



Preventing gun violence: Background checks

"Since the inception of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force after the shooting at Sandy Hook, we have been working across the aisle to help prevent gun violence. Today we take a decisive step forward to help save lives right away. As a gun owner, hunter and supporter of the Second Amendment, I am honored to join with Democratic and Republican colleagues to introduce my universal background checks bill that will help keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them."

—Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA)

"There is no single law that can put an end to mass shootings or gun violence, but there are certainly proactive steps we can take to keep guns out of the hands of felons, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill. When background checks are used, they keep guns out of the hands of people we all agree shouldn't have guns."

—Rep. Peter King (R-NY)

The American Medical Association supports H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, introduced by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), Rep. Peter King (R-NY), and others.

One key element of reducing gun violence must be ensuring that those who are not legally permitted to purchase firearms are not able to do so.

- According to a recent Quinnipiac Poll, 97 percent of all Americans, including 97 percent of all gun owners support subjecting all gun purchases to a background check.
- The Department of Justice has reported that between 1994 and 2015, 3 million individual applications were denied because of the background check requirement.

However, background checks are currently only required for purchases from federally licensed firearms dealers. There are no such federal requirements for purchases from gun-shows, over the internet or through private sales. H.R. 8 would close these loopholes and institute a federal requirement for background checks for all gun sales.

Urge your representative: Cosponsor and support enactment of H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019.

Gun violence research

Gun violence is a public health crisis in the United States with firearms accounting for more than 30,000 deaths annually, including accidents and suicides.

As such, there is a critical need for comprehensive, multi-faceted public health solutions.

A key element of an enhanced public health response to preventing gun violence is improved surveillance and epidemiological research studying the causes and risk factors associated with gun violence, as well as interventions that might work. Determining the root causes—through federally-funded research—of this epidemic is critical to solving it.

For many years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has faced threats from powerful opponents of such research who spread fear that the only likely result of such work would be recommendations to severely curtail firearm ownership. Under the threats to defund other critical injury prevention activities, research on gun violence prevention has languished.

In recent years, however, following a string of highly visible mass shootings in the United States, a greater awareness of the need to better understand the epidemiology of gun violence and how it can be prevented has arisen.

Though legislative riders generally prevent CDC from advocating “gun control,” the agency itself has recently confirmed that there is no prohibition on the conduct of such research—only a lack of funding.

Public health is focused on preventing disease and injury in communities and populations on a larger scale and promoting public safety. Addressing the high number of gun-related homicides, suicides and injuries—many of which are preventable—is as much a public health issue as is addressing tobacco use, underage drinking, alcohol and substance use disorders, vaccinations, safety belt use, pool safety, and helmet use for bicyclists and motorcyclists.

The AMA believes that a specific funding allocation for federal gun violence research, including for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a necessary first step to reversing the course on gun violence.

Urge your senators and your representative to support specific funding for the CDC to conduct epidemiological research on gun violence as part of Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations process.