

June 20, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell,

It's been 20 years since the news that two students murdered 12 classmates and one teacher at Columbine High School stunned the nation. It's been over 18 months since we were horrified to learn that one man took the lives of 58 innocent people and wounded nearly 500 more at a concert in Las Vegas. A few weeks ago the nation was horrified by another breaking news alert: this time a gunman in Virginia Beach killed 12 people at a workplace. This past weekend, 19 shootings took place in the city of Philadelphia—on a playground, inside a deli, at a graduation party, among other places—leaving 28 victims, including five dead. Tragedies of this scale are the ones that punctuate our memories, but gun violence is sadly not at all uncommon. Every day, it claims the lives of 100 Americans.

In the eight years since I was shot, I've met thousands of people whose lives have been forever changed by gun violence. Scars. Trauma. Loved ones lost. Far too many families and communities will never be the same. The heartbreaking reality is that so many of these tragedies could have been prevented.

Four months ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, the first piece of gun safety legislation passed in the House in more than a decade. Americans are now waiting for the Senate to take the next step. With nearly 100,000 people shot every year and nearly 40,000 people killed by guns in 2017 alone, we don't have a moment to lose.

As a gun owner, my respect for the Second Amendment and the right to responsibly own guns runs deep. But I also know all too well that we must do more to prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands.

I chose a career in public service because I believe it's the job of elected officials to make life better for others. To build a better, safer future. As a congresswoman, I took nothing more seriously than my duty to listen to the will of the American people. And today, Americans are demanding stronger gun laws. In fact, over 90 percent of Americans support making our country safer from gun violence by enacting universal background checks.

Speaking is difficult for me, but I am writing to say, as loudly as I can: bring H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, or S. 42, the Background Check Expansion Act, up for a vote without delay.

We have a choice between unfettered fear and simple courage. In supporting background checks, the American people—and the U.S. House of Representatives—have chosen the latter. Now, the choice is yours, Senator.

Every moment we don't act puts more lives at stake, more Americans at risk. Places that should be safe—our schools, our workplaces, our synagogues, mosques, churches, temples—feel like they're under attack. This must change, and you have the power to change it.

Sincerely,



Gabrielle Giffords