

CONCERT ACROSS AMERICA TO END GUN VIOLENCE

Tracey Tynan / Xavier Peace and Justice

25	Americans are 25 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than in any other developed country
51	Average number of women shot to death in the U.S. each month by current or former husbands or boyfriend
91	On an average day, 91 Americans are killed with guns.
12,000	# of Americans murdered by gun violence each year
33,000	# of gun deaths that happen every year – includes murder, suicide and accidental shootings
58,344	# of Federally Licensed Gun Dealers in the U.S. – nearly twice the # of post offices

While these numbers are disturbing, there are other implications to them: gun violence tends to impact those that have already been marginalized by society: they are more likely to live in impoverished areas that lack strong school systems, are controlled by gangs, lack employment opportunities and breed despair.

If America's leaders would invest in proven pathways out of poverty, we could radically diminish violence in America. If America spent as much money offering opportunities to every 16 to 26-year-old as we spend locking them up for minor offenses that further cut them off from a positive future, we could end poverty in a generation or two. When young people find a true pathway to opportunity and a caring community, they become excellent parents determined to give their children the world of opportunities they lacked in their own childhood. As a Jesuit community, we can look at the gun issue as an opportunity to reach out to the marginalized sectors of our country while advocating for change.

Another issue blocking real reform in our gun laws is THE GUN LOBBY Over the last four decades, the leaders of the National Rifle Association have steered the organization away from advocating on behalf of sportsmen and hunters towards lobbying for the most extreme policies and opposing virtually all gun violence prevention legislation. In recent years, that's meant working tirelessly to prevent the passage of common-sense laws that would do more to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

The **NRA** has fought to prevent Congress from providing any funding for research on gun violence; it has blocked law enforcement from being able to share analyses of crime gun trace data; and it has tried to pass laws prohibiting doctors and military leaders from talking to patients and service members about responsible gun ownership and suicide prevention.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) leads the world in research on how violence affects public health, and how to stop it. But it conducts almost no research on the role of firearms in killing nearly 32,000 Americans every year.

When the CDC began studying gun violence in the early 1990s, the Washington gun lobby launched a serious campaign to persuade Congress to block its funding. In 1996, the effort culminated in an amendment backed by the National Rifle Association (NRA) that explicitly forbade the agency from research that could be used to “advocate or promote gun control.”

In the years since, CDC funding for firearm injury prevention has fallen 96 percent. In 2012, the Centers devoted \$100,000 of its \$5.6 billion budget to the subject.

Major public research funding for gun violence prevention is estimated at \$2 million annually. By contrast, in 2011, the National Institutes of Health devoted \$21 million to the study of headaches.

Beginning in 2003, the National Rifle Association persuaded Congress to impose restrictions on how cities and elected officials can use and share the information they gather about guns used in crimes. These so-called “Tiahrt Amendments” also bar the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) from using an electronic database to organize the millions of records it holds, forcing the agency charged with enforcing gun laws in the Information Age to use a paper-based filing system.

We need to advocate for the federal government to revive research on firearms and remove restrictions on the use of information that can reduce crime and save lives.

We need to elect and monitor officials who will:

- Remove “policy riders” on federal appropriations bills that limit firearms research at the CDC and NIH and provide appropriate funding to study the role of firearms on public health.
- Fully fund the National Violent Death Reporting System and expand it to all 50 states to improve our understanding of the role firearms play in fatalities.
- Reconstitute the research program on gun trafficking at the National Institute of Justice to update and expand our understanding of the market for illegal guns.
- Resume the publication of Justice Department reports on illegal gun markets and trafficking patterns.
- Rescind the Tiahrt Amendment - This precludes gun trace data from being used in academic research of gun use in crime. Additionally, the law blocks any data legally released from being admissible in civil lawsuits against gun sellers or manufacturers.

- Expand the bulk sale reporting program for assault weapons to include all 50 states.

As of today, most of the gun-related legislative activity is happening at the state level. Connecticut plans to prohibit local gun sales to people on no-fly lists, while Washington state last year passed a law requiring universal criminal background checks on all firearm sales. We have the New York Safe Act, which includes a tougher assault weapons ban that broadens the definition of what constitutes an assault weapon, and limits the capacity of magazines to 10 bullets. The law also requires background checks of ammunition and gun buyers, even in private sales, imposes tougher penalties for illegal gun use, a one-state check on all firearms purchases, and programs to cut gun violence in high-crime neighborhoods.

The USCCB has said “For the common good, the promotion of human life, there is a right and a moral duty on the part of the public authorities to regulate automatic weapons. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also says that regulating the production and sales of arms are necessary because they affect the common good of nations and of the international community. Chicago Archbishop Blase Cupich, in an Oct. 9 op-ed in the Chicago Tribune, called for Catholics and others to “band together” and demand gun-control legislation in Congress. He argued that the Second Amendment had been “perverted” by the gun industry and its desire for profit. “Let’s be honest,” the archbishop wrote. “The Second Amendment was passed in an era when organized police forces were few and citizen militias were useful in maintaining the peace. Its original authors could not have anticipated a time when the weapons we have a right to bear now include military-grade assault weapons that have turned our streets into battlefields.”

I am an active member and recommend the group Everytown for Gun Safety. It is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country with more than **three million supporters and more than 100,000 donors**, including moms, mayors, survivors, and everyday Americans, who are fighting for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment and help save lives. They are an independent, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to understanding and reducing gun violence in America. At the core of Everytown are Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and the Everytown Survivor Network. I encourage you to visit their website, join and see how you can best help us bring common sense gun laws back to our country.

PLEASE JOIN US THIS THURSDAY AT 630PM IN HURTADO HALL FOR A SCREENING OF “MAKING A KILLING: GUNS, MONEY AND THE NRA.

PEACE AND LOVE ALWAYS!

