

**Strength of Gun Laws Matter  
For a Better America  
For a Better Michigan**

*“The public health and welfare of the people of the state are hereby declared to be matters of primary public concern. The Legislature shall pass suitable laws for the protection and promotion of the public health.” Constitution of the State of Michigan of 1963.*

**States with stronger gun laws have lower gun death rates.**

Evidence from the Giffords Law Center, among other sources, indicates that states with stronger gun laws have lower gun death rates. For example, California is assigned a gun law strength grade of A and a gun death rate of 7.8 per 100K individuals. Michigan is assigned a gun law strength grade of C and a gun death rate 11.2 per 100K. An F grade was given to Alabama with a gun death rate of 22.9 per 100K.

California, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, New York and Hawaii have continued to strengthen already strong gun laws. California requires a background check for every gun sale and has enacted an extreme risk protection order. These and other actions have cut California gun deaths in half.

Michigan gun laws are ranked just above the national average. The rate of gun deaths is ranked below the national average. This is reason enough to oppose any proposed legislation that would reduce the strength of Michigan firearm legislation. Examples of such legislation follow:

- In 2019, legislation was introduced in the Michigan House of Representatives that would repeal criminal sanctions for carrying a concealed pistol after an individual’s license expired.
- A law that would allow concealed carry in pistol-free zones.
- A law that would repeal a current law that makes it a misdemeanor for a pawnbroker to accept and sell a pistol that has been pawned.

**Fewer people die from gun violence in states with strong gun laws.**

Research and statistics that would further reduce gun violence should be reflected in Michigan Legislation. Gun violence is reflected not only in firearm deaths but in shattered families, life-altering injuries and the exorbitant cost of violence. Polls have consistently shown that the public supports laws that have been proven to reduce gun violence. Michigan legislators must be encouraged to pass such laws.

Following are three gun laws that statistically make a difference in reducing firearm violence and merit passage by the MI Legislature.

**(1) Background checks on all firearm purchases.**

**(2) Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO)**, which can help prevent suicides and mass shootings by allowing family members and law enforcement to petition the court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals in crisis. ERPO laws empower those most likely to recognize warning signs of an individual in crisis.

**(3) Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws**, which make it a crime to leave firearms accessible to minors.

Michigan legislators have introduced both ERPO and CAP legislation.

## **Facts about Michigan gun deaths.**

Michigan counties with the highest gun death rates are rural counties. (*Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Fatal Injuries, 2009- 2014*)

54% of gun deaths in Michigan are suicides. (*ibid*)

There were suicides by gun in every Michigan county during this period. (*ibid*)

Suicides are strongly associated with the availability of household guns. (*American Public Health Association, Reducing suicides by firearms, 11/13/2018*)

Firearm trafficking from states with weak gun laws affect firearm violence in states with stronger gun laws. Without the equalizing factor of federal legislation, state legislators have a responsibility to pass laws that have statistically proven to support a reduction in firearm violence. Addressing urban gun violence has traditionally been neglected. All states should be aware of urban gun reduction programs. The Gifford Law Center report *Healing Communities in Crisis and Investing in Intervention* provides intervention strategies and examples of successful implementation.

## **What can we do to advocate for goals that keep our families and communities safe?**

- 1) Register and Vote.
- 2) Contact your legislator, and
  - Encourage legislation that closes deadly loopholes on our background check system.
  - Support enforceable laws that address gun trafficking and fraudulent purchases.
  - Fight gun lobby efforts to allow guns into sensitive places like bars, parks, colleges, and more.
  - Promote the continuing interpretation of the Second Amendment that respects rights while protecting public safety.
- 3) Support League of Women Voter-MI Action Alerts.

**Stronger gun safety laws lead to lower gun death rates.  
Firearm violence is a public health and safety issue.**

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**Resources:** *Data from 50 states is available at <https://lawcenter.giffords.org>. Analysis of the data supports the statement "Gun Deaths Rise as Gun Laws Weaken."*

## **POLICIES OF LWV-US. POSITIONS ON GUN CONTROL**

- The LWVUS believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic weapons in the U.S. is a major health and safety issue to its citizens.
- The LWVUS supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens.
- The LWVUS supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.
- The LWVUS supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.
- The LWVUS supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.