



# Do More Guns Make Us Safer?

## Legislative Action – *Working for Freedom from Gun Violence*

Although Colorado doesn't have the strongest gun laws in the country, we do have ones that are reasonable and a good fit for the people of Colorado. The complaints by the pro-gun rights advocates largely concern convenience, but unless one is a criminal, the slight inconvenience for some creates a huge benefit for our communities in reduced suicides, homicides and accidents with firearms.

For a number of years, the Colorado legislature has been pummeled with numerous proposals to make guns more plentiful, powerful and present in our everyday lives. Proposals have been considered to:

- Allow individuals to carry guns into our public schools
- Expand Stand Your Ground provisions to businesses
- Dispense with requirement for a permit in order to carry a concealed handgun
- Expand Concealed Carry permits to underage military
- Repeal the Background Check expansion to all gun transfers
- Rearm some felons
- Repeal the High Capacity Magazine Ban
- Remove obstacles to obtaining Machine Guns and Silencers

### **This brings forth the question:**

### **Do more guns in our public lives actually make us safer?**

Where there are more guns, there are more gun deaths.

Gun availability is a risk factor for homicide in the United States and other high-income countries. Multiple studies have shown that where there are more guns in homes, communities, states, and regions within the United States, individuals are at a higher risk for firearm homicide.

Where there are higher levels of gun ownership, there are more gun suicides and accidental gun deaths. States with higher gun ownership have far higher firearm suicides, where non-firearm suicides are comparable. Suicide attempts with firearms are most often fatal. Suicides make up nearly 80% of gun deaths in Colorado.

Differences in homicide rates of Law Enforcement Officers is not related to differences in crime rates, but rather to differences in household gun ownership. Law enforcement officers are three times more likely to be murdered in high gun ownership states than low gun ownership states.

Gun rights proponents claim that gun-free-zones, such as schools, are magnets for mass killers. But there is no evidence that mass killers select locations based on gun policy, or that armed citizens have been able to stop the attacks. For example, in his journal, the Aurora Theater shooter made no mention of the theater being a gun-free zone, but did record observations on the right place to park his vehicle.

Gun rights proponents propose that civilians, such as teachers, be armed in our schools. Unfortunately, trained law enforcement officers hit their targets only about 20% of the time in

armed confrontations, meaning those 80% of bullets go somewhere else. In a crowded classroom with a minimally-trained teacher, the consequences could be horrendous.

Gun rights proponents often note the high homicide rates in Chicago and Mexico, which both have strong gun laws, but 70% of guns recovered from crime scenes in Mexico between 2009 and 2014 could be traced back to the U.S., and gun shows in Indiana are a frequent source of crime guns in Chicago.

Where there are more guns, there is a greater propensity for aggressive behavior and violence.

9% of American adults self-report both having impulsive angry behavior and possessing firearms.

Motorists who have a gun in their vehicle are more likely to express road rage (obscene gestures (44% more likely) and following too closely (77% more likely)).

Texans convicted of serious crimes were 4.8 times more likely to threaten someone with a firearm if they had a concealed carry license.

In 2014, nearly eight times more people were shot and killed in arguments than by civilians trying to stop a crime.

In 20% of cases where Law Enforcement officers are killed in the line of duty, it is with their own or their partner's gun.

The gravest danger for women is an abusive partner with a gun. Of females killed with a firearm, two-thirds were killed by an intimate partner.

A woman's chances of being killed increases over 5-fold when her abuser has access to a gun.

States that require a background check for every handgun sale have 38% fewer women shot to death by their intimate partners.

CBI reported that each month, on average, 95 persons with Concealed Carry Permits were found to have committed subsequent crimes, 35% serious enough to bar possession of a firearm.

CBI reporting also indicates that since the inception of the Concealed Carry Permitting program in 2003, over 4700 individuals have been denied permits because they failed the background check. Sheriffs have used their discretion to deny or revoke permits for over 1000 individuals since 2006. Each of these individuals, and many others who never attempted to obtain a permit, would feel empowered to walk our streets with hidden handguns under a permitless system.

Colorado has reasonable gun laws that balance the rights of individuals for protection with the need to ensure the safety of the public from criminals who would use weapons against others. Loosening Colorado's gun laws would make the lives of all Colorado's citizens less safe.

*Colorado Ceasefire has been working since 2000 for freedom from gun violence.*