



# **IT ENDS WITH US**

**A Plan to Reimagine Public Safety**



**MARCH FOR OUR LIVES**

What will it take to create safe communities?

Everywhere we look, gun violence is decimating our families and communities. Whether it's the mass shootings in shopping malls, concerts, schools, and places of worship, the retaliatory gun violence in urban neighborhoods haunted by the legacy of economic disinvestment, racism, and poverty, or the solitary suicides committed nationwide with increasing frequency, gun violence adds up: over 100 Americans die from it every day. 100+ lives lost every single day. We started March For Our Lives (MFOL) to say, "Not One More."

**No more school shooting drills.**

**No more burying loved ones.**

**No more American exceptionalism in all the wrong ways.**

This policy agenda is rooted in what our community is telling us they need to be safe. It is grounded in the perspectives of survivors of gun violence and their families. It is bolstered by robust policy analysis and conversations with a broad range of stakeholders. And it acknowledges many of the underlying forces that fuel gun violence: gun glorification, political apathy, poverty, armed supremacy, and our country's mental health crisis.

As a youth-led movement to end the epidemic of gun violence, we believe a new reality is possible—one where we are free from gun violence in all of its forms, including state-sanctioned violence by police. Among young people, gun violence has become a top cause of death. It has many root causes, including hate, poverty, and despair. And it's amplified by the societal belief that a gun can solve our problems. At MFOL, we know this is a deeply intersectional issue, inextricably bound with our long journey for racial justice, economic justice, immigrant rights, and the rights of our LGBTQIA+ allies.

Just as we have reached a cultural reckoning on mass shootings in the last several years, giving our country the courage to take on the gun lobby, we have accelerated our collective awareness of the violent origins of policing in America that are still present today.

To update the Peace Plan and deliver a policy agenda in a way that is accountable to our communities and our political moment, we engaged—in partnership with the Center for Advancing Innovative Policy (CAIP)—in a participatory process centering our stakeholders, with particular attention to the voices of the young people with whom we work and organize.

## **Our approach to developing a more grassroots-anchored update of this policy agenda was comprised of three main steps:**

- 1) an initial assessment, including a policy landscape analysis,
- 2) a comprehensive stakeholder process, and
- 3) synthesis, which allowed us to integrate ideas and prioritize our policy goals.

The issues and needs identified by MFOL's chapter leads, regional organizing directors, and Youth Congress members critically informed the vision for safety laid out in this agenda.

Over the course of several months, the CAIP team gathered data from over 80 of MFOL's internal and external stakeholders. Once research and stakeholder data were collected, MFOL and CAIP narrowed and prioritized this information while contending with and contextualizing for current political realities, staff capacity, and stakeholder relationships.

This updated agenda is a result of those conversations and analyses—a set of priorities that reflect the diversity and richness of our networks and our movements while acknowledging political realities and pushing our movements forward.

Our mission calls for something more bold and transformative than gun control alone. We call for a world re-imagined: a world where oppressive power structures are abandoned and community is embraced. A world where all human needs are met and the love of people is centered.

In order to understand our approach to taking on gun violence, we want to be clear about the forces that fuel gun violence in our country. They are gun glorification, armed supremacy, political apathy and corruption, poverty, and the national mental health crisis.

- **Gun glorification** is the belief embedded in our culture that power and safety are derived from guns. In this country, we put guns on a pedestal and prioritize firearm access over access to human needs. This makes guns extremely easy to access—easier than housing or medical care.
- **Armed supremacy** is the use of guns and the threat of gun violence to reinforce power structures, hierarchies, and status. It is how individuals or groups of people reinforce their perceived value relative to those with less power. It is how white supremacy and patriarchy survive.
- **Political apathy and corruption** is the gradual destruction of the democratic principle that power comes from the people. It happens when politics fails to change lived outcomes for those it's meant to serve. Politicians use voters to gain power for themselves, but the voters get little in return. People become apathetic because they are not valued or empowered.
- **Poverty** is the state of not having enough material possessions, income, or resources to meet basic human needs. The communities facing the highest rates of everyday gun violence have been intentionally impoverished—systemically denied resources and opportunity by the state for generations.
- There is a **national mental health crisis**. While we fight to end gun violence, there is another mass-scale public health emergency happening simultaneously. Millions of Americans are struggling with undiagnosed and untreated mental illness and lack of access to mental health support and care. People with mental illness are often mischaracterized as being a threat to others, when in fact, they are at higher risk of becoming a victim of gun violence themselves, including suicide. We refuse this scapegoating.

Each of these forces is rooted in oppression. To create a society in which every person is supported and able to thrive, we must understand how these forces operate and then work to dismantle them.

**This policy agenda is part of that strategy.**

Every day in America, [more than 100 lives](#) are taken by the deadly epidemic of gun violence. Among young people, gun violence has become a top cause of death, second only to [car accidents](#), and it is the leading cause of death among [young men](#). And the COVID-19 pandemic has only further laid bare the structural inequities that contribute to violence in our [communities](#), intensifying the need for holistic solutions to gun violence.

Violence is a complex and layered issue, but it is undeniable that the root causes of much of the violence in the United States lie in poverty, marginalization, exclusion, and glorification of guns in our culture. It is amplified by the societal belief that a gun can solve our problems.

We call for robust investment in the things that communities around the country need in order to live in safety, including community-based violence reduction programs, suicide prevention programs, domestic violence prevention programs, and mental and behavioral health service programs.

### **We need leaders willing to take these bold steps to address the national gun violence epidemic.**

President Biden and all our elected officials must act with a fierce urgency to call this crisis what it is: a national public health emergency.

- They must acknowledge that the level of gun violence in the United States is [unprecedented](#) for a developed nation—and only bold, new solutions can move the needle on the rates of gun injuries and deaths.
- They must recognize that gun violence has many faces in our communities, from rural suicides to intimate partner violence to urban youth violence to violence driven by white supremacist ideologies. And they must commit to holding an unpatriotic gun lobby and gun industry accountable not just for weakening our nation's gun laws, but also for [illegal behavior](#) and self-dealing that offends and contradicts America's vast majority of responsible gun owners.
- They must allow communities to be the architects of our own solutions, and facilitating these solutions requires meeting people where they are, listening to their stories and making real investments in improving their lives.

But we cannot do this alone. We need leaders—in the White House, in Congress, and in our courts—who care about the future of our children and our nation.

## **Seek Accountability for the Gun Lobby and Industry**

The gun lobby and industry must be held accountable for decades of illegal behavior and misguided policies intended to shield only themselves and perpetuate the proliferation of armed supremacy. We must reexamine the dangerous *District of Columbia v. Heller* interpretation of the Second Amendment, initiate both FEC and IRS investigations into the NRA, and fully repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA).

## **Address State Violence & Invest in Safety**

Gun violence in America is so deeply entrenched that the state itself is a major perpetrator. To properly address gun violence in America, we must confront the ways law enforcement's brutal targeting of communities of color, and Black people in particular, contributes to gun deaths and injuries. To do so, we must end the war on drugs, stop the school-to-prison pipeline, and dramatically reduce the scope and size of policing to replace it with new forms of public safety that work for everyone instead of a select few. We must also redefine what safety looks like for our communities. This means addressing poverty—manifested in homelessness, food scarcity, disparate access to healthcare. Our investments and advocacy efforts must center community, including programming, mutual aid, and preventative and destigmatizing work that reflects cultural competence.

## **Raise the Standards of Gun Ownership**

A key piece of this roadmap is to end gun glorification by advocating and passing legislation to raise the national standards for gun ownership. This includes a national licensing and registry system that promotes responsible gun ownership; a ban on assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and other weapons of war; policies to disarm gun owners who pose a harm risk; and a national gun buy-back program to reduce the estimated [265-393](#) million firearms in circulation by at least 30%.

## **Build a Real Democracy**

While sensible gun reforms such as gun licensing enjoy wide support across the American electorate, our democratic institutions are fraying. A fully functional democracy that works to elevate—not stifle—the voices of people over corporate interests and influential lobbies is a powerful tool for preventing gun violence and supporting community self-determination. We call for automatic voter registration, the prohibition of voter ID laws, and campaign finance reform, including overturning *Citizens United*. We also call for reform to our judiciary system, including increased diversity of judges, state responsibility for public safety, and increased judicial transparency and accountability.

## Leverage the Power of the Presidency

Young people turned out in record numbers in 2020 to support President Biden and Vice President Harris, and tipped the scales in many swing states that were [crucial to victory](#) for Democrats<sup>1</sup>. In order to restore faith in government, the Biden-Harris Administration must address the unique concerns of young voters starting with a comprehensive plan to combat everyday gun violence ravaging communities nationwide, especially communities of color. To start, they must appoint at least two senior-level positions in the White House: a National Director of Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) and a Director of Youth Engagement. The Director of GVP will be tasked with operationalizing agencies like the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and others which have long been structurally weakened by the gun lobby. The Director would likewise empanel a committee to study and recommend related reforms. The Director of Youth Engagement should be a young Millennial or Gen-Z, and serve on the Domestic Policy Council, advising the President and senior staff on issues of importance to young Americans. Finally, a record level of violence requires a record level of funding: at least \$1 billion in emergency and discretionary agency funding must be directed towards community violence intervention programming and increased data collection and research on gun violence prevention.

1. Approximately 55% of young Americans voted for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to restore leadership in the White House and bring meaningful action on issues that disproportionately impact the youth. Young voters of color, in particular, made the difference in key battleground states including Wisconsin, Arizona, and Georgia.

# HOLDING THE GUN LOBBY & INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABLE



*For too long, the unpatriotic gun lobby and industry have run Washington.*

*Those days are over.*



The Biden-Harris Administration must use the full force of the federal government to bring the reckless and irresponsible gun lobby and industry to justice for the irreparable harm they have brought to the American people, beginning with the gun lobby's decades-long campaign to [change our interpretation](#) of the Second Amendment. Key elements of accountability would include:

- **Rejecting the ahistorical basis of Heller** — We believe the Biden-Harris administration must commit to reexamining the District of Columbia v. Heller decision. Many distinguished [jurists](#) and [historians](#) from across the political [spectrum](#) have excoriated the Heller decision as [contrary to the historical record](#) and the will of the American people. This controversial decision deserves a serious rethinking.
  - **Attorney General study on the Heller decision** — During the George W. Bush Administration, Attorney General John Ashcroft [asked](#) the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel to study the constitutional basis for whether the Second Amendment guaranteed an individual right to own a firearm, a [constitutional question](#) that had been considered settled by the federal courts. Using academic research supported by the gun lobby, the Justice Department concluded that the Second Amendment secures an individual right to bear and keep arms, setting the foundation for the controversial 2008 District of Columbia v. Heller decision. We believe that it's long past time for the Justice Department to reexamine the Heller decision.
- **NRA investigations** — The NRA is under [serious scrutiny](#) from multiple local, state, and federal entities for self-dealing and mismanagement. This should offend responsible NRA members and gun owners alike. President Biden must direct the IRS to open an investigation into the tax-exempt nonprofit status of the NRA and direct the FEC to open an investigation into whether the NRA has violated campaign finance laws.
- **Gun industry accountability** — The firearms industry needs to be better regulated. This begins with a much more muscular ATF. With increased and targeted allocations of funding, the ATF could [aggressively take enforcement action](#) on the small minority of irresponsible gun dealers and manufacturers who are supplying the illegal market for gun crimes. We must also [equip the ATF](#) with the tools to actually fight gun crimes, like enabling searchable gun records across the agency. In addition, we need [federal policies](#) that require anti-theft reporting and training to deter straw purchases and gun trafficking. Real accountability for the gun industry doesn't just protect our communities—it also protects America's gun owners from an industry that doesn't have their best interests at heart.



- **Repeal PLCAA** — One of the biggest favors granted to the gun lobby by Congress is the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), which gives gun manufacturers and dealers [broad immunity](#) from legal liability. PLCAA is both an injustice (removing a method of redress for gun violence victims and survivors) and a shield for the industry from economic incentives to make their products and distribution channels safer. We must repeal PLCAA.
- **Consumer safety standards for firearms** — Unlike a variety of other consumer products like cars and toys, firearms are [specifically exempt](#) from consumer product oversight over their manufacturing and design. We need to change that, to ensure that firearms are expressly regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

# KNOW THE ROOT CAUSES AND RESPOND TO THEM



*Divest from systems that cause  
harm and invest in  
solutions that create real safety.*



Gun violence in America differs dramatically by geography and demographics. Black men are 10 times [more likely](#) to die by gun homicide than white men, but white men are 2.5 times more likely to die by gun suicide than Black men. In short, what works in one community to reduce gun violence may not work in another.

What we know is this: there has been a systemic, discriminatory divestment in communities of color, particularly Black and Indigenous communities, which has had devastating consequences. Creating safety means investing in solutions that actually keep people safe:

- **Community-based violence reduction** — [Urban gun violence](#), which accounts for a majority of the 14,000 gun homicides each year, can and should be addressed. [Ample evidence](#) indicates that urban gun violence is highly concentrated within a specific subset of young, at-risk men of color. Acknowledging this basic premise, we can support community-legitimate and trauma-informed initiatives to provide direct individual outreach, social services, job creation, and [crisis management programs](#) to interrupt and intervene with at-risk individuals, we can seriously [reduce violence in our cities](#). To this end, we support an immediate investment of at least \$1 billion directed at the 40 cities in America with the highest rates of violence for evidence-based and trauma-informed programs, including violence intervention models and hospital and place-based violence intervention programs. This investment would produce an [outsized return](#): 12,000 lives saved and \$120 billion saved in direct and indirect gun violence costs.
- **Dramatically reduce the scope and size of policing** — Firearm deaths account for [95% of deaths](#) of civilians caused by police, and Black people are nearly [three times](#) as likely to be shot and killed by police than white people. Moreover, police officers in departments across the United States are responsible for a [devastating number](#) of non-fatal gun injuries. As it stands today, we rely on the police to do too much too often. They respond to mental health and substance abuse crises, homelessness, school-based incidents, and many other non-violent incidents, often escalating opportunities for violence. We are morally obligated to recognize that our fight to end gun violence includes police violence.
  - To achieve this goal, we support [the BREATHE Act](#), and advocate for divesting from the police state and investing in the health and well-being of all people in order to be free from violence. This bill offers a radical re-imagining of public safety, community care, and how we spend money as a society. It has four key elements:
    1. Divest federal resources from incarceration and policing
    2. Invest in new, non-punitive, non-carceral approaches to community safety that lead states to shrink their criminal legal systems and center the protection of Black lives, including Black mothers, Black trans people, and



### Black women

3. Allocate new money to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities
  4. Hold political leaders to their promises and enhance the self-determination of all Black communities
- **Suicide prevention** — Suicides represent the [majority of gun deaths](#) in America, accounting for nearly two-thirds of gun deaths, with half of all suicides committed with a firearm. Gun suicide rates are rising particularly for [older white men](#) and [younger people of color](#), fueling a crisis of suicide that has [surged](#) 30% in the last two decades. [Research](#) supports a straightforward correlation: more guns means more lethal suicide attempts. To address these challenges, we believe the solutions are twofold. First, we must pass and implement federal policies that create more barriers (permanent revocation, temporary holds, and waiting periods) to firearm access for at-risk individuals who are a danger to themselves. Second, we must invest in state and local suicide prevention programs, including [gun seller partnerships](#), [behavioral health service programs](#), lethal means training for [health care providers](#) and other gatekeepers, hotlines, and [crisis intervention training](#) for law enforcement. We must ensure that we make suicide prevention programs more accessible than firearms.
  - **Mental and behavioral health programs** — We believe that there is a false choice in our country today: stronger gun laws or more behavioral health funding. First, it is crucial to acknowledge that mental illness is not a risk factor for interpersonal gun violence; in fact, individuals struggling with mental illness are [more likely](#) to be victims of gun violence than [offenders](#). The Biden-Harris Administration needs to reject rhetoric that stigmatizes people with mental illness and invest aggressively in gun violence prevention and mental and behavioral health programs. This Administration must make holistic investments in mental and behavioral health services and programs for all communities that are struggling with the aftermath of all gun violence: the daily toll of [homicides](#), suicides, and [mass shootings](#). Our goal: make it as easy to access mental and behavioral health services in these communities as it was to access firearms.
  - **Address intimate partner violence** — Firearms make intimate partner violence all the more dangerous; American women are [five times](#) more likely to be killed in a domestic violence incident when there is a gun in the home and many recent mass shooters have been [linked](#) to domestic violence. That's why we recommend gun licensing denials for any type of domestic violence offender. On top of that, we would leverage the resources of our federal licensing system to fully fund domestic violence programs, including the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) and other programmatic components of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). We strongly urge a shift away from criminalized and carceral solutions, like many of those in VAWA. Instead of punitive measures that are unlikely to decrease intimate partner violence, VAWA should fund and promote [preventative policies](#), like those addressing child



abuse and neglect and developing community accountability and restorative justice models.

- **Invest in thriving communities** — Addressing the root causes of violence requires addressing the historic and systemic divestment and neglect of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. We believe that alleviating the stress of struggling to meet our most basic human needs is a crucial component to ending gun violence in this country. Data have shown that directly addressing these conditions through investments in [health care expansions](#), [summer youth employment programs](#), and [affordable housing](#) is linked to the reduction of violent crime. To that end, we support investments that support meeting basic human needs and the alleviation of manufactured suffering, such as significantly raising the minimum wage, Medicare for All, canceling student debt, robust interventions around education and affordable housing, and a swift response to climate change that accounts for the ways that communities of color have borne the brunt of climate disaster.

We must divest from the ways the state contributes to gun violence, disproportionately harming communities of color in general and Black communities in particular. To do this, we must:

- **End the War on Drugs** — The criminalization of drugs has failed as a strategy to address drug use and has brought unspeakable violence into countless communities, including gun violence. Evidence suggests that drug law enforcement not only contributes to gun violence and homicide rates, but that violence may be an inevitable consequence of [drug prohibition](#). The War on Drugs has fueled a violent underground economy and an equally violent state response. Efforts to decriminalize or legalize controlled substances must pay special attention to the history of racialized drug enforcement, and advocate for solutions that reckon with this history, such as New York's [Start SMART NY](#) marijuana reform campaign, which won legalized marijuana for adult use while addressing the harms of criminalization, automatic expungement, and community reinvestment programs. No plan to address gun violence in the United States is complete without addressing this issue.
- **Stop the school-to-prison pipeline** — The response to school shootings and gun violence in schools has often relied on ineffective interventions that look to carceral solutions. These strategies do not prevent violence, but rather shift who is enacting it. Interventions such as metal detectors in schools and funding for school resource officers build a pipeline from schools to the brutally violent and discriminatory criminal legal system, targeting Black students and other students of color. We support [policies](#) that disrupt this pipeline, such as addressing responses to vague and subjective status offenses that tend to be disproportionately used on students of color, redirecting funding from law enforcement officers in schools to alternative safety measures and services such as trained and supervised guidance counselors and social workers.

# WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN FEAR



*It's time for a higher standard of  
gun ownership.*



The federal government has failed in its responsibility to protect the safety and well-being of the public with regard to the nation's gun violence epidemic. The time for comprehensive and sweeping reform is now. We need ambitious leadership throughout the whole of government to stand in opposition to the gun lobby and industry in order to secure a peaceful America for generations to come.

### **If we require a license to drive a car, we should require a license to own a gun.**

For decades, the NRA and gun lobby have focused on a singular goal: to keep the standards for gun ownership [dangerously low](#). To make a sizable dent in reducing gun violence, we need to do the complete opposite: we need to raise the bar for gun ownership and responsibility in America. This begins with what a wide body of research and international precedents tell us is essential to reducing gun violence: a federal system of gun licensing. The facts are clear: a comprehensive system of gun licensing reduces [illegal gun trafficking](#), cuts down on [gun homicides](#), and [reduces gun suicides](#).

For example, when Connecticut implemented a state gun licensing system, its firearms homicide rate declined 40%, with firearm suicides dropping by 15%. Gun licensing has also proven to be effective in [other countries](#) like Canada, the United Kingdom, and [Australia](#), all of which have established robust licensing systems and have dramatically [lower per capita rates](#) of gun deaths and injuries. From a public health perspective, it should at least be as difficult to buy and transfer a firearm as it is to buy and transfer an [automobile](#), in which decades of regulating cars led to a dramatic improvement in automobile [safety](#).

In this effort, we must face some deeply entrenched social problems. We refuse to make our policy aims so abstract that they lose sight of the people and institutions that will enforce them. We know that forcibly disarming Black people has always been the aim of white supremacist groups in the United States. It is impossible to ignore how perceptions of Black Americans as violent criminals, the War on Drugs, and the gun narrative have led to unequal enforcement and prosecution of gun possession statutes across the nation.

The key elements of a national gun and ammunition licensing system include:

- **A multi-step approval process**, overseen by a law enforcement agency, that requires background checks, in-person interviews, personal references, rigorous gun safety training, and a waiting period of 10 days for each gun purchase. Licenses would be renewed every year upon successful completion of annually refreshed requirements in the above areas. In the



process, a national registry of firearms sales would be created to make gun owners responsible for their weapons and hold them accountable when those weapons are used in a crime. Our licensing system would also include the ability to disarm individuals who become a danger to themselves or others.

- **Annual licensing fees** for anyone who wants to obtain a national gun and ammunition license. The economic [cost](#) of gun violence is hundreds of billions of dollars each year; responsible gun owners paying into a national licensing system for the ability to possess and use firearms would offset this economic cost slightly. In addition, we would impose higher fees on the bulk purchase of firearms and ammunition, which have been [predicated](#) on the misuse of firearms.
- **A higher standard for gun ownership**, which would start with raising the [minimum age](#) for gun possession to 21. In addition, we would expand prohibited categories for obtaining a gun license, with a focus on those with a history of violence. This would include: individuals with violent felony convictions, any level of domestic violence offenders (protective orders and misdemeanors), individuals with a documented history of violence, individuals convicted of hate crimes, individuals convicted of stalking, and individuals that make a credible and public threat against a specific person or institutions such as schools, churches, or workplaces.
- **A [limit](#) of one firearm purchase per month.**
- **A prohibition on any and all online firearm and ammunition sales or transfers**, including gun parts.
- **A requirement to [safely store](#) firearms**, including implementing national standards for locking devices on guns.
- **A requirement to report guns that are [lost or stolen](#)** to local law enforcement within 72 hours.
- **A focus on equity.** Any system that requires data from the criminal legal system runs a high risk of being tarnished by the historically racist enforcement of laws. Any sort of licensing database and consequent enforcement mechanisms should be built with special attention toward equity and in consultation with communities historically targeted by the racist and anti-Black mechanisms that pervade regulatory and criminal legal systems.

National [polling](#) shows strong support for gun licensing, which is favored by 77% of Americans, including 68% of gun owners. President Biden must make a robust gun licensing system the centerpiece of a federal legislative agenda. But a national licensing and registration system is insufficient to address all the faces of gun violence. In addition, President Biden must advocate and pass:



- **A federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines** — It's simple: [weapons of war](#) that enable more casualties during mass shootings should not be allowed on our streets and in our communities. We've debated this for decades and it's time to get it done.
- **A federal policy to effectively disarm gun owners who have become a risk to themselves or others** — For example, safe storage requirements, additional licensing disqualification and re-qualification criteria for mental illness, investment in lethal means [safety counseling](#) and family or community storage opportunities have all proven to reduce access to firearms by individuals when at [elevated risk for suicide](#). Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) laws, while imperfect<sup>2</sup>, give families and law enforcement a civil remedy to disarm individuals who are a danger to themselves or others; a 2018 study found that a Connecticut law similar to ERPO was associated with a [14% reduction](#) in suicides. We also seek to support communities in training, engagement and implementation of these policies to ensure cultural competency, including specific racial impact analyses prior to implementation.
- **A national gun buy-back and disposal program** — There are an estimated 256-393 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States, which means there are more guns than people in the [U.S.](#) In order to operationalize new laws like an assault weapons ban and a higher standard of gun ownership, we need to implement a federal gun buy-back program that facilitates compliance with new laws and provides economic incentives for gun owners to responsibly reduce their gun inventory. All government-purchased gun inventory would be destroyed. The intended goal is to reduce our domestic firearm stock by at least 30%. To be clear: the implementation of an assault weapons ban should involve a full mandatory buy-back of assault weapons, but we would also create programs to encourage voluntary civilian reduction of handguns and other firearms. Evidence indicates that a national gun buy-back program can itself help reduce gun violence; in fact, Australia's national gun buy-back program was associated with as much as a [57%](#) reduction in firearms [deaths](#).
- **State authority beyond federal law** — States and municipalities have long been our laboratories of democracy. Where federal policy is lacking or sits stalled in Congress, this Administration needs to make clear that states and municipalities are empowered to pass localized policies that go beyond federal law, which should serve as the floor, and not the ceiling for policy change. States can also continue to lead with the above list of gun safety policies, much in the same way that states have led on other critical issues (like environmental law and policy) when the federal government has failed to act.

2. MFOL seeks to move away from solutions that center law enforcement and we recognize that ERPO laws in their current iteration rely on law enforcement removal of firearms from owners who have become a harm risk. This reliance on law enforcement will inevitably result in disparate and dangerous impacts on communities of color. It is for this reason that we see ERPO laws as a disfavored and short term solution; they are a last resort in the interest of overall harm reduction, and there is some data indicating their effectiveness in preventing suicide.

**TO SOLVE THESE  
PROBLEMS, WE NEED  
A JUST DEMOCRACY**



*Voters should face no barriers in  
exercising their right to be heard.*



As it stands today, there are countless barriers to the full participation of all eligible people in American democracy.

- **Expand the electorate's ability to participate** — We must implement [automatic voter registration](#) when Americans turn 18 years old or new citizens are naturalized. Automatic voter registration is already state law in 18 states and the District of Columbia; it [increases](#) voter registration rates, cleans up voter rolls, and saves states money. We need a federal fix instead of a patchwork of state laws to modernize our voter registration process. Additionally, we need federal policies to allow for pre-registration of young people when they turn 16, which is an existing practice in many [states](#). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of having numerous options for casting a vote, and saw many states expand their infrastructures for voting by mail and early in-person voting; making these changes permanent and continuing to build the infrastructure for multiple avenues of participation is crucial to reach voters who may otherwise be unable to vote. Lastly, we must dismantle voting regulations that result in the disproportionate silencing of voters of color and low-income voters, such as voter ID laws and the disenfranchisement of people with felony convictions. Likewise, recent egregious efforts to undermine voting rights in states like Georgia have [illuminated](#) the barriers that voters face, particularly Black voters, young voters, and other voters of color. The more we participate in our civic process, the more effective we will be at reducing the impact of gun violence on the next generation.
- **End the filibuster** — The legislative filibuster in the U.S. Senate is an outdated tool that elected officials have weaponized to empower a fringe and hyper-partisan minority of the Senate representing a small portion of the American people to block overwhelmingly popular [legislation](#). A “Jim Crow relic,” the [filibuster](#) has been used on numerous occasions in history to block important civil rights legislation, intended to specifically disenfranchise Black southerners. It should not be allowed to continue blocking desperately-needed [reforms](#).
- **Campaign finance reform** — This includes overturning Citizens United and supporting H.R. 1, [The For the People Act](#), which would expand voting rights, change campaign finance laws to reduce the influence of money in politics, limit partisan gerrymandering, and create new ethics rules for federal officeholders.
- **Judicial Reform** — The federal judiciary's undemocratic structure makes it susceptible to partisan influence and emboldens extremist jurists to set unpopular policies threatening our safety. In order to protect our collective right to democratic self-determination, we must:
  - **End lifetime appointments for Supreme Court Justices** — Judges should be appointed to a single 18-year term, with each appointment staggered every two years. A new appointment would occur every two years and each president would be guaranteed exactly two Supreme Court appointments during his term of office. These 18-year terms would begin with any newly appointed justices following the enactment of this



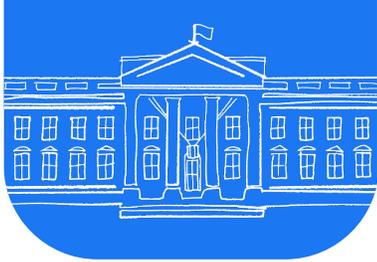
policy to limit retroactive partisan bias.

- **Mandate strong ethics rules** — Supreme Court Justices should be subject to the same codified ethics rules that exist for all attorneys and all judges in the United States, including recusals and robust enforcement mechanisms.
- **Mandate a supermajority requirement** — Require a supermajority of at least six justices to reach consensus before declaring a federal statute unconstitutional.
- **Independent commission for recommending federal judicial nominees** — Establish an independent commission responsible for creating shortlists of federal judicial nominees.
- **Appoint judges who reflect the breadth and diversity of the United States**
  - Our justice system should reflect the diversity of the nation. The selection of younger judges; racial, ethnic, and gender diversity; promoting diversity in the background of legal specialization and [educational](#) background are goals that would help ensure that the legal system is [representative](#) of the communities it serves.
- **Appoint a new slate of justices who respect the will of the American people** — All future judicial appointees must be champions of gun violence prevention and an interpretation of the Second Amendment in step with that of legal scholars, historians, and the nation. The Biden-Harris Administration must appoint judges who:
  - **Recognize the government's interest in securing public safety** — In determining the constitutionality of gun laws, courts consider the extent to which the law serves a “compelling government interest.” It is crucial that new judicial appointees recognize that the government has an interest not only in protecting people from physical harm from bullets, but also ensuring that students, lawmakers, doctors, and other community members can exercise their rights and go about their day free from fear and intimidation.
  - **Recognize that the Constitution guarantees all Americans a right not to be shot** — America's first freedom, as enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, is the [right to Life](#). The exercise of any of our rights—whether protest, voting, or speaking freely—is contingent foremost on our survival.

# LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE PRESIDENCY



*The federal government has long proven its  
ability and powers when there is political will.  
Now is the time for action.*

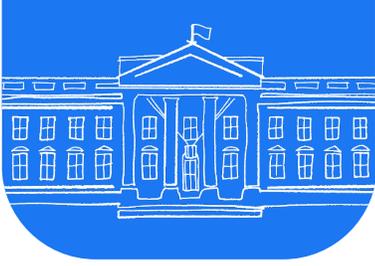


We have never mobilized the full might of the federal government in the fight against gun violence. Quite the opposite: for decades, the gun lobby has [weakened](#) the enforcement authority of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and [prevented](#) even basic scientific research by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). We demand the Biden-Harris Administration increase federal funding for a multi-agency approach to tackling gun violence, including increased funding for ATF, DOJ, CDC, HHS, NIH, HUD, and DOE initiatives.

President Biden should take two concurrent executive actions: (1) declare a national emergency around the epidemic of gun violence—both to unlock executive resources and publicly underscore the urgency of the moment—and (2) announce an audacious goal of reducing firearm deaths and injuries by 50% over the next ten years, thereby saving up to 200,000 lives. To operationalize these goals, the President must put forward a national, unified plan that includes at least \$1 billion in funding for research and community-based violence intervention programming, while prioritizing personnel that reflects the severity of the crisis, including a Director of Gun Violence Prevention. The President should use his bully pulpit to articulate these critical goals to the American public, and work with Congress to pass common sense legislation addressing gun licensing, ownership standards, bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and mental health and wellness.

It's time for some action and oversight. The President must create a new White House position: the Director of Gun Violence Prevention. The Director of GVP will [manage](#) multi-agency coordination in the service of a singular mission. Short of creating a new federal agency dedicated to confronting gun violence—an enormous challenge in an age of partisan gridlock—we believe this position represents our best, most immediate shot at effective federal leadership. The Director of GVP will carry the highest civilian-level title in the White House—Assistant to the President and report directly to the President. They should incorporate a survivor-centered and public health-informed approach to gun violence, reflecting a commitment to vulnerable communities. The Director will have an experienced team of federal officials tasked with actualizing the goal of saving 200,000 lives by reducing deaths and injuries by at least 50% over the next ten years. They will focus on:

- **Empowering weakened federal agencies** — The National Director of GVP will ensure that the whole of the federal bureaucracy will be much stronger than its individual parts. With a direct line to the White House and a singular mandate to reduce gun deaths and injuries by 50%, the Director will provide agency heads at the ATF or CDC with a powerful advocate inside the White House. The Director will also work with the Department of Justice, the Treasury Department, and the IRS to coordinate the establishment of the federal licensing process, which could yield billions of dollars of additional federal revenue to address gun violence. The National Director of GVP's Day One priority: allocate—as a down payment—\$1 billion of annual funding to the CDC/HHS/DOJ to research how to best understand and address gun violence. [Studies](#) have found that gun violence is the most seriously under-researched cause of death, even while other causes with similar or lower rates of mortality,



including hypertension, anemia, and malnutrition, have as much as \$1 billion in funding.

- **Educating Americans about the risks surrounding guns** — We have been taught by the gun lobby and industry that guns are safe products. Quite the opposite is true: the presence of a firearm in your home dramatically [increases](#) your chance of death.
- **Launch a Public Safety Campaign** — Working with the CDC and interested [advertising](#) partners, the National Director of GVP must launch a public safety campaign around the dangers of firearms.
- **Prioritize youth voices in policy solutions** — As one of the most important political forces in this country, Gen-Z organizers and activists put their trust in the Biden-Harris ticket to deliver on critical priorities where previous administrations have failed. It is crucial that President Biden appoint a Director of Youth Engagement, preferably a member of Gen-Z, to sit on the Domestic Policy Council and advise the President and senior staff on issues of importance to [young Americans](#). This necessary addition to the domestic policy team would prioritize issues disproportionately impacting young Americans, while working with the Office of Public Engagement to coordinate an annual youth summit at the White House and a national tour including senior members of the administration. Gun violence, the environment, structural racism, affordable and accessible healthcare, and lowering the cost and debt burden of education are all issues that commonly drive the interest of young Americans, and are problems that we did not create but are determined to solve.

## Join Us

At the center of this vision for communities free from gun violence are the voices of our broad network of young leaders, survivors of gun violence, organizers, and our vital community of allied organizations. This set of social justice priorities came from conversations with this beautiful range of perspectives, and it is grounded in the belief that we are not served by siloes. Instead, we focused on the kinds of systemic changes that challenge some of the ways we commonly think about identity and politics. Our visionary base of young people has demanded a robust analysis of all the ways gun violence happens in the United States—from individual to state actors—and a set of solutions that reflect the magnitude of the issue before us. This document is a reflection of those demands. We invite you to join us in making it a reality.

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