

Handout 1: Background checks, licensing & tracking of gun sales

These proposals require people to have a background check or get a license to purchase a gun, and give law enforcement agencies information on who owns the guns.

Some states require people to get a permit before purchasing a handgun, and sometimes require a mandatory training course. A few states require permits for all firearms—including rifles (or “long guns”). Federal law requires gun makers and sellers to have a gun dealers’ license.

Legislation has been proposed to:

- Close the gun show loophole that currently exempts private sellers and buyers of guns from having to perform background checks on their buyers. The same loophole permits private online sales without back ground checks or licenses.
- Create a ballistics database that would match bullets with the guns that fired them
- Establish a national firearms registry
- Require permits and mandatory training in all states
- Require periodic renewals of gun licenses
- Establish a waiting period after purchasing a gun, when you can actually take possession (time for an angry person to cool down)
- Require states to provide information to the national databases on individuals that might prevent them from buying a gun
- Require manufacturers to stamp a traceable code onto ammunition
- Require gun dealers to record details of ammunition sales

Handout 2: Limits on who can purchase a gun

These are laws that exclude some people from being able to buy a gun. The 1968 Gun Control Act prohibits the sale of guns to people who have served time (over one year) in prison, fugitives, people who are addicted to drugs, undocumented immigrants, those under restraining orders, and other specified persons.

Proposed laws would:

- permit local police, with a court order, to temporarily seize guns from people who are judged to be a danger to themselves or others
- prevent minors (under the age 21) from purchasing guns
- ban gun sales to mentally ill people (beyond those already excluded because their illness was adjudicated)
- require psychotherapists, law officers, and schools to report people who are demonstrating violent behavior to the national database
- expand the list of conditions that would exclude gun ownership to include some lesser crimes (misdemeanors) involving violence, to some juvenile offenses and also to those addicted drugs or alcohol
- deny gun permits to those on the terrorist watch list
- mandate that current gun owners surrender their weapons if they become ineligible for ownership of firearms for any reason
- expand the existing ban on domestic abusers to include stalkers, abusive dating partners, and more family members than just partners and children
- allow police to remove firearms from the scene of a domestic violence incident
- extend prohibitions on weapons purchases to ammunition purchases

Handout 3: Banning certain weapons

Certain weapons are designed to shoot many bullets easily and extremely quickly. Owning fully automatic machine guns (along with sawed-off shotguns and some other weapons) has been illegal since the 1930s.

New laws have been proposed to ban the sales of:

- semi-automatic rifles that load the next bullet automatically after a bullet is fired (allowing the shooter to fire almost 100 bullets in a minute)
- kits that convert semi-automatic rifles to fully automatic (“bump stocks” for example)
- high-capacity magazines that allow shooters to fire up to 100 rounds of ammunition without reloading. The federal ban on these expired in 2004.
- silencers
- ultra-compact (very concealable, semi-automatic) guns
- assault weapons—though the term has no precise definition. Since the expiration of the federal assault weapons ban, states have banned these guns based on how many military features the semi-automatic guns have. These features include things like detachable magazines, and the ability to accept a bayonet or flash suppressor
- particular ammunition like armor-piercing bullets

Handout 4: Requiring gun safety

Federal law only requires that gun dealers provide their customers with some means of locking or securely storing the weapon. There is no requirement that the purchaser actually secures the weapon. Congress has effectively blocked the National Institutes for Health and Centers for Disease Control from spending any money on firearms as a health issue—despite the large number of firearms deaths and injuries. States have had to pass their own laws to promote safety—especially for children.

Gun safety laws include:

- making it a crime to have guns unsecured with children around (some states make it a crime only if the child has actually shot someone)
- requiring that all firearms be stored with locking devices
- permitting lawsuits against parents who give their children access to guns and the child then shoots someone
- encouraging (and eventually requiring) handgun manufacturers to develop “smart guns” that can only be fired by the owner
- providing for federal regulation of safety standards for firearms (Guns are specifically excluded from the products regulated by the Consumer Products Safety Commission)
- ensuring that all guns have some indicator that shows that a bullet is ready to be fired
- making home manufacture of guns with 3D printing illegal
- including guns that use compressed gas (rather than gunpowder) in gun laws

Handout 5: Restricting where and how guns are carried

Some of the fiercest fights over gun control have been about limiting where guns may be taken and the rights of localities to exclude guns certain institutions. Similarly, there is the issue of whether the guns may be hidden.

Laws that reflect these concerns include:

- requiring a permit for a concealed weapon (sometimes with conditions)
- prohibiting concealed weapons in places like schools or sporting events
- regulating the carrying of guns in the open in public places
- excluding specific buildings, institutions, or places like schools, colleges, hospitals, bars, casinos, election polling places, government buildings or churches
- prohibiting concealed guns (even with a permit) in schools

Handout 6: Pro-gun laws supported by the NRA

The NRA and other gun lobbyists work hard not just to defeat gun control efforts, but to loosen the restrictions that are already law. Since the school shooting in Newton Connecticut, in which 26 people were killed, almost 600 gun laws have been passed. According to USA Today, two thirds of these laws were supported by the NRA. Some of the issues the NRA has been working on include:

- “State preemption”: These state laws that prohibit cities and towns from enacting gun controls that are counter to state laws. Forty states have such laws—some with penalties for cities which pass strict gun laws
- "State reciprocity": These laws allow gun permits of one state to be recognized by other states. In December 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill mandating that all states have reciprocity, and attaching it to a larger bill to fix holes in the background check database.
- “Peaceable journey”: These laws allow legal guns to be transported through states in which they are illegal.
- Gun license confidentiality: These laws that exempt gun permits and licenses from open records laws.