



CEASEFIREPA

FALL 2023

NEWSLETTER



CeaseFirePA volunteers celebrate from the House Gallery as legislators voted to pass gun safety bills.

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GUN SAFETY BILLS MARCH FORWARD

In late May, two pillars of CeaseFirePA's Common Agenda to End Gun Violence passed out of the PA House with bipartisan support.

Our team worked hard behind the scenes to get gun safety bills on the legislative agenda for the first time in a decade! Then, you spent weeks making your voice heard and rallying support.

Volunteers like John and Stephanie dropped by Rep. Williams office to urge him to vote for the Common Agenda. Mike and Marilyn empowered their communities to write letters to Reps. Gaydos, Mercuri and Mihalek. Four of our supporters made the case for life-saving action at Rep. Mecuri's Open House.

"This was a day that thousands of Pennsylvanians have been dreaming of for years. We are a step closer to a safer Pennsylvania," said Adam Garber, Executive Director of CeaseFirePA Action.

Dozens of gun violence prevention advocates and survivors cheered from the House gallery as Extreme Risk Protection Orders (HB 1018) and Universal Background Checks (HB 714) moved forward.

These life-saving bills are now one step closer to Gov. Shapiro's desk.

Read about how we happened and next steps on Page 4.

LATEST NEWS

01

Armed Guards Aren't A Solution

The Harrisburg Patriot-News covered our condemnation of Sen. Reagan's misguided proposal to place armed guards in every school instead of real solutions like Extreme Risk Protection Orders.

02

Endorsement: Lindsey Powell

CeaseFirePA Action endorsed Lindsey Powell for the special election in the Pittsburgh-area House District 21 to maintain a gun safety majority.

03

New Lawsuits Target Traffickers

Philadelphia announced two new lawsuits to go after ghost gun manufacturers and irresponsible dealers who are knowingly selling firearms to prohibited purchasers.

04

Empowering Communities

After teenagers Dahv and Asaun were murdered, Aliquippa Mayor Dwan Walker wrote in the Beaver County Times that gun violence "isn't the canary in the coal mine. It's a mother's scream across the state. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court must recognize our constitutional right to live freely."



\$40 Million for Anti-Violence Programs

We joined with allies calling for the General Assembly to restore funding before life-saving programs were shut down.



Keeping Kids Safe in School

Congresswoman Scanlon, students, and teachers called on Congress to ban assault weapons as school returned.

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VICTORY

New Gun Dealer Inspection Launches

5% of gun dealers were inspected in 2021. We're changing that.

Imagine if health inspectors didn't visit your favorite restaurant for years, even a decade. What would happen? You'd be much more likely to get food poisoning or find rats in the kitchen. Not because the owners are trying to poison you, but because inspectors help ensure everyone follows safety guidelines. Now imagine this industry-wide – we'd have a public health crisis.

This is the state of affairs for most gun dealers in the Commonwealth. The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the only current inspector of firearm dealers, inspected only 5% of all federally licensed dealers in 2021. Unsurprisingly, some dealers go over a decade without an inspection.

Over the last year, CeaseFirePA worked in partnership with the Brady Campaign to change that. At the beginning of the summer, Montgomery County Sheriff Sean Kilkenney announced he would begin visiting the dealers his office permits to ensure background checks are run, safety devices distributed, and other key safeguards required under the law are followed.

INSPECTIONS STOP GUN TRAFFICKING

People often ask: "Where do all these guns come from?" In most cases, the starting point is a licensed firearm dealer. The gun may end up in the black market after being stolen or resold, often illegally by a straw purchaser. When law enforcement finds the weapon, it may have been used in a crime. Someone may be dead.



"Gun dealers are the first line of defense in preventing the diversion of firearms to the illicit market, making their compliance with the law critical," said Tess Fardon, Counsel at Brady.

Here are just a few examples of the life-endangering practices that inspections could detect and correct:

- Review background check data to ensure each buyer is who they said they are.
- Guarantee dealers submit information to ATF for multiple gun purchases, a potential sign the person is trafficking weapons.
- Guarantee each gun buyer leaves the store with a locking device.

Illinois began targeted inspections of licensed dealers with high rates of recovered crime guns two years ago. Now the guns with the shortest time to crime dropped by 20 percent.

NEXT STEPS & A LEGAL CHALLENGE

Unfortunately, weeks after the initiative was announced, a local firearm dealer and the 2nd Amendment Foundation sued Sheriff Kilkenney and the PA State Police for ensuring dealers like ShotTec were complying with their permit. We plan to help defend them in court.

After the court allows the program to continue, CeaseFirePA plans to engage other Sheriffs to undertake similar inspection initiatives. In the meantime, we'll continue making the case that gun dealers, like any other business, cannot flout the laws meant to keep our community safe.

The Path to a Safer PA

Elected officials faced fierce pushback from a small minority of extremists for supporting the Common Agenda to End Gun Violence. Meanwhile, many supporters asked our team when the Pennsylvania Senate vote would happen.

Our answer: let's show our champions in the House they have support at home. And those who voted to allow gun violence to continue must know how out of step they are with their constituents.

At a town hall at Villanova, Majority Leader Bradford and freshman Rep. Borowski called the votes overdue. Nearly forty Pennsylvanians listened as Scott Charles of Temple Hospital and Dr. Merle Carter of Jefferson Hospital discussed how these two bills would keep people out of their trauma centers. In a separate forum at a Senior Center in Glen Mills, Assistant District Attorney Rouse gave real-world examples of how Extreme Risk Protection Orders could be used in Delaware County:

"While someone is in crisis, the ability to take those steps will undeniably prevent acts of violence both to the community at large and also self-inflicted."



Our movement heard the call. From dropping off thank you cards to educating their neighbors about these life-saving votes, we spread out in critical legislative districts to make it clear: voting to end gun violence is right and what Pennsylvanians want.

Soon afterward, we released a scorecard that is being distributed to tens of thousands of voters in key districts.



GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION SCORECARD

The good news: 100 state Representatives voted to end gun violence every single time this session. CeaseFirePA's new Gun Violence Prevention Scorecard released in August helps constituents discover how their legislators voted.

We will continue to push for a clear gun safety majority. And, this new tool will allow Pennsylvanians to hold their elected officials accountable. It will be updated on a regular basis as more votes occur.

**Your Representative's
Record**



THE NEXT STEP TO SAVE LIVES



#WearOrange



Clockwise from top left: Residents marching in Chester; a kid hopes for a safer world in West Chester; survivors and activists gather on a Philadelphia playground to keep kids safe; Lt. Gov. Davis addresses a crowd at our annual Pittsburgh #WearOrange Rally.

After the vote, CeaseFirePA supporters shared their concerns with Rep. Craig Williams, protested outside Rep. Scheuren's office, and recruited neighbors in Bucks & Chester County to call their elected officials.

“Mandatory reporting laws deter straw purchases and keep guns away from people who shouldn't own them. If [Rep. Craig] Williams is truly 'tough on crime,' he should start by keeping guns away from criminals.

Isabella, CeaseFirePA Volunteer in the Delaware County Daily Times ”

IN COURT

Constitutional Right to Safety

Gun violence is the leading cause of death for young Black men and youth in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. This danger isn't random – it was designed by a system that has denied these cities the ability to enact life-saving laws for decades. And, it was powered by a General Assembly that has rejected evidence-based laws like permit to purchase.

On September 13th, in partnership with the City of Philadelphia and gun violence survivors, our lawsuit challenging firearm preemption was heard at the PA Supreme Court. Simply put, “preemption” means municipalities are barred from enacting local gun safety measures to keep their residents safe.

Represented by lawyers at the Public Interest Law Center and Hogan Lovells, we had our day in court for all the Pennsylvanians who have lost someone to this public health crisis.

WHY WE SUED

The General Assembly's refusal to enact evidence-based laws has had a bloody toll – more than 4,000 dead in Philadelphia in the last decade alone. Thousands more were injured.

For decades, CeaseFirePA has fought to enact life-saving laws. While some policies to disarm abusers and expand background checks



have passed, critical solutions like permit to purchase and Extreme Risk Protection Orders have been stiff-armed by the General Assembly. Survivors and public health experts have been stunned as gun violence expanded.

Their refusal to act has endangered lives. As Judge Leadbetter noted in her lower court opinion: when a child leaves his home every day with the fear of being shot, “we are denying him the most fundamental right, that of life and liberty, and so I would urge our Supreme Court to reconsider” an earlier decision on preemption.

VIGIL TO THOSE LOST

Survivors and supporters gathered at City Hall the day before the Court heard the case to demonstrate the damage from decades of preemption. In a powerful roll call, loved ones walked to the podium and shared the names of their loved ones, the year they were killed by gun violence, and why they mattered. In silence, each person was remembered as attendees hoped no one else will join the deadly list of victims, before the court will act.

“If giving Philadelphia the right to have its own gun laws will save one life, it is worth it. To not, is a demonstration of the loss of humanity in our society.”

Stanley Crawford, father of William, murdered in 2018

CHAMP'S CORNER

Youth Fighting Gun Violence

Cayla Waddington is 17 years old and a senior in high school in Philadelphia. She has spoken at CeaseFirePA rallies and events.

Q: Why did you first get involved in addressing gun violence?

A: I first got involved in gun violence prevention because my mom was afraid. My freshman year of high school was the year when everyone had to do online school because of the pandemic. My only chance to get out of the house was to ride my bike, but my mom was afraid of letting me go outside because of the fear that I would get hit by a stray bullet. I knew I had to do something so my mom wouldn't have to be afraid anymore.

So, I started participating in the District Attorney's Office's violence prevention workshops and speaking at press conferences. Eventually, I led a coalition surveying 1,300 students across Philadelphia to see what people my own age thought the impacts, causes, and possible solutions of gun violence could be. We then compiled all the responses so we could come up with a cohesive recommendation for City Council.

Q: You've spoken up at City Council, in the State Capitol, and at community events. Why do you think it's essential for youth to have a voice in this discussion?

A: Young people's voices need to be heard because we are the ones who will be inheriting the problems and systems that grown-ups will leave us. We need the adults in positions of power to recognize that their actions will affect the next generation, will affect us. I've made it my mission to ensure teens have a voice regarding important issues



like gun violence prevention. I've seen the harmful effects of gun violence; I've seen how it affects kids my age.

After conducting our survey, I found a discouraging consensus: hopelessness. The teens I've talked to are hopeless because they are scared. They are tired of having to see yet another school shooting on the news. They are tired of having metal detectors in their schools and having to do shelter-in-place drills.

Our teenage years are supposed to be some of the best years of our lives, I just started my senior year. If instead of worrying about what college I'm going to next year or hanging with friends for one last hoorah I have to worry about someone opening fire on the El train on my way to school, then the people in power allowing that to happen have to hear about it.

Q: What would you say to people who think this is hopeless?

A: Gun violence is a man-made problem. That means it can be fixed with man-made solutions. People need to recognize that we can be the solution, not the problem. We can email, call, and visit our elected officials. We can compel our elected officials in Harrisburg to do what needs to be done to stop gun trafficking, ban assault weapons, and require safe storage. We can make our elected officials keep us safe. And if they don't, we can speak out. We can be the change we want to see in the world.



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

For the first time this fall, I sent my kid off to school. Whether you are still sending your kid in each day or remember those days, it is filled with hope and apprehension. Will they get along with other children? What will they learn? And what challenges will they face?

But there is an unspoken worry: will the school call to tell me my kid is sick or there is an active shooter on campus? Will my child come home at the end of the day? Will they be shot and end up in the hospital, or worse?

This fall, we launched our Keep Kids Safe in School campaign because students should focus on learning. Parents shouldn't worry if they are safe.

I know we don't have to live like this. And together, we'll make sure our grandchildren do not have to. Thank you for being our partner in this important work.

Adam Garber



**DONATE TODAY TO
POWER THE
MOVEMENT!**

TAKE A STAND

Visit CeaseFirePA.org to learn more