



**Remarks by Mike Heyka, Member of Colorado Gun Owners for Safety**

**As delivered before the Colorado Senate Committee on State, Veterans, and  
Military Affairs  
March 15, 2019**

Good afternoon, my name is Mike Heyka. I have lived in Highlands Ranch for nearly 22 years. I want to thank the chairman and members of the committee for allowing me to speak today.

I have owned guns for nearly 50 years and hunting and shooting have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Maintaining that right—the right to own guns—is something I take very seriously, which is why I am also a member of Colorado Gun Owners for Safety. We are a group that unites hunters, sport shooters, and collectors who support responsible gun ownership and commonsense gun laws. As a gun owner, it is obvious to me that the right to own a firearm goes hand in hand with reasonable regulations. This is what makes us responsible gun owners—we respect the Second Amendment while at the same time acknowledging the need for sensible laws that make our communities safer.

That is why we are here today. As Coloradans who are responsible gun owners, we ask you to pass HB 1177, the Extreme Risk Protection Order. As you've heard, this bill creates a mechanism for family members and law enforcement to temporarily remove guns and prevent the purchase of new guns by people who pose a serious risk of hurting themselves or others. This policy has already saved lives in the thirteen states that have put it into practice. In the first three months after Maryland's law went into effect last year, a judge ordered the removal of firearms in 148 out of 302 cases. Four of those involved credible threats made against schools.

I often hear the argument that ANY action to address our epidemic gun violence is "unconstitutional" and goes against the rights of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. In the preamble to that same Constitution is the phrase "ensure domestic tranquility". Over the past 50 plus years, since the assassination of Robert Kennedy with a gun, more Americans have died from guns than have died in all the wars the United States has ever engaged in.

We have lost far too American lives to wars abroad, and we have lost far too many American lives to gun violence here in our own country. The Constitution gives us rights AND it gives us responsibility. They are not mutually exclusive.

Temporarily keeping guns out of the hands of people who have been found by a court to pose a significant risk to themselves or others is common sense. Colorado has the opportunity to take action to reduce mass shootings, suicides, and other gun deaths. I am a gun owner, and I am also someone who is deeply troubled about the gun violence tearing apart our families and our communities. As a gun owner and concerned patriotic Coloradan, I urge you to support HB 1177 and help protect Colorado families and communities.

### **Remarks by Vic Bencomo, Member of Colorado Gun Owners for Safety**

**As delivered before the Colorado Senate Committee on State, Veterans, and  
Military Affairs  
March 15, 2019**

Good afternoon, my name is Vic Bencomo and I have lived in Denver for over 30 years. I am a member of Colorado Gun Owners for Safety, we are a group that unites hunters, sport shooters, concealed carriers, and collectors who support responsible gun ownership and common-sense gun laws. I want to thank the chairman and members of the committee for allowing me to speak today.

I own several guns and I'm an avid hunter. I consider myself a patriot and I strongly believe in the second amendment. I have had the distinguished honor of serving this great nation for 22 years in the United States Navy, I am a combat veteran with tours in Iraq. I am here today because I am most concerned for our veteran population. According to the U.S Department of Veterans affairs, 20 veterans commit suicide daily nationwide, that is over 6000 Veterans a year. In One year....., One single year- The United States will see more Veteran Suicides then the total amount of Service Members Killed in Action in the last 17 years of fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. A more staggering statistic is that Colorado ranks higher for Veteran suicides than most states in the nation. In 2016, 175 veterans committed suicide in Colorado, of those 175, 119 of them or 68% used a firearm. I have personally, on multiple occasions have taken custody of another Veterans firearm when they found themselves in crises and in need of help. Make no mistake about it, veterans suicides is an Epidemic, and with each epidemic we need our elected officials to pass legislation to help solve the problem and save lives.

Our warriors answered the call and have lost so much on the battlefields already, please don't let them lose their lives at home. Temporarily keeping guns out of the hands of people who have been found by a court to pose a significant risk to themselves or others is not an infringement on their rights, it's just common sense. With this bill, Colorado has the opportunity to take action to reduce mass shootings, suicides, and other gun deaths. As a concerned Veteran and Coloradan, I urged you to support HB 1177, the Extreme Risk Protection Order and help protect our Veterans, their families and communities.

Thank you.

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*[Giffords](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence. Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Navy combat veteran and retired NASA astronaut Captain Mark Kelly, Giffords inspires the courage of people from all walks of life to make America safer.*