In 2018, a new wave of youth-led activism spurs sweeping gun safety reforms across the nation.

Mass shootings, far too common in our country, are often the catalysts for safer gun laws. After a gunman used a bump stock to kill 58 people and wound hundreds of others in Las Vegas in 2017, eight states banned these and other trigger activators. This year, the surge of youth activism following the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, motivated state lawmakers to enact the strongest improvements to state gun laws in years, including two states raising the minimum age to purchase firearms to 21.

Undoubtedly, though, the laws with the greatest momentum in 2018 were extreme risk protection order (ERPO) laws, which allow law enforcement, family members, and/or other designated members of the community to temporarily disarm a person in crisis. In addition to preventing mass shootings, ERPO laws can also prevent everyday gun deaths from suicide and stalking. Seven states, including Florida, have enacted ERPO laws so far this year.

While national gun violence tragedies have always been the precipitators of legislative action, the wave of activism post-Parkland is being led by our nation’s young people. Some experienced gun violence for the first time when tragedy struck their school; others face it every day in their communities. Together they are saying “enough” to the gun lobby’s influence over our politicians and “enough” to living in fear.

For decades, dedicated activists, academics and lawmakers have been laying the foundation for the momentum that continues to build and the change that is happening now. This year, we have seen more significant victories and more bipartisan legislation than ever before and we know that a safer America is in reach.
2018 STATE GUN LAW VICTORIES

New Lifesaving Gun Laws

BACKGROUND CHECKS
Six states enacted laws that add a background check requirement or improve an existing background check law: Florida SB 7026, Louisiana SB 231, New Jersey AB 2757, Oregon HB 4145, Tennessee SB 834, and Vermont SB 55.

BUMP STOCKS & TRIGGER ACTIVATORS
Eight states enacted laws that ban the use of bump stocks and other trigger activators: Connecticut HB 5542, Delaware HB 300, Florida SB 7020, Hawaii SB 22046, Maryland SB 707, New Jersey SB 3477, Rhode Island SB 2292/HB 7075, and Washington SB 5992. In 2017, a bump stock was used in the worst mass shooting in modern American history when a gunman killed 58 people and injured hundreds of others at a concert in Las Vegas.

CONCEALED CARRY
Five states tightened laws that regulate the carrying of concealed firearms in public: Maryland HB 819, New Jersey AB 2758, Oklahoma HB 3353, South Dakota HB 1209, and Washington HB 2519.

DEALER REGULATIONS
Oregon HB 4145 extended the state’s handgun dealer regulations to all firearm dealers. Federally licensed dealers are subject to very little scrutiny. States that enact gun dealer regulations can reduce the number of irresponsible gun dealers whose misconduct threatens the lives and safety of others.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Nine states enacted laws that help keep firearms away from domestic abusers: Kansas HB 2145, Louisiana SB 770, HB 896, and SB 231, Maryland HB 1646, New York SB 8121, Ohio HB 1, Oregon HB 4145, Utah SB 27, Vermont HB 422, and Washington SB 6298.

EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS
Seven states have enacted measures that allow law enforcement, a family member, or others in the community to petition for a temporary order removing access to firearms by at-risk individuals: Delaware HB 222, Florida SB 7028, Maryland HB 1302, Massachusetts HB 4670, New Jersey AB 1217, Rhode Island SB 2492/HB 7688, and Vermont SB 221.

GUNS IN SCHOOLS
Vermont HB 25 banned possession of guns in K–12 school buildings and buses, except where authorized by local school officials for specific occasions or purposes.

MENTAL HEALTH
Delaware HB 302 and New Jersey AB 1181 both facilitated removal of firearms from a person who is dangerous due to mental illness.

PROHIBITED PERSONS
Four states added prohibiting factors to laws regulating who may purchase and possess firearms: Louisiana SB 411, Nebraska L 990, New York SB B121, and Virginia SB 669. New York’s law also extends the state’s relinquishment procedures to individuals who have committed felonies or serious offenses.

URBAN GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROGRAMS
Eight states passed laws to provide state funding to evidence-based urban gun violence reduction programs: California SB 840, Connecticut CT S 543, Florida HB 5001, Illinois HB 109, Maryland HB 113/HB 432, Nebraska L 944, New York S 7503, and Rhode Island H 5175.

TRAFFICKING
Two states enacted laws that make it harder for criminals to traffic firearms from the legal to the illegal market: Georgia HB 657/SB 407 and Wisconsin SB 408/AB 524.

WAITING PERIODS
Florida SB 7026 extended the state’s three-day waiting period for handguns to all firearms sold at retail locations.

DEFEATING GUN LOBBY BILLS
In 2018 so far, gun safety advocates have prevented gun lobby–backed bills from becoming law in 31 states.

PERMITLESS CARRY: Defeated in 11 states
This year, bills to repeal concealed carry permit requirements, a gun lobby priority, failed in Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

GUNS ON CAMPUS: Defeated in 14 states
The gun lobby continually attempts to force colleges and universities to allow guns on campus. Campus carry bills failed in Arkansas, California, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

GUNS IN K–12 SCHOOLS: Defeated in 19 states
After school shootings, gun lobby–backed legislators predictably call for laws arming teachers. This year, bills to allow guns in K–12 schools failed in Arkansas, Alabama, California, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

54 GUN SAFETY BILLS HAVE BEEN SIGNED INTO LAW IN 27 STATES SINCE PARKLAND

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New Gun Lobby Laws

The gun lobby’s relentless efforts to weaken our nation’s gun laws at the expense of public safety continued in 2018. Despite the loss of young lives in school shootings and the men, women, and children dying in gun homicides and suicides every day, the gun lobby continued to push reckless legislation in state after state.

Fortunately, this year, as in years’ past, courageous legislators and activists who care about public safety have stopped the vast majority of bills that would weaken our gun laws and put us in danger. However, a handful of irresponsible laws promoted by the gun lobby have been enacted in 2018.

Florida SB 7026 allows school districts to authorize teachers and other school personnel to carry concealed firearms in classrooms and on other parts of K–12 campuses. It also requires that “safe-school officers,” who may be law enforcement or armed staff, be assigned to each school.

Iowa HJR 2009 authorizes a constitutional amendment to be put on the ballot that would subject all gun laws to the highest and strictest form of judicial review, known as “strict scrutiny.”

Idaho SB 1313 creates a Stand Your Ground law that removes the duty to retreat in public before using self-defense.

Oklahoma HB 2632 expands the ability of a person to claim self-defense when using force in houses of worship.

South Dakota HB 1083 allows certain individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 to obtain a restricted concealed carry permit. HB 1271 allows firearms on the grounds of private K–12 schools, houses of worship used for public school functions, and any private K–12 school located on the premises of a house of worship.

West Virginia HB 4187 forces private business owners to allow guns in their parking lots. SB 244 allows K–12 schools to adopt a written policy permitting guns on their property.

Wyoming HB 144 repeals the prohibition on guns in houses of worship. HB 168 expands the Stand Your Ground law by broadening the presumptions of reasonableness granted to a shooter who invokes the defense. The law also makes it easier for shooters to avoid civil liability by allowing the defendant to prove self-defense in a motion rather than at trial.

We’re on a mission to save lives

For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence. Founded in the wake of a 1993 mass shooting in San Francisco, in 2016 the Law Center joined with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords to form a courageous new force for gun safety that stretches coast to coast.

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