

Mission: To reduce the public health crisis of gun violence by supporting relevant legislation and educating and inspiring communities across South Carolina to work toward practical solutions.

Who we are: Galvanized by the Emanuel AME Church shooting in Charleston, Gun Sense SC is an independent, grassroots group of more than 1,200 South Carolinian health care professionals, faith leaders, gun owners, teachers and volunteers from all walks of life. We're working together to close the loopholes in the current laws that allow guns to fall into the wrong hands, while continuing to support the Second Amendment right of citizens to lawfully own guns.

Gun Violence Is a Public Health Issue

South Carolina has the fifth-highest rate of gun homicides, ranks second in aggravated assault with a gun and is the fifth-leading supplier of guns used in crimes in other states, at a rate 82% higher than U.S. average (Center for American Progress, 2016).

Not including suicides, our state averaged one death, two injuries and four incidents due to gun violence each day in 2016 (Gun Violence Archive).

From 2014 to 2016 alone, 56 children under age 12 in our state were killed or injured by guns, as were 131 teenagers and 23 police officers (Gun Violence Archive).

In 2014 South Carolina had the fifth-highest rate of females murdered by males in single victim/single offender homicides. In the prior four years our state ranked first- or second-highest. In the indicated five years 56% of these domestic violence victims were murdered with a firearm (Violence Policy Center 2016).

What Has Been Done

At the Federal level it has not been possible to pass background check reform despite the fact that background checks have prevented 2.8 million firearm purchases to prohibited persons, 147,000 in 2014 alone (SmartGunLaws.org).

Nineteen states have expanded Brady background checks for all gun sales, with seven states adding such laws since 2013. In Nevada and Washington this occurred through voter driven direct ballot initiatives. It's up to us, as South Carolinians, to implement these statistically proven modifications to cover the dangerous gaps in our state's background check system.

The Current Problem

Gun regulations apply only to federally licensed gun dealers. *Twenty-two percent of firearms are being acquired without a background check* (Annals of Internal Medicine, 2017), many being sold by unlicensed sellers via the internet, gun shows and classified ads.

Background checks do not prevent individuals from acquiring guns — with rising gun sales, there were 402,978 background checks in SC in 2016, twice as many as in 2010 (FBI/NICS) — **unless individuals should not have them.** There were 79,760 SC adjudicated mental health active records in the 2016 NICS Index. These individuals are *prohibited* from purchasing a firearm yet under our current laws *can* readily acquire a gun from unlicensed sellers and private transfers.

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What Can Be Done

AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, we support improving the computerized national database by decreasing the time it takes to complete background checks along with stronger ATF enforcement of current laws concerning straw purchasers and those falsifying information on background check forms.

AT THE STATE LEVEL, we need legislation now in order to:

- Close the loopholes that allow unlicensed sellers to sell guns without background checks online, at gun shows, through classified ads or any other way.
- Mandate that no guns be sold until background checks are completed.
- Strengthen penalties for violation of gun-sale and gun-possession laws and prosecute “bad apple” gun dealers. Ninety percent of guns used in crimes are being supplied by 5% of dealers (ATF, *Commerce in Firearms*, 2000). Shoplifters, under current SC law, receive increasing penalties for each new conviction, while violators of gun-sale and gun-possession laws receive the same wrist-slap fine no matter how many times they’re convicted.

Why are expanded background checks vital? States with them have seen:

- 53% fewer law enforcement officers killed by guns that weren’t their own
- 47% fewer women killed with guns by intimate partners
- 47% fewer gun suicides
- 48% less gun trafficking (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2016)

Broad Support for Our Efforts

Eighty-four percent of South Carolinians want background checks on all gun sales, including 82% of Republicans and 86% of Democrats. Three statewide polls in the last two years have demonstrated this overwhelming consensus (Public Policy Polling 2015, 2016; Winthrop Poll, 2015), a support echoed by 82-84% of gun owners and 72-74% of NRA members nationally (Luntz 2012, NEJM/GfK 2013, PPP/CAP 2015). Evidential effectiveness and public opinion, as demonstrated by all national surveys since Sandy Hook, has been consistent for four years.

Conclusion

Expanding background checks to cover all gun sales is not a partisan issue. We are committed to addressing this urgent public health issue with sensible solutions that don’t jeopardize our Second Amendment right to lawfully possess guns, and to pursue educational initiatives to reduce gun violence in South Carolina.

***Please join us by emailing gunsenseSC@gmail.com or visiting www.GunSenseSC.org
To donate: ARM-IN-ARM, 164 Market St., Suite 103, Charleston, SC 29401***