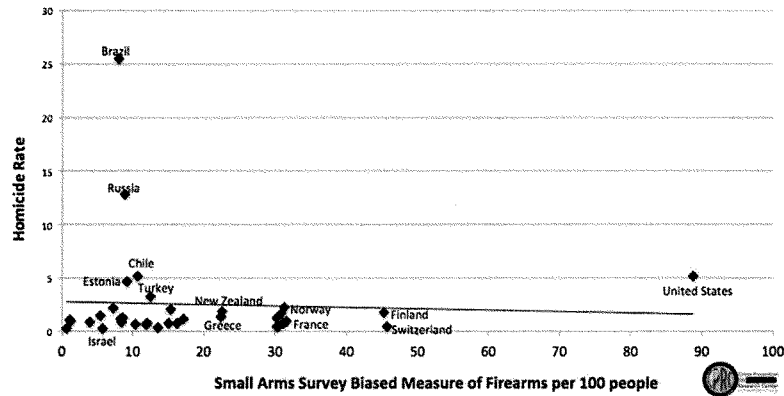


## 6. Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates

A very common claim is that countries with the most guns have the highest homicide rates.

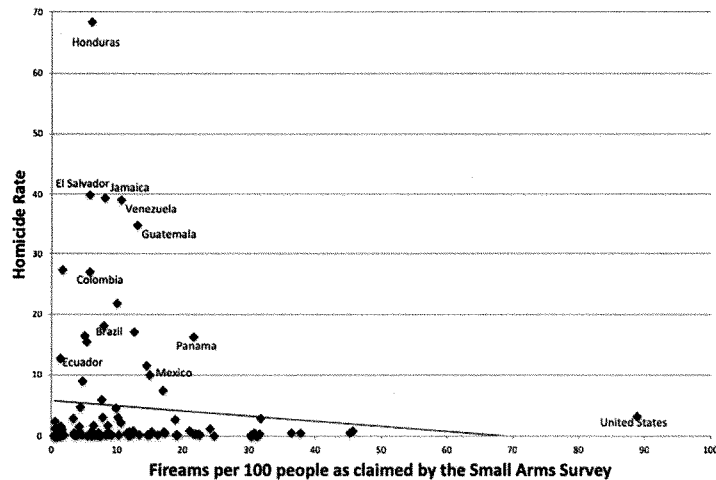
But looking at OECD countries, excluding the US, it's not true that there is an association between more guns and more gun deaths. In fact, higher gun ownership rates are associated with lower homicide rates.

**Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for All Developed Countries (OECD  
2011 or latest year)**



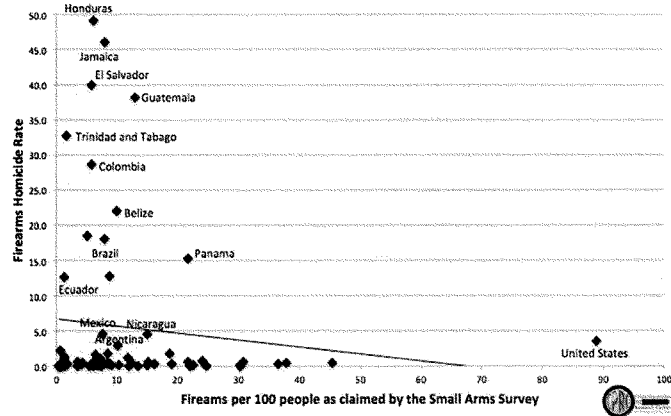
When we look at all of the surveyed countries, the Small Arms Survey shows an association between more guns and fewer homicides.

**Small Arms Survey measure of Gun Ownership and  
Homicide Rate for the selective countries covered by  
survey**



The same is true for the much smaller set of countries that report firearm homicides.

**Small Arms Survey measure of Gun Ownership and  
Firearm Homicide Rate for the selective countries  
covered by survey**



## 7. Do Gun Bans Ever Lower Murder Rates?

Every place that has banned guns (either all guns or all handguns) has seen murder rates go up. You cannot point to one place where murder rates have fallen, whether Chicago or D.C. or even island nations such as England, Jamaica, Ireland, Venezuela, or obscure places such as the Solomon Islands.<sup>17</sup>

Take the handgun ban in England and Wales in January 1997.<sup>18</sup> Homicide rates were in flux after the ban, but only one year (2010) had a homicide rate lower than the rate in 1996. The immediate effect was about a 50% increase in homicide rates. Firearm homicide rates almost doubled between 1996 and 2002. The homicide and firearm homicide rates only began falling after a large 8% increase in the number of police officers during just 2003 and 2004. Despite the increase in the number of police, the murder rate still remained slightly higher than the immediate pre-ban rate.<sup>19</sup>

While they haven't gotten the same attention as UK's handgun ban, other countries have tried banning guns. In order to make useful comparisons, we limit ourselves to countries that have crime data both before and after the bans were implemented. My previous work has dealt extensively with the dramatic increases in murder rates in Chicago and Washington, DC after their handguns went into effect respectively in November 1982 and February 1977.

By August 5, 1972, Ireland required that all privately held pistols, revolvers, and all rifles over .22 caliber be surrendered to local police stations.<sup>20</sup> Jamaica's Gun Court Act of 1974



virtually eliminated the issuing of handgun licenses to civilians.<sup>21</sup> In 2012, Venezuela banned guns in an “attempt by the government to improve security and cut crime.”<sup>22</sup> The Solomon Islands banned guns in 1999.<sup>23</sup>

The Republic of Ireland and Jamaica both experienced large increases in homicide rates after enacting handgun bans.<sup>24</sup> From 1945 through 1971, Ireland’s homicide rates stayed in the relatively narrow range from 0.1 to 0.6 per 100,000 people, with an average of 0.3. After the ban, the homicide rates from 1972 to 2012 rarely overlapped with the rates before the ban (ranging from 0.4 to 1.8 per 100,000 people), with an average of 0.9. Ireland’s 1974 homicide rate spike was quite high even with terrorist attacks subtracted from the total.<sup>25</sup> The big increase starting in the 1990s was largely due to a rise in drug gangs as recreational drug use soared.<sup>26</sup>

Jamaica’s increase in homicides was even more dramatic than the increase in Ireland. The homicide rate is always higher after the ban than it was before, with the average homicide rate going from 7.3 per 100,000 during 1967 to 1973 to 31.5 per 100,000 in 1995. Jamaica’s explosion in homicides during the 1990s is also directly blamed on drug gangs.<sup>27</sup>

Similar results can be found for countries from Venezuela to the Solomon Islands.<sup>28</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

While we and other criminologists and economists are very skeptical that background checks or other types of gun control regulations will reduce either mass public shootings or murder rates, we have sketched out some very reasonable changes in the current proposed background checks that would quickly get them passed. I have provided these same points to gun control groups for 20 years.

The most obvious policy to stop the vast majority of mass public shootings is to eliminate gun-free zones and encourage people to carry their permitted concealed handgun.

Finally, we have shown that despite the common belief, more guns do mean less murder.

<sup>1</sup> Juliet Eilperin, “Obama weighs expanding background checks through executive authority,” *Washington Post*, October 8, 2015 ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-weighs-expanding-background-checks-through-executive-authority/2015/10/08/6bd45e56-6b63-11e5-9bfe-e59f5e244f92\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-weighs-expanding-background-checks-through-executive-authority/2015/10/08/6bd45e56-6b63-11e5-9bfe-e59f5e244f92_story.html)).

<sup>2</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, “Breaking down Mass Public Shooting data from 1998 through June 2019: Info on weapons used; gun-free zones; racial, age, and gender demographics,” Crime Prevention Research Center, June 15, 2019 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2019/07/breaking-down-mass-public-shooting-data-from-1998-through-june-2019-info-on-weapons-used-gun-free-zones-racial-age-and-gender-demographics/>).

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey A. Roth and Christopher S. Koper, “Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994–96,” National Institute of Justice, March 1999 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/173405.pdf>). This was later published as Christopher S. Koper and Jeffrey A. Roth, “1994 Federal Assault Weapon Ban on Gun Violence Outcomes: An Assessment of Multiple Outcome Measures and Some Lessons for Policy Evaluation,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 33-74. See also their later report Christopher S. Koper, Daniel J. Woods, and Jeffrey A. Roth, “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun

Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003," Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice, June 2004 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey A. Roth and Christopher S. Koper, "Impacts of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban: 1994-96," National Institute of Justice, March 1999 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/173405.pdf>). This was later published as Christopher S. Koper and Jeffrey A. Roth, "1994 Federal Assault Weapon Ban on Gun Violence Outcomes: An Assessment of Multiple Outcome Measures and Some Lessons for Policy Evaluation," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 33-74. See also their later report Christopher S. Koper, Daniel J. Woods, and Jeffrey A. Roth, "An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003," Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice, June 2004 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, "UPDATED: Mass Public Shootings keep occurring in Gun-Free Zones: 94% of attacks since 1950," Crime Prevention Research Center, June 15, 2019 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>).

<sup>6</sup> "Since 1994, background checks have blocked over 3.5 million gun sales to felons, domestic abusers, and other people who aren't allowed to have guns under existing law." Everytown for Gun Safety, "Better Background Checks," Everytown, as observed on September 15, 2019 (<https://everytown.org/issue/background-checks/>).

<sup>7</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, "CPRC in the Associated Press on background checks," Crime Prevention Research Center, December 9, 2014 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2014/12/cprc-in-the-associated-press-on-background-checks/>).

<sup>8</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., "Background Checks Are Not the Answer to Gun Violence," New York Times, February 12, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/opinion/politics/background-checks-gun-violence.html>).

<sup>9</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., "Background Checks Are Not the Answer to Gun Violence," New York Times, February 12, 2018 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/opinion/politics/background-checks-gun-violence.html>).

<sup>11</sup> Louis Klarevas, "Rampage Nation: Security America From Mass Shootings," Prometheus Publishers (2016). Jon Stokes, "The assault weapons ban didn't work. A new version won't, either," Los Angeles Times, March 1, 2018 (<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-stokes-assault-weapon-ban-20180301-story.html>).

<sup>12</sup> John Donohue and Theodora Boulouta, "That Assault Weapon Ban? It Really Did Work," New York Times, September 4, 2019 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/04/opinion/assault-weapon-ban.html>).

<sup>13</sup> Brian Doherty, "Dianne Feinstein Touts Research Claiming the Assault Weapon Ban Reduced Mass Shootings," Reason, March 2, 2018 (<https://reason.com/2018/03/02/research-relied-on-to-defend-a-new-assau/>).

<sup>14</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, "New CPRC Research: Mass Public Shootings are much higher in the rest of the world and increasing much more quickly," Crime Prevention Research Center, November 22, 2018 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/11/new-cprc-research-mass-public-shootings-are-much-higher-in-the-rest-of-the-world-and-increasing-much-more-quickly/>).

<sup>15</sup> John R. Lott, Jr. and Carlisle E. Moody, "Is the United States an Outlier in Public Mass Shootings?" Econ Journal Watch, March 2019, pp. 37-68 (<https://econjwatch.org/articles/is-the-united-states-an-outlier-in-public-mass-shootings-a-comment-on-adam-lankford?ref=articles>).

This is the same definition that was used by Lott and Landes (2001) and the work done by the Crime Prevention Research Center.

*We looked at attacks from 1970 to 2017 (Global Terrorism Database, 2017 and LaFree et al, 2015).*

Crime Prevention Research Center. See also Lott and Landes (2003) and Lott (2010). *The only categories that sometimes meet our criteria for mass public shootings are "terrorism", "other crime type," and "intra/inter-group conflict." Government sponsored or directed/ordered killings or state terrorism (the "State Actor" category) are completely excluded.*

*We then reviewed each case using Nexis and web searches to determine whether they met our definition. Less than 50% of the terrorism shooting cases identified by the GTD met the definition of mass public shootings.*

*Over the twenty years studied here, the GTD also misses 39 cases in Europe.<sup>15</sup> The GTD also missed all of the cases*

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for some countries such as the Solomon Islands.

To obtain these additional cases missed by the GTD, at the CPRC we used our own Nexis and web searches for mass shootings for Europe and the United States and for large-scale mass public shootings where at least 15 people were killed. We have also hired people who can speak Chinese, French, Polish, Russian, and Spanish.

<sup>16</sup> The Small Arms Survey is the most commonly cited source for data on gun ownership rates, with claims that the United States has by far the highest level of gun ownership, with 88.8 guns per 100 people. Unfortunately, the only citations that the Small Arms Survey offers are to the European Union Survey on gun ownership rates and in email discussions they point to the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS).<sup>16</sup> The EU survey covers only 28 countries in the European Union. The ICVS only covers five countries past 2005, and those are all countries that are already in the later EU survey. The only other information has been that they rely on gun ownership numbers, not gun possession numbers, for Israel and Switzerland, though no sources were provided.

<sup>17</sup> More detailed information is available in my book "More Guns, Less Crime," University of Chicago Press, 2010, third edition.

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Smith (Ed.), Sarah Osborne, Ivy Lau, and Andrew Britton, "Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2010/11: Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11," Home Office, January 2012 ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/116483/hosb0212.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116483/hosb0212.pdf)). See Table 1.01 and the column marked "Offences currently recorded as homicide per million population."

<sup>19</sup> Home Office, "Police workforce England and Wales statistics and Policing statistics," (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-service-strength-england-and-wales-31-march-2012> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>).

<sup>20</sup> Department of Justice and Equality, "An Garda Síochána Working Group on Review of Firearms Licensing," Irish Department of Justice and Equality, November 2014 (<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/2014.WG.Report.pdf/Files/2014.WG.Report.pdf>).

<sup>21</sup> W. Calathes, "Gun Control in a Developing Nation: The Gun Court Act of Jamaica," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, Volume 14, No. 1 (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publications/abstract.aspx?ID=160203>). Enforcement continues through today "Get the Guns" campaign nets 68 guns, 800 ammo," Jamaica Observer, October 15, 2015 (<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/-Get-the-Guns--campaign-nets-68-guns--800-ammo>).

<sup>22</sup> BBC, "Venezuela bans private gun ownership," BBC, June 1, 2012 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18288430>).

<sup>23</sup> "Guns in the Solomon Islands," GunPolicy.org (<http://www.gunpolicy.org/es/firearms/region/cp/solomon-islands>). There are a large number of errors at the GunPolicy.org website. For example, the site claims that there were no gun murders after 1999, but as we will show in the text that was clearly not the case.

<sup>24</sup> Jamaica's crime data were obtained from a variety of sources. Its murder data from 1960 to 1967 were obtained from Terry Lacey, *Violence and Politics in Jamaica, 1960–70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977). Professor Gary Mauser obtained the data from 1970 to 2000 from a Professor A. Francis in Jamaica and the data from 2001 to 2006 from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (<http://www.statinja.com/stats.html>). Jamaica's population estimates were obtained from NationMaster.com ([http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo\\_pop-people-population&date=1975](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo_pop-people-population&date=1975)).

<sup>25</sup> "How Ireland was Always Violent," (<http://www.irishsalem.com/irish-controversies/crime-in-ireland/wasireland-alwaysviolent-jun11.php>).

<sup>26</sup> Niamh Hourigan, "Niamh Hourigan examines the true nature of gang crime in Ireland today and asks, has anything really changed post-austerity?" Garda Review, November 25, 2014 (<http://www.gardareview.ie/index.php/the-changing-face-of-irish-gangsters/>).

<sup>27</sup> Michael Lohmuller, "Jamaica Sees 20% Spike in Murders," August 28, 2015 (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/jamaica-sees-20-spike-in-murders-in-2015>).

<sup>28</sup> John Lott, *The War on Guns*, Regnery: Washington, DC, Chapter 8, 2016.

# Joint Economic Committee Testimony on: Gun Violence in America

September 18, 2019

John R. Lott, Jr.



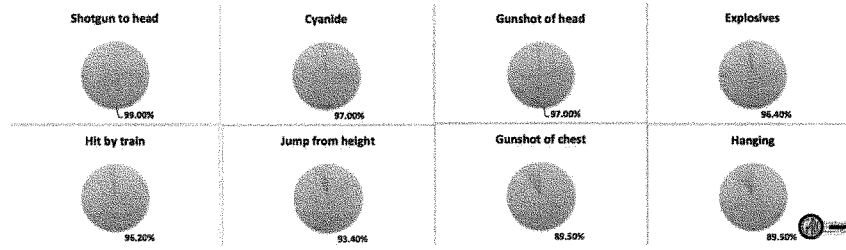
See our research at [crimeresearch.org](http://crimeresearch.org)

## Trade-offs

- Guns make it easier to kill people, but they also make it easier to protect people and keep them from being harmed.
- It makes no more sense to count only people killed or injured by guns then it does to count only lives saved or injuries prevented — the question is what is the net effect.
- The same is true of estimates of the cost of gun violence.
- If guns are a net cost to society, why is it that every place in the world that has banned either all guns or all handguns has seen homicide rates go up? Can you name one place that banned these guns and seen homicide rates even stay the same? No.

- Surveys indicate that on average people use guns defensively 4 to 5 times more frequently to stop crime than to commit it.
- If you think that strict gun regulations will reduce gun violence, look at Mexico
  - Only one gun store in the country since 1972, the most powerful rifle that you can buy is a .22-caliber, and only about 1 percent of Mexicans are licensed to own guns.
  - Yet, this Mexico has had well over 21,000 murders during the first seven months of the year, and they are facing a murder rate that is over six times the rate in the US.
- As to suicides, it is simply not realistic to assume that eliminating guns will significantly reduce suicide. There are lots of close substitutes methods of committing suicide.

**4,117 cases of completed suicide in Los Angeles  
County during the period 1988-1991.**



## How to quickly pass Universal Background Checks

- Continually called for after mass public shootings
  - It would not have stopped any of the mass shootings we have seen in this century.
- Frequent claim is: Background checks have stopped 3.5 million dangerous or prohibited people from buying guns.
  - Virtually all of these false positives
  - Hurts minorities
  - “This incredibly high rate of false positives imposes a real burden on the most vulnerable people,” said Reagan Dunn, the first national coordinator for Project Safe Neighborhoods, a Justice Department program started in 2001 to ensure gun laws are enforced.
  - Easy fix

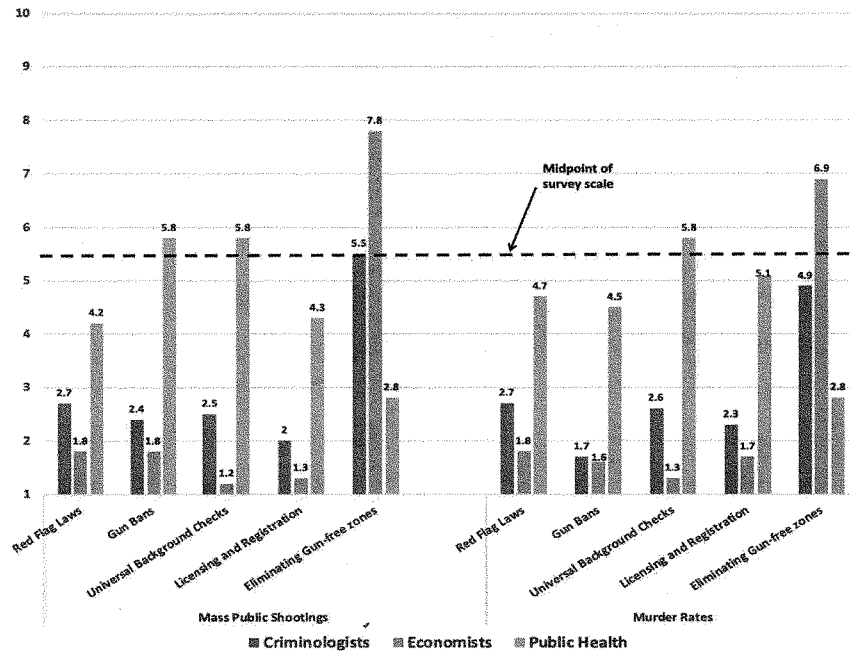


- Costs
  - In Washington, DC, background checks on private gun transfers cost \$125. In New York City, it costs at least \$125.
  - Democrats who think that voter ID laws are unfairly onerous for poor minorities ought to appreciate the obstacles presented by background check fees
  - Discriminatory against the very people who need guns the most for self-defense
  - If you want to encourage people to do these background checks on private transfers, why would you make them pay a tax to do it?
  - Simple fix – if you believe that this reduces crime for everyone, then everyone should pay for it.
- Concern about a national registry being created
  - Simple fix – have a time limit on how long information can be held.
- Details on who you can transfer to

## Survey of Academic Researchers

- Academic researchers broadly think that eliminating gun-free zones, such as where the attack in San Bernardino occurred, is a promising policy change that could save lives.
- Criminologists and economists are the most interested in that solution, while public health researchers tend to favor traditional gun control methods. But outside of economists who favor eliminating gun-free zones, none of the groups are significantly above the midpoint (5.5) in supporting any type of gun control.

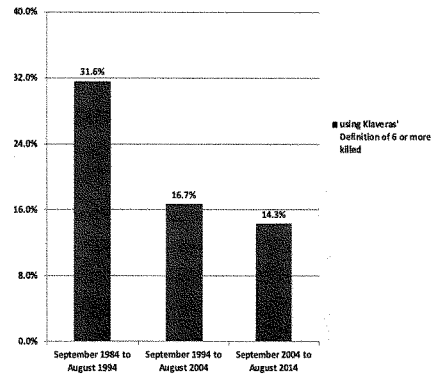
**Survey of Academics on Different Gun Control Policies by Type of Policy (February 18th to March 21st, 2019) \***



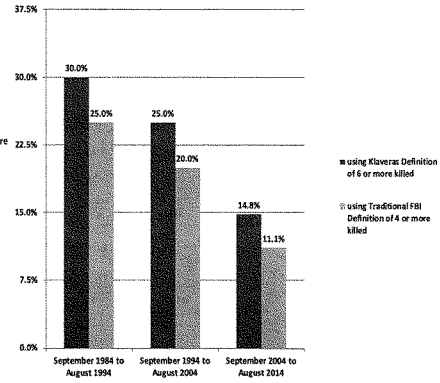
## Assault Weapons Ban

- The Assault Weapon Ban would only have caused the use of assault weapons to decline during the ban and then rise after the ban ended in 2004.
- In fact, the use of other types of guns would likely to be expected to rise during the ban. In fact, while the share of mass public shooting using assault weapons fell during the ban, they fell even further in the ten years after the ban ended

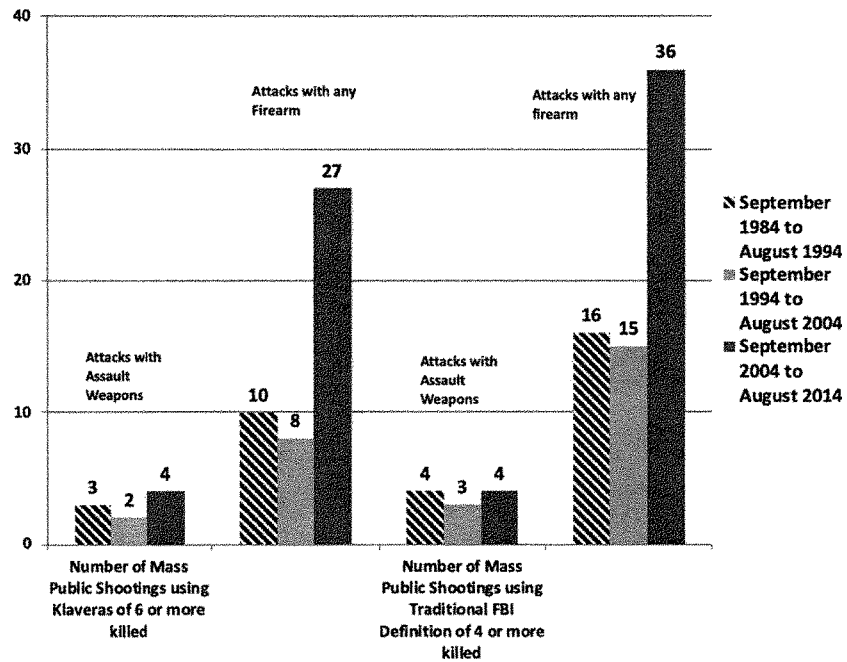
**Percent of Mass Shootings with Assault Weapons  
(Using Klarevas' Mass Shooting data )**

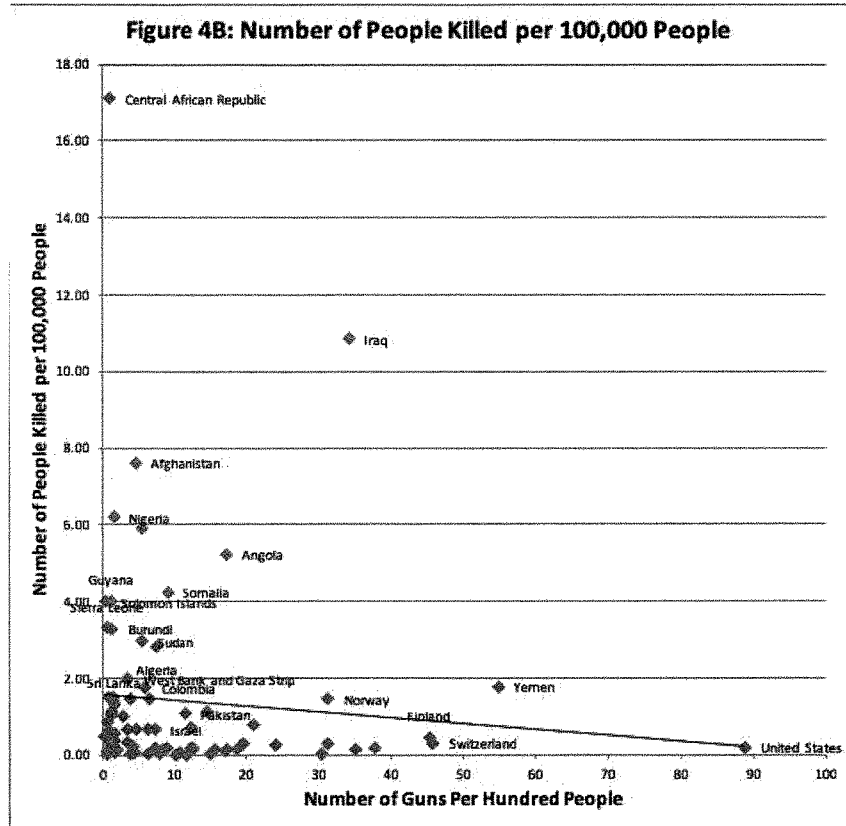


**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons  
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**

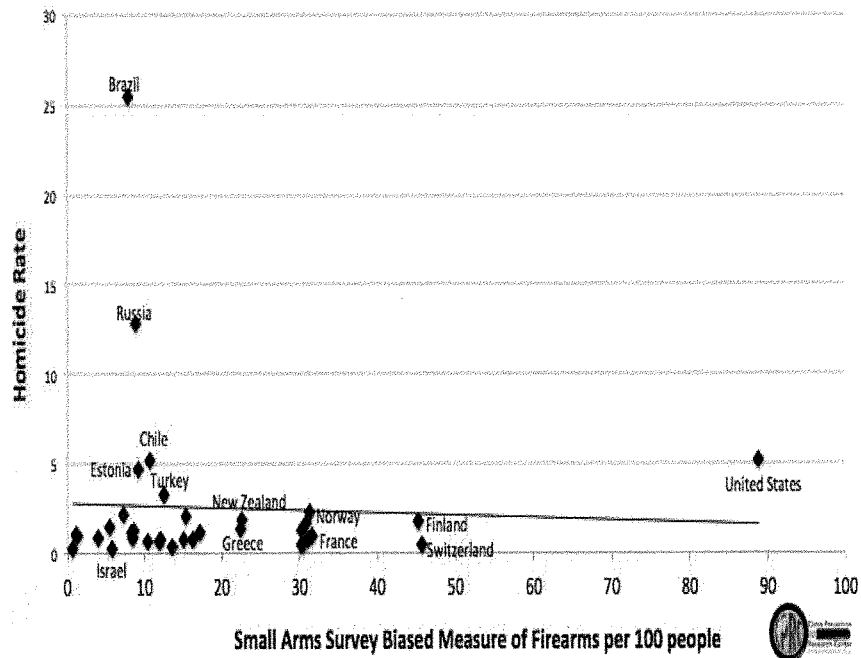


**Changes in Number of Mass Public Shootings Before, During, and After the Federal Assault Weapons Ban  
(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**



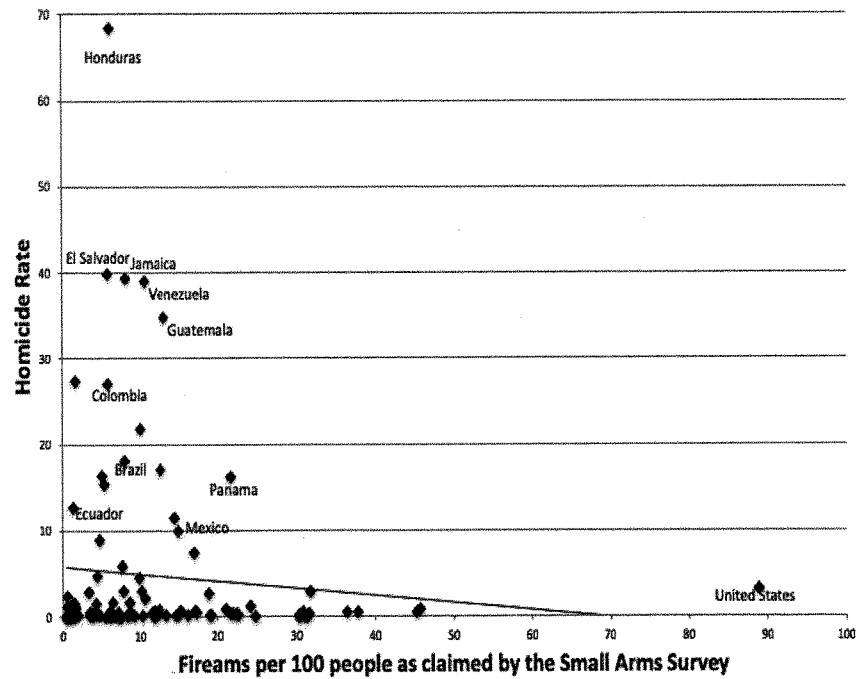


### Gun Ownership and Homicide Rates for All Developed Countries (OECD 2011 or latest year)





**Small Arms Survey measure of Gun Ownership and  
Homicide Rate for the selective countries covered by  
survey**



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These comments and opinions are my own and do not reflect those of my employer.

You titled this committee "Gun Violence In America: Understanding and Reducing the Cost of Firearm Injuries and Deaths." I am here to make sure you also consider the high cost of Gun Control in your discussions. While I'm sure you are considering spending millions in taxpayer money to further gun control measures, don't forget about the billions of dollars responsible gun owners put INTO the economy.

I was not raised in a house with guns. Growing up, no one in my immediate family was a hunter, although I support hunting. However, I WAS raised in a home in which my father was an expert on the founding of the country, so I fully understood the reasons behind the Second Amendment since childhood. I firmly believe that it is the lack of teaching history in our current public education system that has us here today, in the current debate.

That being said, I was gifted a handgun by a veterinarian friend, with full support of my family, when I became an adult and moved into my own place. Some years later, I had a patient who was an assistant District Attorney in Houston who actually convinced me to start carrying the gun in my purse, illegally. At that time, in the state of Texas, we did not have concealed carry available to us. He said something like, "Suzanna, you don't see the bad stuff. I see it everyday. No police officer will bother you. Carry it."

Several years later, in 1991, my parents and I accepted a lunch invitation from my manager friend of a Luby's cafeteria. It was Boss's Day, so the place was packed, but we enjoyed our meal and sipped coffee when my friend left to check on the kitchen. Suddenly, a pickup truck came crashing through the floor-to-ceiling window, knocking over a number of tables as he came to a stop. Of course, we all thought it was an accident, and I stood up to help the people he had injured. But then we heard gunshots. My father and I immediately got down on the floor and put the table up in front of us. My mother was down behind us. Almost everyone else in the restaurant got on the floor as well. The guy kept shooting. He was on the other side of the truck from us initially, so it wasn't immediately clear who or what he was shooting at. I kept waiting to hear him say something like, "Everyone put your wallets on the table." But he didn't. As he came around the front of his vehicle, I saw him take aim at a patron on the floor in front of him, and pull the trigger. Then he moved to the next victim, took aim, and pulled the trigger. Slowly, and deliberately. Execution style. He had complete control of the room.

It took me a good 45 seconds from the time I heard the first gunshots to realize that this guy was just there to kill people. (Remember, it was 1991 and these mass shootings weren't happening with any frequency at that time. And when they did, we didn't have a 24/7 news cycle constantly repeating the story.) When I figured out what was happening, I reached for my purse on the ground next to me. The murderer stood maybe 15 feet from me, everyone else was down, I had the upturned table on which to prop my arm.

Then I realized that I had made the stupidest mistake of my life: my gun was out in my car in the parking lot, completely useless to me. A few months earlier, I had chosen to obey the law and leave my gun in the car in case I broke down on a back road somewhere. When the

realization sunk in, I thought, "Great. What do I do now? Throw my purse at him?" At that point my father took my attention saying, "I've got to do something! I've got to do something! He's going to kill everyone in here!" I grabbed him by the shirt collar and said, "Stay down, or he'll kill you too." But when he saw what he thought was a chance, he got up from his crouched position behind the table and ran at the guy. The gunman still had total control at that point. Dad covered perhaps half the distance when the killer simply turned, and shot him in the chest. My Dad went down in the aisle maybe 7 or 8 feet from me. He was still alive and still conscious, but as terrible as it sounds, I saw the wound and wrote him off at that point. The good news is that it made the gunman change directions slightly. Instead of continuing directly toward me, he veered off to my left and continued executing helpless people. A few moments later, I heard a window break at the opposite end of the room. An accidental hero had kicked out a window and provided an escape. At that point, the gunman lost some control and pandemonium erupted with people rushing to get out. We were trapped in a front corner, but I peeked over the upturned table, and when his back was momentarily turned, I stood up, grabbed my mother by the shirt collar and said, "Come on! Come on! We've got to run! We've got to get out of here."

At that point, my feet grew wings. I ran out through the back window. Once outside, I turned to say something to my mother, and realized she had not followed me out.

To shorten this up, I found out exactly what happened next from the law enforcement officers who were in a conference at a hotel just one building away. Several of them had been patients of mine, and they told me that in an odd twist of gun control fate, the manager of the conference hotel had asked them to store their weapons in their vehicles so as not to "upset" the other hotel patrons. They said it took precious minutes to retrieve their guns from the trunks of their cars before running to the scene. There were bodies everywhere, and they couldn't immediately identify the shooter. But they did see a woman kneeling in the aisle, cradling a mortally wounded man. They saw a younger man walk up to her. He put a gun to her head as she looked up. She put her head down, and he pulled the trigger. THAT is how they knew who the shooter was. They said all they had to do was shoot a round into the ceiling and the guy ran to the bathroom alcove area, exchanged a few shots with them, and then put a bullet into his own brain.

Twenty three people were killed that day, including my parents. My folks had just had their 47th wedding anniversary two weeks prior, and it didn't occur to me as I ran away that my mother wasn't going anywhere without my father.

It was the largest mass shooting to that point in this nation's history.

You can check my quotes from the next few days' newspapers. The story hasn't changed. I am not mad at the guy who did it. To me, that is like being mad at a rabid dog...you don't get mad at it, you take it behind the barn and kill it. But I was MAD AS HELL at my legislators, whom I felt had legislated me out of the right to protect myself and my family. The ONLY thing gun control did that day, was provide a target rich environment for a guy who wanted to rack up a high body bag count. Gun control served us up like fish in a barrel.

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You want to talk about the cost of gun violence? Well, I can tell you the cost of gun control on October 16th, 1991: my parents and twenty one other innocent lives, several of whom had dutifully left their guns in their cars to comply with the law.

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Is having a gun a guarantee? Of course not. My gun could have jammed (a revolver at the time, so not likely). I could have missed (true, but I've hit much smaller targets at much greater distances). The one thing you can't really deny, is that IT WOULD HAVE CHANGED THE ODDS. These creeps rarely go to places where people can defend themselves. They go where they can rack up a high body bag count, and that is where good people, families, can't fight back.

Since that day in '91, we have seen many, many more of these terrible events. And the vast majority of them have occurred in places where guns are not allowed and good people are not allowed to protect themselves. Restaurants, post offices, schools, daycares, dance clubs, theaters, print shops. Nearly every one of them had a sign depicting a red circle with a line through a handgun.

Explain this to me: if guns are the problem, then why haven't we seen any of these mass shootings at NRA conventions, skeet and trap competitions, or the dreaded gun show...places where there are thousands of guns in the hands of law abiding citizens?

I know some of you immediately think of the Las Vegas shooting, knowing my little handgun wouldn't have made a lick of difference. And you would be right. If it makes you feel better to ban bump stocks, then ban bump stocks. But don't believe for a moment that such a law would have stopped that maniac from murdering helpless event-goers. It doesn't take much of an imagination to think of several other options he could have taken. I wonder how many people he could have killed with a hunting rifle and a handmade suppressor. With so many people in the crowd it would have taken an eternity for them to figure out that they were being shot at, especially if he scattered his shots. And if he REALLY wanted to get those body bags, all he had to do was grab one of the two private planes I understand he kept at the airport about a mile away, and fly it straight up through the crowd and into the stage. That would have likely taken out hundreds!

The lack of simple logic used in some of the past legislation amazes me. Why do we trust a school teacher to carry her weapon at the grocery store amongst dozens of families and babies in strollers. Yet, when she crosses the street and enters the school where she works, (a place that has become a magnet for these shooters), society no longer trusts her. But for "extra security," we'll spend money putting up lots of extra cameras. (It doesn't help, but that way we can see the carnage from lots of different angles.)

I am no expert on firearms. But I have learned over the years that many educated people, including reporters and legislators, do not know what a semi-automatic is. A lawyer from California said to my grown son, "Why do you think we want to take away YOUR guns? ...But surely you don't think regular people should have semi-automatics!?" She, and most reporters I've encountered, think a semi-automatic is in effect a rapid fire, machine gun type weapon. Those are AUTOMATICS, and have been illegal without special license since the 1930's. Semi-automatics shoot one bullet at a time, only as fast as you can repeatedly pull the trigger, and nearly every single woman I know carries a semi-automatic pistol in her purse. So yes, dear lawyer, you ARE talking about taking our guns.

So if you want to make a difference, you can start by speaking truthfully and accurately, without misleading rhetoric. Next, you could rid us of public gun-free zones. No guarantee, but again, it changes the odds. Defensive uses of guns are estimated at between 2.2 to 2.5 million annually (that estimate coming from a self-proclaimed "liberal" professor who didn't own a gun at the time, Dr. Gary Kleck).

Here's an idea for legislation, since everyone is anxious to "do something." Create a law that makes it crystal clear that if a property/business owner/employer strips people of their right to protect themselves (by disallowing concealed or open carry), that he or she becomes not only

**responsible** for your safety, but **financially liable** as well. Should a bad guy come in and shoot or otherwise harm people then they have failed in their end of an implied contract. In those cases, I believe there is culpability similar to what we currently use in child endangerment laws. I can promise that if something ever happens to any of my loved ones in a place that has disarmed them, I will sue the pants off of that entity to make the point.

Universal background checks, in my opinion, are not the answer. I am a firm believer that this becomes de facto registration. And registration always, always, ALWAYS leads to confiscation.

For years I have proposed that media quit using the killer's name or picture, with the understanding that it only glorifies the murderer. I am happy to say that it is now common practice. So positive changes can be made.

The next positive change could be fleshed out through a task force that could be implemented at the state level. My husband is a criminal psychologist who recently gave a brief description of how we could prevent many (but of course not all) of these mass shootings. He believes that most of the killers are not mentally ill, but with proper threat assessment, tracking, and treatment, many ideations would be thwarted without the need for any significant changes to current law. We have heard so many stories where relatives of these killers reached out to law enforcement or others ahead of time. We have said, "If you see something, say something." But there is currently no cohesive system to follow through on the concerns. So the next phase in the evolution is to create that cohesive system to give law enforcement, mental health, and other members of society the tools they need to properly follow up on these concerns and prevent these terrible events.

A plan would look something like this (and much is already currently in place, but not being used): someone could call in with a concern that you are a threat to others. A specially trained investigator would be dispatched to do a threat assessment. We currently do **risk** assessments, but these are easily lied through or worked around. I'm talking about a much more comprehensive **threat** assessment. Currently, an individual may refuse to cooperate, but with probable cause, that person can be detained as a credible threat to society. Virtually every state already allows for detention even without cause for up to 24 hours, but with a credible threat, most, if not all, states allow for even longer detention. During that time, a higher level evaluation would be performed by a designated multidisciplinary Statewide Task Force. If the task force determines a person to be a credible and imminent threat, then a myriad of existing legal charges and mental health services could be deployed that would allow the individual to be monitored and tracked until such a time as the threat has decreased. Current laws already exist for probation and court-ordered mental health treatment. Why not employ these tools that already exist in a cohesive and coordinated effort to lower the risk and still protect individual rights and Constitutional freedoms? Events such as those at Walmart, Parkland, Sandy Hook, Sutherland Springs, Midland-Odessa, and others would likely have been thwarted with this approach.

In the end, the title given to this hearing in part is "...Reducing the Cost of Firearm Injuries and Deaths..." While attempting to stop violence as a whole is a worthy cause, I find it pointless to focus on the tool. A gun can be used to kill a family. A gun can be used to protect a family. It's just a tool.

By the way, an estimated 350 million guns in America didn't hurt anyone this year. THAT is a staggering statistic.

## Scholar Invents Fan To Answer His Critic

[+ Add to list](#)

By Richard Morin

February 1, 2003

Mary Rosh thinks the world of John R. Lott Jr., the controversial American Enterprise Institute scholar whose book "More Guns, Less Crime" caused such a stir a few years ago.

In postings on Web sites in this country and abroad, Rosh has tirelessly defended Lott against his harshest critics. He is a meticulous researcher, she's repeatedly told those who say otherwise. He's not driven by the ideology of the left or the right. Rosh has even summoned memories of the classes she took from Lott a decade ago to illustrate Lott's probity and academic gifts.

"I have to say that he was the best professor I ever had," Rosh gushed in one Internet posting.

Indeed, Mary Rosh and John Lott agree about nearly everything.

Well they should, because Mary Rosh is John Lott -- or at least that's the pseudonym he's used for three years to defend himself against his critics in online debates, Lott acknowledged this week.

"I probably shouldn't have done it -- I know I shouldn't have done it -- but it's hard to think of any big advantage I got except to be able to comment fictitiously," said Lott, an economist who has held senior research positions at the University of Chicago and Yale.

Moreover, the AEI resident scholar acknowledged on Friday that he permitted his 13-year-old son to write an effusive review of "More Guns, Less Crime" and then post it on the Amazon.com Web site. It was signed "Maryrosh."

His son gave the book five stars -- the highest possible rating.

"If you want to learn about what can stop crime or if you want to learn about many of the myths involving crime that endanger people's lives, this is the book to get," the review stated. "It was very interesting reading and Lott writes very well. He explains things in an understandable commonsense way. I have loaned out my copy a dozen times and while it may have taken some effort to get people started on the book, once they read it no one was disappointed."

Lott denied that he was the author of the review, an assertion made on various Web sites that have been tracking the controversy. He said his son wrote it, with some help from his wife. "They told me they had done it.

Scholar Invents Fan To Answer His Critics - The Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2003/02/01/scho...>  
 They showed it to me. I wasn't going to tell them not to do it. Should I have?"

Lott's book, which argues that gun ownership deters crime, has been praised by gun advocates and attacked by those who favor gun control.

Lott also is a lesser player in the now-diminishing debate over the 2000 elections. In a study two years ago, Lott reported that the decision by the major television networks to call the Florida election for Al Gore before the polls had closed everywhere in the state led thousands of Republican-leaning voters in the Florida Panhandle not to vote. Other researchers dispute his findings, which have been embraced by conservatives as well as by critics of exit polling.

Lott said that he frequently has used the name "Mary Rosh" to defend himself in online debates. The name is an amalgam of the first two letters of his four sons' first names. In a posting to the Web site maintained by Tim Lambert, an Australian professor who has relentlessly attacked Lott's guns studies, "Mary Rosh" claims to be a former student of Lott at the University of Pennsylvania, where the economist taught between 1991 and 1995.

"I had him for a PhD level empirical methods class when he taught at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania back in the early 1990s, well before he gained national attention, and I have to say that he was the best professor that I ever had. You wouldn't know that he was a 'right-wing' ideologue from the class. . . . There were a group of us students who would try to take any class that he taught. Lott finally had to tell us that it was best for us to try and take classes from other professors more to be exposed to other ways of teaching graduate material."

When a reporter attempted to read the posting to him over the telephone, Lott stopped him after the first few words. "I'm sure I did that. I shouldn't have done it."

Julian Sanchez, a Cato Institute staffer, is the cybersleuth who tracked Mary Rosh back to John Lott.

Sanchez is a blogger -- someone who maintains a Web site where they report and comment on the news -- who had been tracking the debate between Lott and critics of his gun research. He became suspicious about Rosh after he noticed that several of Rosh's online defenses of Lott seemed to track closely with arguments the scholar himself had made in private e-mails to Sanchez and other bloggers. He tracked Mary Rosh's IP address (the computer code translation of the standard e-mail address) to Pennsylvania.

"I compared that IP with the header of an email Dr. Lott had sent me from his home address. And by yet another astonishing coincidence, it had originated at the very same IP address. Now, what are the odds of that?" he wrote in a posting on his Web site. "Sarcasm aside, we're a little old to be playing dress up, aren't we Dr. Lott?"

Lott said he initially used his own name in online debates with critics. "But you just get into really emotional things with people. You also run into other problems." So he started using the name Mary Rosh. "I should not

Scholar Invents Fan To Answer His Critics - The Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2003/02/01/scho...>  
have done it, there is no doubt. But it was a way to get information into the debate."

Officials at the American Enterprise Institute declined to comment yesterday.

John R. Lott Jr. signed a copy of "More Guns, Less Crime" in February 2000 in Westminster, Md.

 0 Comments



RESPONSE FROM MR. SKAGGS TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY  
SENATOR KLOBUCHAR

**1) I am concerned about a dangerous loophole in our background check system that allows domestic abusers to buy a gun simply because they are not married to, or do not have children with, their victims. When a gun is present in situations of domestic abuse, a woman is five times more likely to be killed, and according to the Justice Department, nearly half of women killed by romantic partners are killed by dating partners. That is why I introduced the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, to close this so-called “boyfriend loophole” and to prevent convicted stalkers from buying or owning a gun.**

- **How have State laws that prevent domestic abusers and convicted stalkers from buying or owning guns been effective in reducing gun violence?**

Guns and domestic violence are a deadly mix. The gun homicide rate for women in the United States is 21 times higher than it is in other high-income countries,<sup>1</sup> a disparity that is fueled in large part by elevated rates of intimate partner homicide in America.

Despite these risks, Federal law does not prohibit gun possession by people convicted of non-felony stalking crimes, and Federal law does not prohibit gun possession by abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence if they are not married to, and do not have children with, their victims. But States across the country have taken steps to address the boyfriend and stalker loopholes in Federal law: about half the States have laws that prohibit dating partners subject to protective orders or convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from possessing firearms, and nine States have similar laws for those convicted of stalking.

A robust body of research shows that these laws are associated with significant reductions in intimate partner homicides. For example, State laws that restrict firearm access in domestic violence cases when a restraining order has been issued are linked to a 13% reduction in intimate partner homicides committed with firearms.<sup>2</sup> Ensuring that abusers are actually relinquishing their firearms is also critical: reductions in intimate partner homicides are even larger when State laws require that abusers provide proof that they have turned over their guns.<sup>3</sup>

The Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act would close critical loopholes in our Federal gun laws. These provisions were also included in the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 that passed the House. The Senate should similarly move to close these dangerous loopholes in Federal law.

**2) Your research has found that the levels of gun violence, and the associated costs, are lower in the 19 States that have adopted universal background checks.**

- **What are the economic benefits that you would expect to see if legislation to require universal background checks became law?**

Universal background checks are a foundational policy for reducing gun violence and the associated economic costs to our country. So long as prohibited persons are able to bypass the NICS background check system and get their hands on firearms through unlicensed sales with no questions asked, we will continue to see unacceptable levels of gun violence in our communities.

There is no single policy that will end gun violence in America, but universal background checks represent the single most important step Congress could currently take to address this epidemic. Reducing the number of Americans being shot will lead to significant economic benefits. It will mean lower costs for medical care and mental health treatments. It will mean fewer survivors living with reduced wages and quality of life. And it will mean less costs associated with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. For example, if the Federal universal background check system prevented just 100 gun deaths, our calculations find that the country would see more than an estimated \$538 million in cost savings.

Polling consistently finds that over 90% of Americans support universal background checks. The House of Representatives passed H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Back-

<sup>1</sup>Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, “Violent death rates in the US compared to those of the other high-income countries, 2015,” *Preventive Medicine* 123, (2019): 20–26.

<sup>2</sup>April M. Zeoli, et al., “Analysis of the Strength of Legal Firearms Restrictions for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence and Their Association with Intimate Partner Homicide,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 187, no. 11 (2018).

<sup>3</sup>Id.

ground Checks Act, more than 200 days ago by a margin of 50 votes. The Senate should move it immediately to President Trump's desk for his signature.

