We Can End Gun Violence

September 30, 2019

It is time to tell the truth about guns in America and take action.

For too many Americans die each year from gun violence — and we can do something about it.

Our nation grieves the loss of fellow Americans on a regular basis. Guns kill about 100 Americans a day, and in 2017, the last year of complete data from the CDC, gun deaths reached their highest level in 20 years: nearly 40,000 died from suicides, urban gun violence, domestic violence, and mass shootings.

By and large, Americans agree on how we should solve these problems. Americans want Washington to act. 97% of Americans, including gun owners and Republicans, support background checks for every gun sale. But the NRA has corrupted our democracy, and instead, Washington politicians write the rules that put special interests above the American people. The tragedies that we have been forced to witness are a direct result of a sick democracy that is not responding to the needs and desires of the people.

Some politicians have also stoked the flames of white supremacy, with racist and bigoted rhetoric, putting our country’s black, brown, and religious minority communities at risk. And we’ve seen the deadly results when this hate is armed. I will take immediate action to combat this.

Over the last two election cycles, I led the largest effort to engage and mobilize young voters. I was proud to partner with Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence and Everytown for Gun Safety on a nationwide initiative to register 50,000 high school students to vote ahead of the 2018 midterm elections in the Our Lives, Our Vote program.

These young people have led the charge, calling us to look squarely at the plague of violence that haunts so many communities. From heightened gun violence in black, brown, and Native American communities to high rates of firearm suicide among Veterans, from the increasingly deadly escalation of domestic violence and hate driven attacks against LGBTQ community to the mass shootings that regularly capture a news cycle, we see gun violence all too intimately woven into the fabric of our lives.

Though the gun lobby extols the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms, it is not without limits, and the courts have upheld this fact repeatedly. Even Conservative Justice Scalia said that the right to bear arms is not unlimited, and that regulations have already
existed around firearms in this country in the Supreme Court decision District of Columbia v Heller.

And yet the fact remains: easy, unrestricted access to guns makes killing easy. Since the 2012 tragedy at Sandy Hook, 45 states and DC have enacted 280+ lifesaving gun safety laws. And extensive research proves that states with strong gun safety laws have lower gun death rates.

It is time that the federal government takes a stand against gun violence.

While victims of gun violence pay the ultimate price, gun violence costs each American roughly $700 a year, totaling $229 billion across the country. These are challenges my administration plans to tackle head on.

Gun violence in America is preventable. The time to act is now.

I stand side by side with students, parents, teachers, law enforcement and community members across America against powerful special interests, to address our nation’s gun crisis. The American people demand gun reform. It is time to give the NRA-backed politicians a simple choice: listen to our demands, or find a new job.

As president, I will work tirelessly toward a new definition of ending gun violence by taking back our democracy, committing to long overdue gun reforms, and working together for safety and peace.

Take Back Our Democracy

The gun debate isn’t a conversation about the Second Amendment. It is a conversation about corruption and cowardice. Right now, Mitch McConnell and congressional Republicans are refusing to bring to a vote legislation that will help curb gun violence. Why? Because their funders at the NRA forbid it. Members of Congress should be held accountable to the people — not special interests and gun manufacturers. Over 90% of Americans, including gun owners, support commonsense gun laws. This is why, through executive action and the legislative process, I will restore democracy to the American people by initiating structural reforms to return power to voters.

There are few instances in which the impact of special interest lobbying is more clear than on commonsense gun reform. That is why we have to start with the following structural reforms:

- **Institute comprehensive campaign finance reform** and **repeal Citizens United** because it is time to break the corporate stranglehold on Congress.

- **Institute a national referendum** to put important issues, like gun safety, directly before the American people.

- **Expand voter registration and voting access**, particularly to early voting registration of the young people who have led on the issue of gun violence.
• **Restructure the Federal Election Commission.** The FEC is an independent agency that oversees our elections — but it has been plagued by internal dysfunction that has enabled corporations and powerful special interests like the NRA to run amok. We will reform the broken FEC by making necessary changes to its budget, commissioner composition, independence from other branches of government, and penalty enforcement. This will enable the appropriate investigations of campaign finance law and tax exempt status violations.

• ** Appropriately resource and empower the IRS** to uphold transparency and reporting requirements for corporations spending money through special interest non-profit membership organizations, including the NRA.

### Address Gun Safety

On average, 100,000 Americans are injured or killed by guns each year — and the number is growing. Gun homicides have increased over 30% since 2014.

Solutions to this problem exist. 97% of Americans support universal background checks, one of the most effective tools we have to ensure that guns do not fall into the hands of those who are a risk to themselves and others.

**SUPPORT COMMONSENSE LAWS**

I will fight for commonsense gun laws that have long been studied and proven, and I will fight to:

• Pass universal background checks by expanding them to private sales and unlicensed sellers; close the Gun Show, Boyfriend, and Charleston loopholes; establish waiting periods at the federal level for delivery of guns; pass the Making America Safe and Secure Act (MASS Act) on gun licensing standards and incentives for both buyers and sellers

• Ban high risk weapons including assault weapons, device modifications, high capacity ammunition magazines, and strengthen laws on untraceable firearms, including ghost guns, 3D printed guns, and home manufactured guns

• Establish strong Red Flag/Extreme Risk laws to temporarily prohibit access to firearms from individuals demonstrating risky behaviors toward themselves or others

• Work with Congress to repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), that gives the gun industry special protections and exemptions and denies gun violence victims their day in court, the Dickey Amendment, to fully fund gun violence research, and the Tiahrt Amendments, which prevents the public release of important crime gun data that can be used by policymakers and researchers to uncover solutions to illegal gun trafficking

• Reverse existing DOJ policy that allows fugitives to buy guns, and reverse Social Security Administration policies that exempt records of mentally ill from background checks
• Regulate sellers by monitoring their inventory and restricting sales locations

• Prohibit manufacturing of guns outside of traditional supply chains, including 3D printing and ghost guns

• Pass a reauthorization and expansion of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, to support provisions to close gun loopholes and ban firearm purchases from domestic abusers, including partners and stalkers

• Work closely with state level governments to establish high standards for concealed carry

• Pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act and Disarm Hate Act

**REDEFINE RESPONSIBLE OWNERSHIP**

As a gun owner, I believe in responsibility. That is why I will work tirelessly to make it a serious responsibility for all Americans to buy, operate, and sell guns. My administration will establish:

• National licensing for all gun ownership, similar to a driver’s license

• A national registry of all assault weapons

• A robust gun safety curriculum

• Safe gun storage and Child Access Protection (CAP) laws that hold gun owners liable if a child accesses an unsecured firearm

• Voluntary buyback programs of all firearms, including handguns.

**IMPROVE FEDERAL OVERSIGHT**

Agencies that are charged with overseeing safe gun practices have long been underfunded and understaffed, resulting in weak oversight of firearms that are in the hands of the public. I will change this immediately.

I will create a special Office on Gun Violence Prevention, reporting directly to the president, to coordinate efforts at all levels of government to make the gun violence epidemic a top priority in my administration and to implement solutions that are already proven to make a difference. I will work through this office to coordinate efforts at the federal level to strengthen oversight and fully fund the efforts at all levels of government, including states and municipalities. This office will also tackle the issue of white supremacy that is present in our country today, by working across federal agencies in a coordinated manner.

**To do so, I will:**

• Strengthen the process of background checks at the FBI

  – Strengthen the FBI’s office of background checks, which is currently under-funded and under-staffed
- Unify background checks databases to make them truly comprehensive

- Expand prohibitions on temporary domestic violence restraining orders

- Fully fund the ATF to strengthen oversight of licensed dealers, including:
  - Issue an ATF regulation defining gun sellers “engage[d] in the business” based on the number of guns they sell in a year (e.g. five), opening up to background check laws many sellers who have claimed to be hobbyists.
  - Direct the ATF to increase its inspections of gun dealers and its penalties for negligent behavior, and instruct federal prosecutors to seek convictions for this behavior
  - Issue an ATF regulation clarifying that firearm conversion equipment qualify as firearms under federal law. Doing so would require these items would be printed with serial numbers when sold and only sold after a buyer passes a background check

- Fund DHS programs on domestic terrorism, including groups designated as white supremacists, and issue an annual public report on domestic terrorism

- Empower the FEC and IRS to strengthen rules around disclosure

- Expand HUD’s community development block grant programs to allow funding for gun violence prevention programs

- Strengthen rules around campaign finance disclosure

- Expand the authority of the Consumer Product Safety Commission to oversee and regulate firearms

- Develop mechanisms for holding straw purchasers and traffickers accountable by making gun trafficking a federal crime

- Establish clear banking policies to promote gun safety when issuing credit to gun buyers and sellers

- Establish joint federal-state, and international, investigations of white nationalist activity.

Prevent Gun Violence

Gun violence is a public health epidemic, and we must recognize it as a preventable and critical problem. We can and together we will reclaim a culture of safety and peace across America.

Research has shown that access to firearms increases the risk of suicide. Suicides account for over 60% of all gun deaths in the United States; access to guns triples the risk of suicide death.

Furthermore, gun violence many times begins in the home and the community before it shows up as a mass shooting.
Communities of color carry a heavy burden of gun violence. Black men, are less than 7% of the US population, but represent 52% of all gun homicide victims. Compared to white women, Black women are twice as likely to be fatally shot by an intimate partner, and murders as a result of domestic violence are on the rise in the US. White nationalists are also using guns more and more to commit terrorist attacks.

I will invest in wraparound services that address the full spectrum of challenges faced by gun violence survivors, many individuals at high risk, people of color, Veterans, victims of domestic violence, through targeted programs on mental health treatment, trauma care, drug treatment, voluntary self-prohibition, and mentoring. I will make it a priority to:

- Partner with organizations focused on community based solutions — such as the March for Our Lives Safety Corps — as well as deterrence programs for individuals at high risk for extremist tendencies — such as white nationalists
- Set up a task force of advocacy groups, including youth groups such as March for our Lives, Veterans’ Groups, Black Lives Matters, and others
- Set up a task force of urban community leaders who are impacted by gun violence by homicide
- Directly fund:
  - Law enforcement agencies to support effective local violence intervention and interruption strategies, and training in implicit bias, and addressing mental health and domestic violence situations
  - Research at the CDC and NIH on gun violence
  - Partner organizations on focused deterrence programs for high-risk individuals, that help their members turn away from violence and extremism
  - Evidence-based intervention programs at the local level to reduce gun violence
  - Community-led resources for mental health and counseling, including 3-digit hotlines, which have proven success, and public education campaigns about firearm suicide
  - Resources for victims of and prevention of domestic abuse