Legislators heard the message of the 2018 midterms loud and clear—Americans want gun safety, and they want it now.

The 2018 midterm elections resulted in a clear mandate to state and federal lawmakers: make gun violence prevention a priority. Now that legislative sessions in Congress and most states are underway, representatives have already introduced numerous pieces of consequential gun violence prevention legislation.

On January 8, exactly eight years after she was shot at a constituent meeting in Tucson, Arizona, former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords helped Rep. Mike Thompson (CA-05) introduce a bipartisan bill that would ensure millions of gun purchases are subject to background checks. Similar efforts are currently underway in several states, including New Mexico (HB 8/SB 8).

Building from the unprecedented momentum of 2018, when eight states enacted extreme risk protection order (ERPO) laws, legislators in 14 states have introduced ERPO bills so far this year. Federal legislators also plan to introduce bipartisan ERPO bills.

Funding for urban gun violence reduction programs will continue to be a priority for many states in 2019. Bills that would bolster funding for community-based violence prevention and intervention programs have been introduced in California, Nebraska, and New Jersey.

With a clear directive from voters and help from advocates, motivated legislators in both state governments and Congress are poised to make 2019 a critical year in passing gun safety laws and saving lives.

LONG-AWAITED VICTORY IN ILLINOIS

In the 2018 midterms, Illinois voters elected a new governor who pledged to be a champion for gun violence prevention. On one of his first days in office, Governor Pritzker signed SB 337, which had been vetoed by the former governor. Advocates had worked for years to enact the law that will help stop unscrupulous dealers outside of Chicago from flooding the city’s streets with guns.

GOVERNOR REVIEWS SWEEPING REFORM PACKAGE

On January 29, New York legislators sent the governor a package of legislation that, among other things, includes bills to create an extreme risk protection order (SB 2451/AB 2689), close the “Charleston loophole” by extending the time period the FBI has to conduct a background check to 30 days (SB 2374/AB 2690), ban trigger activators such as bump stocks (SB 2448/AB 2684), and prohibit K-12 schools from arming teachers (SB 101A/AB 1715A).
GUN BILLS IN MOTION

BACKGROUND CHECKS
New Mexico HB 8 and HB 40 have a hearing on February 4. SB 8 passed a committee. New York SB 2374/AB 2690 and SB 2438/AB 1213 passed both chambers. New Hampshire HB 109 has a hearing February 13. Maryland HB 96 has a hearing on February 25.

EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS
District of Columbia B 1068 was signed by the mayor. New York SB 2451/AB 2689 passed both chambers. New Mexico HB 83 has a hearing on February 4. New Hampshire HB 687 has a hearing scheduled for March 5. North Dakota HB 1537 has a hearing scheduled for February 4. ERPO bills are pending in at least 14 states.

PERMITLESS CARRY
Permitless carry laws allow individuals to carry concealed weapons without a background check and can increase the likelihood of deadly confrontations in public. South Dakota SB 47 was signed by the governor on January 31. There are reckless permitless carry bills pending in at least seven states.

URBAN GUN VIOLENCE
Community-based urban gun violence reduction strategies that focus on identifying individuals at high risk for involvement in shootings have been shown to significantly reduce gun violence in cities. Currently, three states have bills pending that would direct or protect funding for such programs.

LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN OR ENACT BACKGROUND CHECKS IS PENDING IN 17 STATES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Abused women are five times more likely to be killed if their abuser owns a gun. A bill in Maryland which would prohibit gun possession by a person convicted of a stalking misdemeanor has a hearing on February 7 (SB 138). New Mexico HB 87 has a hearing on February 4. At least 18 states have bills pending that would close domestic violence loopholes that allow abusers to access guns.

GUNS IN SCHOOLS
Allowing guns in schools increases the risk of students being shot. A Virginia bill that would allow private schools to employ armed security guards passed the house (HB 1656). New Mexico HB 129 passed a house committee. Virginia HB 2721 passed a committee on January 28. Dangerous bills to allow guns in school or on campus are pending in at least 19 states.

For a complete list of firearm bills introduced in this legislative session, or any other questions about Gun Law Trendwatch, contact its author, Allison Anderman, at aanderman@giffords.org.

INDIANA BILL WOULD PROTECT SHOOTERS OF NONVIOLENT CRIMINALS
Indiana HB 1284 would immunize a shooter from civil liability for, among other things, shooting an unarmed person escaping after committing a felony—even a non-violent one. A family bringing a wrongful death suit would have to prove that the shooter was not justified in using self-defense, or the case would be dismissed without a trial.