

Dear President Biden: Gun Violence is a National Crisis Too

During your inaugural address, you announced that you would be focusing your administration on “containing a raging virus,” “confronting growing inequality,” addressing “the sting of systemic racism” and tackling our “climate in crisis.”¹

Unfortunately, you’re inheriting another national crisis: rising gun violence across the country. And we, the survivors of gun violence, have come together to tell you that you cannot address the impacts of Covid-19 or eradicate systemic racism, without working to reduce gun violence in the early days of your administration.

You ran on the most ambitious and comprehensive gun reform agenda in history and are taking office in the midst of a surge in gun sales and a significant spike in gun deaths and injuries. In fact, homicides have increased by double digits in more than a dozen major cities in 2020.² Childhood deaths have risen by 40 percent in 2020 and teenage deaths are up by 37 percent.³ This past year, the United States experienced 612 mass shootings, a 47 percent increase from 2019. Numerous data points indicate that suicides are on the rise across the country as a growing number of Americans are taking their lives amidst the economic and social distress of Covid-19.⁴

Here are the steps your administration should take to reduce gun violence:

Integrate Gun Violence Prevention Into Every Agency’s Mission. Americans are calling out for you to elevate gun reform throughout the administration and instruct every federal agency, department, and program to address this crisis. Nowhere is this call louder than in the Black and Brown communities closest to the pain of everyday gun violence, many of which continue to be disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. On the campaign trail, you pledged to establish a \$900 million initiative to fund evidence-based violence interventions in cities across the country and we are urging you to live up to that promise by making robust investments in violence intervention programs that have successfully mitigated cyclical and retaliatory gun violence as part of your effort to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 and systemic racism and inequality in our country.

Crack Down on Social Media Companies that Enable Hate and Violence. As you noted in your inaugural address, our nation is experiencing “a rise in political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism” that “we must confront and we will defeat.” The link between racism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism and our nation’s loose gun laws became all the more apparent as thousands of mostly white American insurrectionists mobbed the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021, resulting in the deaths of at least five Americans. This terror attack on America took place as hate crimes rose to their highest number in a decade, and white nationalism and right-wing extremism surged over the summer.⁵ These troubling increases only underscore the reality that firearms are too easy to acquire in the United States and your administration must work to enhance oversight of the firearms industry, bolster enforcement efforts against firearm dealers who have a history of selling firearms that end up being used in crimes, and crack down on social media companies that have allowed extremists to organize, spread conspiracy theories, and cause violence in the real world for years.

Strengthen Our Nation’s Federal Gun Laws. Your administration will have to work with the U.S. Congress to pass much-needed legislation to 1) strengthen our nation’s background check system for firearm and ammunition purchases, 2) ban military-style assault weapons and high capacity magazines in the civilian marketplace, 3) crackdown on firearm trafficking, 4) require safe storage of firearms, 5) hold firearm manufacturers accountable for their dangerous and irresponsible products and business practices, 6) allow for temporary removal of weapons from individuals who may harm themselves or others, 7) and make criminal justice and police reform a priority.

Expand the Coalition. Build a New Playbook for Gun Violence Prevention. We urge you to reframe this conversation away from the partisan food fight it has become and define it as the preventable public health crisis it is. To do this, you must engage new voices that could help reach new audiences, build unexpected political coalitions, and strengthen the public case for gun reform. This includes doctors, nurses, religious, and business leaders, and gun owners and gun dealers who, over the last several years, have come to understand that they have a responsibility to keep their customers, patients, employees and fellow Americans safe from gun violence.

We, the undersigned, are eager to work alongside you in building safer American communities and are going to do all that we can to ensure that gun reform is a priority in your administration.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/20/joe-biden-inauguration-speech-transcript-full-text-460813>

² <https://twitter.com/Crimealytics/status/1343950694672379905>

³ <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/11/23/covid-pandemic-rise-suicides/>

⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/hate-crimes-rise-fbi-data-ebbcadca8458aba96575da905650120d>

Signed:

Megan Ackerman • Elizabeth Adams • Pastor Kathie Adams-Shepherd • Ilana Adleson • Katherine Aker • Julie Allen
Diana Alvarado • Mayra Alvear • Stacey Austein • Nancy Bacon • Sallie Badger • Lisa Balbone • Michelle Barnes-Anderson
Amy Beer • Linda Beigel Schulman • Teche Bergeron • Stephanie Bishop • Michael Bishop • Jeri Bishop • Esther Bloch
Joan Bloom • Paul Bocanegra • Helen Boddie-Khan • Rebecca Boldrick • Tika Bordelon • Kalissa Braga • Iris Brewington
Susan Browder • Linda Brown • Amber Brown • Tracy Brown • Stephanie Brown • Milagros Burgos • Rafael Burgos
Terry Burnside • Julie Butcher • Dianne Byers • Tom Campbell • Barbara Campbell • Mary Campbell • Emily Cantrell
Alison Carew • Alyssa Carsten • Keren Carter • Shirley Carter • Monica Cassaberry • Jenifer Caughan • Justine Chadly
Heather Chapman • Lauren Child • Erin Christian • Natasha Christopher • Kelly Clark • James A Clark Jr • Maria Clementi
Richard Cohn • Tonya Colombo • Nicole Cook • Lisa Cook Bayer • Michele Cooper • Sharon Cooper • Lydia Cortez
Jessica Cortez • Yvonne Crasso • Marie Curtis • Dianna David • Geena Davis • Ryan Deitsch • Marina Delgado • Marie Delus
Caryn Desacia • Gayle DiBenedetto • Kari Dirksen • Carolyn Dixon • Robert Dobson • Toldy Dolack • Tara Donnelly
Jane Dougherty • Romania Dukes • Mitchell Dworet • Annika Dworet • Lizzie Eaton • Zach Elmore • Christine Evans
Phillip Falayi • Dave Feather • Gail Finney • Rachel Foote • Bishop Mario Ford • Jeff Foster • Alicia Franklin • Adam Friedman
Kristin Froehlich • Mary Fryer • Joy Gaine • Barbara Gaines • Nicole Gardner-Lewis • Kimberley Gatbunton • Carol Gaxiola
Sharon Genkin • Joanne Giardello • Joy Gibson • Valerie Gilbert • Lisa Glassman • Patricia Glenn • Carla Goad
Jordan Gomes • Heather Gooze • Roxanna Green • Shanequa Griffin • Shirell Gross • Anne Guice • Fred Guttenberg
Jennifer Guttenberg • Jesse Guttenberg • Ellyn Guttenberg • Paul Guttenberg • Lori Hanky Haas • Kate Hairrell
Debbie Hamilton • Yvonne Harris • Denise Harrison • Holley Haymaker • Archer Heinzen • Craig Hexham • T. Christian Heyne
Pamela Hight • Debra Hixon • Elizabeth Hjelmeth • Robert Hofland • David Hogg • Ilene Horowitz • Kelley Ireland
Diana Isherwood • Denise Janssen Eager • Edward Jenkins Snr • Beth Jersey • Dolene John • Rachael Joseph • Nadine Joseph
Joshua Kadish • Paul Kaneko • Celeste Kanpurwala • Seth Kaplan • Deborah Kemper • Susan Kennedy • Lee Keylock
Alyssa Kilpatrick • Tanna King • John King • Madeline King • Leah Kirschner • Carolee Koehn • Patrick Korellis
Christina Krueger • Pamela Lane • Jenn Lawlor • Tom Lawlor • Craig Lazeretti • Lisa LeBlanc • Erica Lee • Christine Leinonen
Lisa Litberg • Mia Livas Porter • Don Lococo • Demicha Lofton-Thomas • Mary Long • Crystal Lopez Carroll • Linda Luke
Vincent Lynch • Karen Lynch • Tracey Lyons • Lindsay Lyons • Jacinda Maatu • Sara Macaluso • Mary Kay Mace
Patricia Maisch • Denise Marks • Jaclyn Martinez • Veronica Maul • Rachel Maurice • Marcel McClinton • Florence McCrary
Melody McFadden • Caroline Mclean • Tanya McLean • Carol McMillan • Tina Meins • Lynne Meyer • Erin Milgram
Debby Miller • Ruby Millner • Brenda Mitchell • Jackson Mittleman • Tracy Moen • Cindy Montoya • Andrea Moore
Avalon Moore • Giselle Morch • Jenny Morgan • Kelly Murphy • Yvonne Murray • Steve Muster • Mo Neal • Amy Newbery
Elias Nikitchyuk • Tracy Nishimuta • Kellie Nixon • Emily Nottingham • David O'Connor • Danielle Oko • Patricia Oliver
Manuel Oliver • Corey E. Olsen • Rick Omilian • Martha Omilian • Gregory Orfalea • Susan Orfanos • Deborah Parker
Barbara Parker • Andy Parker • Chris Patterson • Natalie Pavia • Nicholas Payne • Karleigh Pedroncelli • Khary Penebaker
Joan Peterson • Maria Pettolina • Sandy Phillips • Lonnie Phillips • Nicole Pignataro • Maria Pike • Jennifer Pippard
Chip Pryde • Camisha Pryor • Judi Richardson • Wayne Richardson • Haley Rinehart • Mary Robison • James Robison
Monico Robles • Helen Rodrigues • Madison Roeschke • Ricardo Roldan • Rosa Rosenberg • Diane Ruggeiro • Liz Russell
Joseph Sakran • Heather Sallan • Coni Sanders • Angela Schellenberg • Alicia Schemel • April Schentrup
Judy Schneider-Wallace • Michael Schulman • Sandra Schwartz • Gail Schwartz • Evangeline Semark • Clare Senchyna
Ruth Senchyna • Jessica Sewell • Stacie Shannon • Joan Shirley • Melissa Sisco • Joyce Slavik • Sonia Solivan • Kristin Song
Mike Song • Anne Stahl • Jeremy Stein • Manjula Stokes • Ami Strahan • Tom Sullivan • Chris Sydoriak • Cathy Taylor
Caren Teves • Jennifer Torres • Nadine Trujillo • Sheena Tucker • Carolyn Tuft • Cathryn Tuthill • Lenie Urbina
Christina Vanderlaat • Michele Vanderwarker • Joanne Wallace • Jay Ward • Charles Ward • Mary Ward • Leatha Washington
Takeela Washington • Leslie Washington • Bethany Webb • Angela Weber • Mary Wehking • Jane Weiss • Stephanie Wells
Joseph Wenzel • Stacey Wesch • Wendy Wheatcroft • David Wheeler • Francine Wheeler • Brenda Whitney • Larriccia Wiley
Brandon Wolf • Patricia Wrencher • Frederick Wright • Maria Jose Wright • Andrew Yates • Abbie Youkilis • Missy Zeitsoff
Michele Zoutte