

# Virginia Gun Violence Prevention Special Session 2019

July 9, 2019

In the wake of the Virginia Beach shooting, Giffords **SUPPORTS** the legislative agenda put forth by Virginia Democrats this Gun Violence Prevention session which includes the following laws that will save lives:

## Universal Background Checks

- A [universal background check law](#) would require people to pass an instant background check in order to acquire ownership of a firearm from any seller, including private sellers online and at gun shows, unless they are receiving the gun as a gift from a close family member. Closing the background checks loophole will save lives.
- Gun deaths have increased precipitously in Virginia since 2012, when 840 people died from gunshot wounds in the state. In 2017, over one thousand Virginians died from gun violence, meaning that an average of 20 Virginians die each week by firearm. Background checks would prevent guns from continuing to fall into the wrong hands.
- This policy has widespread support, even among gun owners and Republicans: [97% of Americans—including 99% of Democrats, 97% of Republicans, and 97% of gun owners support background checks on unlicensed sales.](#)

## Establish an Extreme Risk Protective Order

- An [extreme risk law](#) creates a legal mechanism to temporarily separate a person from their firearms and prevent them from accessing firearms when the court finds that they pose a substantial danger to themselves or others.
- Every year in VA, more than a thousand people die by suicide. More than half kill themselves with a gun.<sup>1</sup> An extreme risk protective order is another tool for law

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Fatal and NonFatal Injury Data," last accessed July 3, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. Figures represent an average of the five years of most recent available data: 2013 to 2017.

enforcement to keep their communities and its residents safe, particularly from firearm suicide.

- In the first 14 years of the implementation of Connecticut's law, [researchers estimated](#) that by temporarily removing weapons from 762 at-risk individuals, Connecticut's law had saved up to 100 lives from suicide alone.

## Particularly Dangerous Weapons

- Limiting the sale, purchase, possession, and transport of particularly dangerous weapons, including large capacity magazines, bump stocks, and silencers would save lives in the Commonwealth. **These dangerous weapons have been used in mass shootings in Virginia including in Virginia Beach.**
- These weapons are designed to increase the number of casualties in a shooting. Seven states and DC have addressed this issue.

## One Handgun a Month

- [Limiting handgun purchases](#) to one per month will help reduce gun trafficking by preventing purchasers from buying large numbers of handguns to resell.
- Virginia's one-gun-a-month law—which was in effect from 1993 to 2012 and prohibited the purchase of more than one handgun per person in any 30-day period—significantly reduced the number of crime guns traced to Virginia dealers.
- A 2007 University of Pennsylvania report to the National Institute of Justice found that guns purchased in bulk were up to 64% more likely to be used for illegal purposes than guns purchased individually.

## Reporting Lost or Stolen Firearms

- This policy will require a person to report to the State Police or local law enforcement within 24 hours if a gun is lost and stolen, seeking to help deter straw purchasing and the illegal trafficking of firearms.
- Guns originally purchased in Virginia often end up being used in crimes in other states. In 2017, Virginia supplied crime guns to other states at the 12th highest rate among the states. Virginia exported crime guns at nearly twice the national rate and nearly three times the rate at which it imported crime guns from other states.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Calculated from data available at: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearm & Explosives, "Number of Firearms Sourced and Recovered in the United States and Territories (xcl)", at <https://www.atf.gov/file/130336/download>. Last accessed July 8, 2019.

- [Lost and stolen reporting laws](#) also facilitate the return of the lost or stolen firearm to the lawful owner. Timely reporting to law enforcement enables police to trace guns more effectively and makes it more likely that there will be a successful prosecution of the person who stole the guns.

## Child Access Prevention and Raising the Minimum Age

- [Child access prevention laws](#) ensure that a person can be held accountable for leaving a loaded, unsecured firearm around a child or teenager and
- Unintentional shootings and youth suicides occur far too often when there is a gun present in the home, especially when guns are not stored safely and securely. In May 2019, two toddlers in Virginia were killed because of easy access to a firearm.
- 73% of children under age 10 living in homes with guns reported knowing the location of their parents' firearms, and 36% had handled the guns.<sup>3</sup>

## Local Authority Regarding Guns

- Virginia's law deprives cities, towns, and counties of their own, independent authority to tackle gun violence through local laws. [Local laws](#) can address the unique issues and dangers facing each different community.
- Virginia should repeal the prohibition on localities in Virginia adopting ordinances that regulate firearms and allow localities to adopt ordinances that regulate firearms in municipal buildings, libraries and at permitted events.
- Localities should be free to codify their communities' shared expectation that public places like libraries will be free from guns.

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### ABOUT GIFFORDS

*Giffords is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence. Led by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, Giffords inspires the courage of people from all walks of life to make America safer.*

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<sup>3</sup> Frances Baxley and Matthew Miller, "Parental Misperceptions About Children and Firearms," Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine 160, no. 5 (2006): 542–547.