



**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Giffords  
**DATE:** **UPDATED -- June 1, 2019 at 2:00 PM ET**  
**RE:** Mass Shooting in Virginia Beach

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As the workday was coming to an end on Friday afternoon at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, a gunman opened fire, killing at least 12 people and sending four others to the hospital. Virginia Beach Police Chief James A. Cervera said an officer was among the wounded but was [saved by his protective vest](#).

The gunman, a disgruntled employee carrying a .45 handgun with a suppressor on it, was killed after firing at police.

***"This is the most devastating day in the history of Virginia Beach. The people involved are our friends, coworkers, neighbor, colleagues. "***

**—Virginia Beach Mayor Bobby Dyer**

The Virginia Beach Municipal Center is comprised of 30 buildings and annexes that includes city hall, courts, and offices for multiple city departments, a city directory shows. Relatives of those involved in the mass shooting were instructed to gather at a local middle school to await further details.

Our team will continue to monitor this situation and provide updates as we learn more. In the meantime, the following experts are available for interviews. To arrange an interview, email [media@giffords.org](mailto:media@giffords.org).

- [Peter Ambler](#), Executive Director, Giffords
- [Robyn Thomas](#), Executive Director, Giffords Law Center
- [David Chipman](#), Former ATF Agent, Senior Policy Advisor, Giffords
- [Laura Cutilletta](#), Managing Director, Giffords Law Center
- [Robin Lloyd](#), Managing Director, Giffords
- [Lindsay Nichols](#), Federal Policy Director, Giffords Law Center
- [Allison Anderman](#), Senior Counsel, Managing Attorney, Giffords Law Center

## **Background about Virginia Gun Laws**

**Virginia** received a D in our most recent [gun law scorecard](#). Among other things, Virginia law does not:

- Require a [background check](#) prior to the transfer of a firearm between unlicensed individuals;
- Require firearms dealers, purchasers, or owners to obtain a [state license](#);
- Regulate the transfer or possession of [large capacity ammunition magazines](#);
- Require firearm owners to report [lost or stolen firearms](#);
- Impose a [waiting period](#) prior to purchase of a firearm;

- Have an [extreme risk protection order law](#).
- Have significant laws to prevent [domestic abusers](#) from obtaining or possessing firearms.

**Virginia law does include the following provisions, among others:**

- Firearms dealers in Virginia must contact the Department of State Police (“DSP”) prior to selling a firearm, and DSP acts as a “point-of-contact” for the [background check system](#).
- After the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, in which a mentally ill individual killed 32 people and himself with firearms he purchased after passing a background check, Virginia significantly improved its reporting of [mental health records](#) to the database used for firearm purchaser background checks.
- Virginia requires all employees of federally licensed firearms dealers to undergo background checks prior to beginning employment.
- Virginia imposes some regulations on [gun shows](#).

Virginia also imposes few restrictions on [assault weapons](#). Local governments in Virginia generally [lack authority](#) to regulate firearms or ammunition, and local courts must issue a [concealed handgun permit](#) to any applicant who meets basic qualifications. Earlier this year, a number of local lawmakers who ran on a commitment to address gun violence made a push to strengthen Virginia’s laws. They fought for a number of strong gun safety measures, including expanding background checks, establishing an extreme risk protection order, banning bump stocks, and keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers. These measures, backed by Virginians, were voted down in [committee by the Republican majority](#).

## **Background on Workplace Shootings**

In 2017, approximately [77% of workplace homicides](#) were committed with a firearm. While workplace homicides have generally decreased over the last 10 years, there have been [troublesome upticks](#) in this violence in recent years. Additionally, the number of homicides committed by co-workers or former co-workers has remained relatively stable, with around 65 such homicides each year—the majority of which involve firearms.

Immediate and ready firearm access is a [common feature of workplace deaths](#) committed by co-workers and former co-workers. As such, workers in places where the employer’s policy allows guns may have a higher chance of being killed at work. [One study](#) found that workplaces where guns were specifically permitted were five to seven times more likely to be the site of a worker homicide relative to those where all weapons were prohibited.

## **Background on Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines**

[Large capacity magazines](#), some of which can hold up to 100 rounds of ammunition, significantly increase a shooter’s ability to injure and kill large numbers of people quickly because they enable the individual to fire repeatedly without needing to reload. These magazines are a common thread uniting many of the high-profile mass shootings in America including the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School, the 2011 shooting in Tucson, AZ, the shooting in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School, and many more.

Nine states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws banning large capacity ammunition magazines, Virginia has not. The: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont. All of these jurisdictions except Colorado and Vermont also ban assault weapons.

Legislation has been introduced in both chambers of Congress to ban ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds: [S. 447](#), introduced by Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), and [H.R. 1186](#), introduced by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL). Neither chamber has yet to bring up either bill.

## **Background on Silencers**

Silencers (also referred to as “suppressors”) are dangerous accessories that criminals may use to suppress the sound of gunfire and mask muzzle flash. These devices obstruct law enforcement efforts to quickly and effectively respond to active shooters, since silencers make it harder to recognize the sound of gunfire and locate the source of gunshots. Silencers enable criminals to elude law enforcement and raise the risk of ambush attacks, in which a shooter may escape before the police are even called.

Silencers are not a fully effective method for protecting a shooter’s hearing. Dual ear protection—muffs and plugs—is the gold standard for any professional shooter, including police and members of the Armed Forces. The real reason the gun lobby wants to deregulate silencers is so that the industry can profit off their sale and the accessories required for their use—all at the expense of public safety.

The [National Firearms Act](#) (NFA), enacted in 1934, imposes certain obligations on people who make, manufacture, sell, or transfer silencers. That law has made it difficult for criminals and other prohibited individuals to obtain silencers. The NFA comprehensively regulates machine guns, silencers, and certain other weapons, but not traditional rifles, shotguns, or handguns. Each person or entity engaged in business as an importer, manufacturer, or dealer of NFA firearms and devices, including silencers, must register with ATF and pay a special occupational tax. The NFA also requires anyone, even an unlicensed person, who is manufacturing, “making,” importing, or transferring an NFA weapon to register it with ATF. The NFA requires ATF to maintain a central registry of all NFA weapons, including silencers, that are legally owned by private persons. There are currently [over 1.4 million silencers](#) registered under the NFA.

Eight states and the DC ban silencers. A large number of other states have laws on the books that only ban those silencers not registered in accordance with the federal laws mentioned above. The jurisdictions that ban silencers, with no exception for those registered under federal law, are California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island.

## **Research, Data & Related Studies**

- In 2017, Virginia had the [32nd highest gun death rate](#) among the states, with a gun death rate of 11.9 gun deaths per 100,000 persons—roughly the national average.
- Gun violence claims the lives of [958 Virginia residents each year](#). Someone is [killed with a gun every 9 hours](#) in the state.
- According to the Gun Violence Archive, this marks the [nation’s 150th mass shooting in 2019](#) (incidents in which four or more people were killed or injured by a shooter). This is the fifth mass shooting in the state of Virginia since January 1, 2019.
- This is the [deadliest mass shooting](#) in the United States since November, when a gunman opened fire in Thousand Oaks, California

- Gun violence costs the state of Virginia more than [\\$1.9 billion in directly measurable costs](#). When indirect costs that impact families and communities, such as pain and suffering, are factored in, the overall estimate of the economic cost of gun violence rises to \$5.3 billion per year.

## Statement from Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords:

### Statement from Former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (05/31/2019)

“We’re only 151 days into 2019 and there have already been [150 mass shootings](#). This reality is horrifying. It’s heartbreaking. And the fact that our nation’s leaders continue to fail to protect us should fuel outrage in every American.

“The stories of survivors from Virginia Beach touch on a familiar refrain: the peace of the workday shattered by the sound of gunfire. Coworkers huddled on the floor trying to stay quiet as the shooting gets closer. The disbelief that it’s finally happening to them. Our hearts and our sorrow are in Virginia tonight.

“If gun violence feels like an everyday occurrence, that’s because it is. Every single day, nearly 100 lives are lost because of guns. Every time you hear news of another horrific shooting, remind yourself this is not normal. No other developed nation in the world experiences this kind of daily heartbreak and horror.

“Gun violence is a problem we can address. We know there are steps we can take as a country to keep deadly weapons from landing in dangerous hands. We are a country of citizens crying out for a response to this epidemic of gun violence, but whether it’s in Richmond or Washington DC, there are politicians who take the gun lobby’s money and vote against our safety. It’s time for that to change. Our leaders must work to protect us. And if they don’t, we must elect new leaders. It’s been nearly 100 days since the US House of Representatives passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. How many more lives will be lost before Majority Leader McConnell and President Trump take the next steps to sign that lifesaving legislation into law?”

## Reactions from the Community:

Tim Kaine: <https://twitter.com/timkaine/status/1134598280547930113>



**Tim Kaine** ✓  
@timkaine

Following

I’m devastated to learn of the tragic shooting tonight in Virginia Beach. My heart is with everyone who lost a loved one, and I’m praying for a swift recovery for all those who have been injured.

7:11 PM - 31 May 2019

Rep. Elaine Luria: <https://twitter.com/RepElaineLuria/status/1134569683854774273>

 **Representative Elaine Luria** @RepElaineLuria · 3h  
My heart is with all those injured & affected by today's shooting at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center. I'm so thankful for first responders & law enforcement for risking their lives to bring a suspect into custody. This is more proof Congress must act to prevent gun violence.

123 132 390

Jane Harper: <https://twitter.com/janeharpervp/status/1134578619110608897>

 **Jane Harper** @janeharpervp · 2h  
Va Beach courthouse employee Shelia Cook tells reporters about hearing muffled shots when a shooter opened fire in the city's public works building.



Alissa Skelton: <https://twitter.com/AlissaSkelton/status/1134602144047423489>

 **Alissa Skelton** @AlissaSkelton · 36m  
Paul Swain said his fiancé texted him that there was a shooter on her floor. He sped to the Municipal Center and police pulled him over for speeding. He finally made it and is waiting outside the school for her to come out.



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[Giffords](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence. Founded 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.

For 25 years, the legal experts at [Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#) have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence.