

## CeaseFire Pennsylvania Candidate Questionnaire for 2016 State House and Senate Elections

CeaseFire Pennsylvania is the advocacy arm of CeaseFirePA, Pennsylvania's leading gun violence prevention organization. We seek commonsense legislative reforms to reduce gun violence, stop the flow of illegal guns into our streets, and keep guns out of the hands of those who should not have them. We proudly work with mayors, police chiefs, city council members, and other elected officials, along with more than 60,000 citizen activists in cities and towns across Pennsylvania. For more information about our mission and accomplishments, please visit [www.ceasefirepa.org](http://www.ceasefirepa.org).

**CeaseFire Pennsylvania wants to provide information to Pennsylvania voters about the candidates seeking to represent them in the State House and State Senate.** To that end, we hope you will complete this questionnaire. In determining whether or not to recommend a particular candidate, CeaseFire Pennsylvania may also consider that candidate's record of supporting or opposing gun violence prevention measures during past service as an elected official.

To be considered for recommendation by CeaseFire Pennsylvania, please complete the following questionnaire and return it no later than March 21, 2016. Responses may be faxed to (215) 923-3385, emailed to [ceasefire\\_pennsylvania@ceasefirepa.org](mailto:ceasefire_pennsylvania@ceasefirepa.org), or mailed to CeaseFire Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 60095, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

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Candidate signature

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Date

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Candidate name (please print)

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Party

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Office Sought, District

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Telephone/Email address

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### Instructions:

Please select only **one** answer for each question.

Please answer all questions.

Feel free to leave additional comments in the space provided or on additional sheets.

For more information on any of these issues, as you consider your position, please feel free to contact us.

When complete, please return to CeaseFire Pennsylvania using the address above.

# Keeping Firearms Out of the Hands of Those Defined by Law As Prohibited Purchasers

## 1. Expand the Background Check System to Cover the Private Sale of Long Guns.

The data shows that background checks are an effective means of keeping guns out of the hands of those who are not allowed to have them because of their criminal records or mental health histories. But loopholes in the law enable some prohibited purchasers (defined as felons, fugitives, domestic abusers and the dangerously mentally ill) to buy guns. Current law requires background checks for all sales at federally licensed dealers, and for all sales of handguns in PA, regardless of the seller. However, private sales of long guns – rifles, shotguns and semi-automatic rifles – are exempt from both the federal and Pennsylvania background check systems.

- I **would co-sponsor** legislation expanding the PA background check system to cover the private sale of long guns in the same manner as the private sale of handguns.
- I **would vote for** legislation expanding the PA background check system to cover the private sale of long guns in the same manner as the private sale of handguns.
- I **oppose** legislation expanding the PA background check system to cover the private sale of long guns in the same manner as the private sale of handguns.

## 2. Maintain the Pennsylvania Instant Criminal Background Check System

Pennsylvania is a “*point of contact*” state, which means we utilize our own state background check system in addition to the federal background check system. Neither system is a registry of people who own guns. They are only a method of identifying people who are legally prohibited from purchasing firearms. The gun lobby wants to eliminate the Pennsylvania Instant Criminal Background Check System and have Pennsylvania rely only on the National Instant Check System. The Pennsylvania State Police believe Pennsylvania's background check system successfully blocks gun sales to prohibited purchasers, contains more data than the federal system, and provides additional benefits to law enforcement agents.

- I **oppose** the elimination of the Pennsylvania Instant Criminal Background Check System
- I **support** the elimination of the Pennsylvania Instant Criminal Background Check System

## 3. Strengthen Protections for Victims of Domestic Abuse

Differences in how federal law and Pennsylvania law define prohibited purchasers have meant that certain domestic abusers have been able to maintain weapons they already own, despite being defined as prohibited persons under federal law. To close the gap, Pennsylvania should: require surrender of all firearms if the defendant is subject to an active final protection from abuse order; require that firearms being surrendered be surrendered to the sheriff's office or a licensed dealer; and require convicted domestic violence offenders, prohibited for life under federal law, to surrender their guns in 24 hours.

- I **support** closing the gaps in Pennsylvania law that enable domestic abusers to access guns.
- I **oppose** closing the gaps in Pennsylvania law that enable domestic abusers to access guns.

## **Expanding the Tools Available to Law Enforcement to Stop Trafficking and Illegal Possession**

### **4. Reporting lost or stolen firearms to the police.**

Lost or stolen reporting is a reform designed to crack down on the major sources of crime guns: loss, theft, and straw purchasers – people who buy guns and then sell them illegally to prohibited purchasers. By requiring missing firearms to be reported, police can begin looking for a lost or stolen gun before it winds up at the scene of a crime. In addition, if a gun that was already reported as lost or stolen is later used in a crime, the police do not need to waste valuable time questioning the original owner about the whereabouts of his gun. Finally, when police repeatedly trace crime guns back to an owner who claims each gun was “lost” but never reported, police may be able to flag a potential trafficker or straw purchaser.

- I would co-sponsor** statewide legislation requiring that gun owners report lost or stolen firearms to the police.
- I would vote for** statewide legislation requiring that gun owners report lost or stolen firearms to the police.
- I oppose** statewide legislation requiring that gun owners report lost or stolen firearms to the police.

### **5. Allow PA municipalities to enact local laws to reduce gun violence based on local needs.**

Local municipalities face the brunt of gun violence and are in the best position to know what type of additional legislation is needed to address gun violence in their communities. What works in a big city may not be appropriate in a smaller town. While commonsense, responsible statewide gun laws are essential to protect public safety, cities and towns need the authority to enact specific, local gun violence prevention laws in order to suit local needs.

- I support** giving municipalities in Pennsylvania the authority to regulate firearms.
- I oppose** giving municipalities in Pennsylvania the authority to regulate firearms.

**6. Punishing Local Authorities.** In 2014, the Pennsylvania Legislature enacted Act 192, which allows gun owners and gun organizations to sue towns and cities that enact local ordinances, even if those ordinances have not been enforced against that gun owner or organization – or against anyone at all. Act 192 completely redefined the meaning of legal standing to allow such lawsuits to proceed even in the absence of actual or imminent harm. Act 192 was struck down by the Commonwealth Court, and the question of its constitutionality is pending before the PA Supreme Court. Would you support reauthorizing the special standing provisions contained in Act 192?

- I oppose** reauthorizing the special standing provisions of Act 192.

- I **support** reauthorizing the special standing provisions of Act 192.

## Measures to Ensure Safe Storage and Security of Firearms

### 7. Child Access Prevention

Child access prevention bills have been shown to be effective at reducing unintentional firearm deaths among children. Unlike many other states, Pennsylvania lacks any child access prevention laws that penalize adults who give children unsupervised access to firearms. Every year in Pennsylvania, there are tragic accidents and criminal shootings by children who have found guns in their own homes.

- I **support** adopting child access prevention laws in Pennsylvania.
- I **oppose** adopting child access prevention laws in Pennsylvania.

### Carrying of Firearms

#### 8. Guns on college or university campuses.

In compliance with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act, Pennsylvania law *already* prohibits anyone, even a concealed weapons license holder, from possessing firearms in the buildings or on the grounds of any private or public elementary or high school. Pennsylvania law also requires each public or private institution of higher learning to publish a statement of policy regarding the possession and use of weapons. There have been efforts to amend the policy that governs the universities that are part of the Pa State System of Higher Education to require them to allow carrying of firearms on campus. CeaseFirePA believes that possession of firearms and ammunition should be prohibited on any college or university campus in PA.

- I **support** prohibiting the possession of firearms and ammunition on PA college campuses.
- I **oppose** prohibiting the possession of firearms and ammunition on PA college campuses.

#### 9. Guns in the Pennsylvania Capitol

Members of the public may not carry guns into the Pennsylvania Capitol because it contains a courtroom. Do you support or oppose allowing members of the public to carry guns into the Capitol?

- I **support** allowing members of the public to carry firearms into the Capitol.
- I **oppose** allowing members of the public to carry firearms into the Capitol.

#### 10. Guns in Municipal Buildings and on Municipal Property, Including Libraries and Parks

PA municipalities are not free to regulate the carrying of firearms into municipal buildings and onto municipal property, including libraries and parks. In the summer of 2013, there was a tragic shooting in

the Ross, PA township municipal building during a public hearing. Do you support or oppose allowing municipalities to prohibit the carrying of firearms into municipal buildings and onto municipal property?

- I **support** allowing municipalities to prohibit the carrying of firearms into municipal buildings and onto municipal property.
  
- I **oppose** allowing municipalities to prohibit the carrying of firearms into municipal buildings and onto municipal property.

**Thank you!** Please feel free to include additional comments when returning this form.