In 2019, states led efforts to invest in proven solutions to community violence as legislators expanded focus beyond mass shootings.

Our gun violence epidemic looms so large in public consciousness that parents across the country are afraid to send their children to school. While school shootings are a devastating and uniquely American phenomenon, too little attention is paid to the children in underserved communities whose greatest risk of gun violence isn’t in the classroom, but on the walk to and from school.

For years, violence in our cities has been dismissed as inevitable—despite the existence of evidence-based solutions like the ones implemented in Oakland, which helped cut shootings in half in just six years.

Ignoring this violence is both unconscionable and costly. By investing in programs proven to save lives, cities and states can generate enormous savings for taxpayers. The cities of Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts, saved an estimated $15 million between 2012 and 2013 by investing $2 million in local violence reduction programming. For too long, well-funded group violence intervention programs like the ones in Oakland and Boston were the exception, not the norm.

That started to change in 2019, when a growing number of states invested a record amount of funding for violence intervention and prevention programs. California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia invested most heavily, directing a total of $132 million towards local violence reduction efforts. To increase the safety of our cities, states should continue to increase their investment in these proven, evidence-based programs.

Federal politicians are following the courageous lead set by these states by introducing bold legislation and plans to tackle community violence. In October, Senator Cory Booker introduced S. 2671, the Break the Cycle of Violence Act, which would appropriate $90 million in grant funding to expand local violence reduction programs.

While much of the national conversation about gun violence still disproportionately focuses on mass shootings, 2019 has seen a promising trend among lawmakers to direct attention and resources to the daily gun violence that afflicts our nation’s most underserved communities.
2019 STATE GUN LAW VICTORIES

New Lifesaving Gun Laws

BACKGROUND CHECKS
Four states enacted laws that add a background check requirement or improve on an existing background check law: New Mexico SB 8, Nevada SB 143, New York SB 2374 and AB 1213, and Washington HB 1465.

BUMP STOCKS & TRIGGER ACTIVATORS
Nevada AB 291, a bill introduced by a Route 91 survivor, and New York SB 2448 ban all trigger activators. District of Columbia B22-0588 bans bump stocks.

CHILD ACCESS PREVENTION
Four states strengthened laws that help keep unattended guns out of the hands of minors: California SB 172, Connecticut HB 7218, Nevada AB 291, and New York SB 2450.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROGRAMS
Nine states increased funding to help scale up evidence-based community gun violence reduction strategies. The largest increases were made in California (AB 74 and AB 1603) and Illinois (SB 262). Other states that passed such funding include Connecticut HB 7424, Massachusetts HB 4000, Nebraska LB 294, New York AB 2003, and Rhode Island HB 5151. Both New Jersey and Virginia directed millions of dollars in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to community violence reduction strategies.

DEALER REGULATIONS
Illinois SB 337 comprehensively regulates firearms dealers in the state, requiring dealers to obtain a state license, secure their premises, and conduct background checks on employees, among other things. California SB 376 tightens restrictions around firearms dealer licenses.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Six states enacted laws that help keep firearms away from domestic abusers: Arkansas HB 1851, California AB 164, Louisiana HB 279, New Mexico SB 328, Oregon HB 2013, and Washington HB 1225, HB 1517, and HB 1786.

EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS
Seven states and DC enacted or strengthened measures allowing law enforcement or others to petition for temporary orders removing firearm access from at-risk individuals: California AB 12, AB 61, AB 339, and AB 1493; Colorado HB 1177; District of Columbia B22-0588 and B23-0286; Hawaii SB 1466; Indiana HB 1651; Nevada AB 291; New York SB 2451; and Washington SB 5027.

GHOST GUNS

giffordslawcenter.org/trendwatch
KEEP UP ON THE LATEST TRENDS IN STATE FIREARM LEGISLATION AND VIEW PAST ISSUES
GUNS IN SCHOOLS
Wyoming SB 22 increases restrictions on programs allowing staff to carry guns in K–12 schools. New York SB 101 prohibits schools from arming teachers.

GUN SAFETY TECHNOLOGY
New Jersey SB 101 requires all firearm dealers to offer at least one personalized handgun once a model is approved by a state commission and listed as eligible for sale.

LOST AND STOLEN REPORTING
Hawaii HB 720 requires gun owners to report the loss or theft of a gun to law enforcement.

PROHIBITED PERSONS
Five states prohibited additional categories of people from purchasing or possessing guns: California SB 172, Indiana HB 1607, New Jersey SB 3897, Washington SB 5181 and SB 5205, and Utah HB 100.

SAFE STORAGE
California SB 172 requires the Department of Justice to create procedures to regulate the storage of firearms in elderly residential care facilities and Connecticut HB 7223 requires safe storage of handguns in unattended vehicles. Delaware HB 63 criminalizes reckless or intentional failure to secure a gun when a prohibited person accesses it.

TRAFFICKING
Three states enacted laws that improve efforts to prevent firearms trafficking: Nevada AB 272, New Jersey AB 4449, and Tennessee HB 754.

DEFEATED GUN LOBBY BILLS
In 2019, gun safety advocates prevented gun lobby–backed bills in the below categories from becoming law in 27 states.

PERMITLESS CARRY: Failed in 7 states
This year, bills to repeal concealed carry permit requirements—a gun lobby priority—failed in Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

GUNS ON CAMPUS: Failed in 15 states
The gun lobby continually attempts to force colleges and universities to allow guns on campus. Campus carry bills failed in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

GUNS IN K–12 SCHOOLS: Failed in 19 states
After school shootings, gun lobby–backed legislators predictably call for laws arming teachers and other civilians. This year, bills to allow guns in K–12 schools failed in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and Wyoming.

137 GUN SAFETY BILLS HAVE BEEN SIGNED INTO LAW IN 32 STATES AND DC SINCE PARKLAND
New Gun Lobby Laws

While gun safety advocates made tremendous gains in 2019, the gun lobby continued its push to weaken gun laws. America’s gun violence epidemic is fueled by too many guns and too few laws, yet year after year, the gun lobby promotes legislation that expands gun access among individuals at risk of harming themselves or others.

In 2019, gun advocates pushed states to repeal critical laws that require a permit and background check to carry a gun in public and lobbied to recklessly arm teachers. Most of the gun lobby’s agenda was thwarted by courageous legislators and advocates, as well as strong public support for gun safety. This progress in the fight to save lives will continue in 2020 and beyond.

Concealed Carry: Two states weakened laws requiring a permit to carry a concealed weapon: Tennessee HB 1264 and Indiana HB 1284.

Dangerous Weapons: Three states repealed laws that regulate unusually dangerous weapons and accessories: Arkansas SB 400 and HB 1820, Indiana SB 119, and North Dakota HB 1308.

Guns in Schools: Two states enacted laws aimed at allowing guns in K–12 schools: Indiana HB 1284 and North Dakota HB 1332. Florida SB 7030 expanded the state’s “school guardian” program.


Permitless Carry: Four states enacted or modified laws that would allow people to carry hidden guns in public without a permit: Idaho HB 206, Kentucky SB 150, Oklahoma HB 2597, and South Dakota SB 47.

Preemption: Two states further restricted the freedom of local governments to regulate guns: South Dakota HB 1056 and Texas HB 3231. Montana HB 357 puts the issue of preemption on the 2020 ballot.

Other Dangerous Laws: The Iowa legislature passed SJR 18, a first step toward putting a constitutional amendment on the 2022 ballot to require courts to use strict scrutiny to review gun laws. Indiana HB 1284 expands the state’s Stand Your Ground law. Utah HB 94 expands the situations in which an intoxicated person can possess a gun in public.

WE’RE ON A MISSION TO SAVE LIVES

For over 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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