

**Statement of Jay Dickey and Mark Rosenberg**  
**April 12, 2016**

Firearm violence is a major health and safety problem in the United States, and far too little is known about the solutions that might be available. We believe that increasing funding for firearm violence prevention research would help stimulate technological innovations and generate scientific evidence that will let us both save lives and protect gun rights. This is not an academic exercise and we will need to better understand each other, collaborate, and reach consensus on how to really get this done.

Our unique involvement in the history of public funding for research on firearm violence has given us important insights and what we believe is a unique perspective. We have written recently about that history and its consequences for the *Washington Post* (1), and we excerpt that article here.

Twenty years ago, one of us was director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, supporting research to build an evidence base to advance the science of gun-violence prevention. The other of us was a Republican representative from Arkansas determined to dismantle that effort because conservatives had concluded that it was aimed at gun control and not gun violence.

Ultimately, the House of Representatives voted to insert language into the CDC's appropriations bill that succeeded in prompting the CDC to bring gun-violence research to a halt. The law stated that no CDC funds "may be used to advocate or promote gun control." One of us subsequently was fired because of his commitment to gun-violence prevention research. The other saw the CDC's abandonment of its commitment to this research as a successful effort to protect the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

When we met, at a congressional appropriations hearing in 1996, we fiercely opposed each other's positions. But over years of communicating, we came to see that, while we had differences, we also shared values. We became colleagues, and we became friends. We have argued with each other and learned much from each other. We both belong to the National Rifle Association, and we both believe in the Second Amendment.

We have also come to see that gun-violence research can be created, organized and conducted with two objectives: first, to preserve the rights of law-abiding citizens and legal gun owners and, second, to make our homes and communities safer. Well-structured research can be conducted to develop technologies and identify ways to achieve both objectives. We can get there only through research.

Our nation does not have to choose between reducing gun-violence injuries and safeguarding gun ownership. Indeed, scientific research helped reduce the motor vehicle death rate in the United States and save hundreds of thousands of lives —

all without getting rid of cars. For example, research led to the development of simple four-foot barricades dividing oncoming traffic that are preventing injuries and saving many lives. We can do the same with respect to firearm-related deaths, reducing their numbers while preserving the rights of gun owners.

We believe strongly that funding for research into gun-violence prevention should be dramatically increased. We do not see the congressional language against using federal funds “to promote or advocate gun control” as a barrier to this research. While our own efforts have been focused at the federal level, we recognize and wholeheartedly support leadership and action by the states, counties and cities. We think it is critically important that two goals of the research be made explicit at the outset and be embedded in the legislation. One goal must be to protect the Second-Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners; the other goal, to reduce gun violence. We also think it is important that research proposals be reviewed by a panel of highly qualified scientists, i.e. be peer reviewed by a broad and balanced panel, to make sure that it is well-designed and scientifically sound. The portfolio of completed research projects should also be reviewed periodically to make sure it is balanced and addresses both research goals.

As one of us wrote elsewhere recently, doing nothing is no longer an acceptable solution.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Jay Dickey  
United States House of Representatives (Retired)

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1. Dickey J, Rosenberg M. How to protect gun rights while reducing the toll of gun violence. *Washington Post*. December 25, 2015. Available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-for-collaboration-on-gun-research/2015/12/25/f989cd1a-a819-11e5-bff5-905b92f5f94b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-for-collaboration-on-gun-research/2015/12/25/f989cd1a-a819-11e5-bff5-905b92f5f94b_story.html).