



# August Action Toolkit

## Stand Up, Speak Out for Gun Violence Research Funding

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*August 2019*

*This Toolkit has been adapted from materials distributed by the [Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#), [Brady](#), [March for Our Lives](#) and other organizations working to prevent gun violence. Their work and generosity is greatly appreciated.*

# Introduction

Healthcare professionals and medical students bring a unique public health perspective to the firearm safety conversation.

**We deal intimately with the consequences of violence every day.**

**We know that research is the only way to understand the epidemiology and etiology of health issues.**

**We understand the importance of evidence-based solutions when caring for patients.**

Across the nation, medical students in organizations such as our Medical Students for Gun Safety campaign are standing up. We are actively working to highlight the health impact of the epidemic of firearm violence in America and promote meaningful discussions about it.

**We've got a unique stake in this issue, so it's up to us to make our voices heard.**

We need to stand up for our patients and demand gun safety reform like never before. We must remind our elected officials that gun violence is a public health crisis and that the future physicians of this country will not stand on the sidelines. There must be regulations and interventions in place to prevent dangerous and deadly weapons to circulate freely in our communities. And in order to create more evidence-based regulations for the future, we must advocate for research now. Enough is enough!

For this August recess, it's up to us to call for action from our representatives in Congress. As future health professionals, it is our responsibility to continue to raise alarms about this public health epidemic and demand appropriate research funding to resolve this preventable problem.

This Advocacy Toolkit will give you the tools and the information you need to advocate for necessary research funding on this issue!

## **With this Toolkit:**

1. **LEARN:** What you need to know about the gun laws being debated at the federal level. A handy cheat sheet to help you look up our lawmaker's record. **(page 3)**
2. **CALL:** A script to help you deliver a message when you call your member's office **(page 4)**
3. **SHARE:** Social media content for you to share with your networks **(page 5)**
4. **BACKGROUND & RESOURCES:** Info, MSGSG connections, fact sheets & links **(pages 6 & 7)**

Let us know if you need help with planning your Chapter activities. And [send us photos](#) (email [msgsg.chair@amsa.org](mailto:msgsg.chair@amsa.org)) and [details of your events](#) to share with other AMSA Chapters!

***-MSGSG Campaign Chairs Mattie & Vishnu***

# 1. Learn

## *What You Need to Know about Gun Safety Legislation*

Thanks to a historic number of candidates running and winning on gun safety in the 2018 midterm elections, gun violence prevention has been a top priority in the House of Representatives this year. They have passed bills aimed at introducing background checks for all gun sales, stopping prohibited people from purchasing guns, providing critical protections for survivors of intimate partner violence, supporting extreme risk laws, and banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines.

**Here's what MSGS will focus our advocacy efforts on for the August Recess, pushing the Senate to follow the House's lead:**

***Funding for Gun Violence Research:*** *Gun violence is a public health and safety epidemic in America, killing close to 40,000 people every year. Every other phenomenon that kills as many Americans is researched by our leading public health institutions, the CDC and NIH, leading to life-saving policy and health interventions. However, Congress has historically prohibited these research agencies from researching gun violence by refusing to allocate any dedicated federal funding over the past two decades. The House took a critical step towards changing that in June 2019, approving an appropriations bill that included \$50 million for the CDC and NIH to study gun violence.*

***The Senate has yet to vote on this bill.***

- ***Want more info? Check out the end of this Toolkit for some more background***

## *Learn about Your Lawmaker's Record on Gun Safety Legislation*

Gun safety organizations across the country have created a database that compiles the latest information on **NRA grades, gun lobby contributions, and positions on key issues** like background checks, extreme risk laws, and the Violence Against Women Act.

[Click here](#) to look up information about your congress members' records.

## 2. Make a Call – One of the Most Effective Things You Can Do! - *Scripts for calling your Senators*

**NOTE** - You can reach your members of Congress by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at **(202) 224-3121**, which will connect you directly with your senators' office; or dial the member's office directly at numbers found [here for the Senate](#).

### Sample Script: Calling about Legislation to Strengthen Gun Laws in America

Hi, my name is [ ] and I'm a constituent of [Senator NAME], from [town/city]. I am a [medical student/resident/pre-med] calling to discuss the epidemic of firearm violence in America. In the first days of the August Recess, 19 lives were lost in El Paso, and at least 22 more people were shot and injured. In Dayton, 9 were killed and at least 27 more were shot in less than 1-minute. In one day, an average of 100 Americans die from every-day gun violence. America is grieving, and enough is enough!

As a [medical student/resident/pre-med], I know that research is the only way to understand the root causes and treatments of health issues. I understand the importance of evidence-based solutions. And I stand in solidarity with those whose lives have been lost or affected by gun violence. I stand for the safety of my patients.

Earlier this year, a strong bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives passed a bill that appropriated \$50 million in federal funding to the CDC and NIH to research gun violence in America. **Does [Senator NAMES]'s support this funding and what steps is he/she taking to get it signed into law?**

- **If opposes funding:** How can [Senator NAME] claim to care about protecting my patients but refuse to support the very legislation that will make our communities safer? As our elected leader, it's [Senator NAME]'s responsibility to stand up for the safety of my patients and [his/her] constituents, not the gun lobby.
- **If noncommittal:** If [Sen NAME] is serious about keeping my patients and [his/her] constituents safe and bolstering law enforcement, I expect [him/her] to strongly support this live-saving legislation and vote for it. I'd like to hear back if [Senator] will commit to protecting our families and communities by voting in favor of these bills, please email/call me at [Insert your email address or phone number].
- **If supports funding:** Great! Thank you to [Senator NAME] for working to keep our communities safe from gun violence.

### 3. Share - *Social Media Content to Share*

**NOTE** - Remember to include a period at the beginning of your tweet if you start with a lawmakers handle.

#### SOME SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- **.@YOUR SEN'S HANDLE:** Gun violence is one of the leading causes of death and injury in the US. It's past time for the government to invest in research to study this public safety threat. Protect our patients! #EnoughIsEnough
- **.@YOUR REP or SEN'S HANDLE:** "Thoughts and prayers" won't stop the next shooting. What is your plan to protect my patients & community & strengthen our country's gun laws and save lives? #EnoughIsEnough
- **.@YOUR REP SEN'S HANDLE:** The House of Representatives has already passed several gun safety bills, from universal background checks to funding for gun violence research. Passing these bills will help protect my patients & our communities. What are you doing to demand a vote on these bills?
- **.@YOUR REP or SEN'S HANDLE:** 100 Americans die every day because we let dangerous people get their hands on guns. It's time for action. What is your plan to #EndGunViolence and save lives? #EnoughIsEnough
- **.@YOUR REP or SEN'S HANDLE:** Over 90% of Americans support background checks on every gun sale. Do you? #BackgroundChecksNow
- **.@YOUR REP or SEN'S HANDLE:** The NRA opposes the Violence Against Women Act because they want NO restrictions on who can have guns. They even want domestic abusers and stalkers to be able to keep their guns. I don't, what about you? Help pass #VAWA and help me protect my patients who are domestic violence survivors.
- **.@YOUR REP or SEN'S HANDLE:** Extreme Risk Protection Orders empower law enforcement and family to intervene when someone shows signs of hurting themselves or others. Please push to pass this type of law nationwide, to protect my patients & our communities! #EnoughIsEnough

## 4. Background

Gun violence in America is a public health crisis. It is one of the leading causes of death in America. Every day, 100 people in America are shot and killed. More than 35,000 people in America die by guns every year. Gun violence costs the American economy \$229 billion every year.

Since the passage of the Dickey Amendment more than 20 years ago, the CDC and NIH have severely underfunded gun violence research. CDC funding for gun injury prevention fell by 94 percent between 1996 and 2018. In 2018, out of a total budget of more than \$8.2 billion, the CDC devoted merely \$199,000 to firearm-related research. This left public health researchers and providers in the dark as the epidemic of gun violence has grown to epic proportions in our country.

Researchers estimate that gun violence receives less than 2% of the funding it would be expected to receive based on the scope and toll of the problem. The underfunding of gun violence research is particularly stark when compared to funding for other common causes of death. The federal government spends only \$57 in research monies per gun death. By contrast, lung disease, cancer, and heart disease receive \$6,556, \$2,996, and \$1,740 per death, respectively.

A majority of Americans support efforts to increase federal funding for gun violence research. Additionally, more than 100 medical associations have called on Congress to provide funding for this research. The American people recognize that to solve this public safety crisis, we first need to understand it. It's time for our leaders to step up, take action, and fund the CDC.

Gun violence is a public health crisis in America, and there is a demonstrated need for additional research to guide policy-making. Research and data are integral to prevention, but without adequate resources, researchers are prevented from thoroughly examining gun violence and gun policies.

**Medical Students for Gun Safety (MSGGS)** is a coalition of health professional students from across the United States dedicated to advocating for the end of gun violence in this country. Our efforts are focused on:

- (1) Promoting responsible gun ownership
- (2) Advocating for effective federal violence prevention legislation
- (3) Fighting for a better gun safety curriculum in medical education
- (4) Improving public health

Learn more here: <https://www.amsa.org/advocacy/gun-safety/>

Apply to join the MSGS Steering Committee [here](#).

Become a chapter representative for MSGS by contacting [Abby Solomon](#) (our MSGS-AMSA Chapter Liaison) or filling out this [form](#).

## Key Resources and Factsheets:

- **AMSA:** [Medical Students for Gun Safety Campaign](#)
- **AMSA Fact Sheet:** [Gun Violence Prevention Research](#)
- **Brady United:** [Critical Topics on Gun Violence Research: Why CDC/NIH Funding Matters](#)
- **Education Fund to Stop Gun Violence:** [After Two Decades, House Votes to Fund Gun Violence Research](#), [Approaching Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue](#)
- **March for Our Lives/Brady:** [#WeNeedtoKnow Toolkit](#)
- **Everytown for Gun Safety:** [Why Funding Gun Violence Research Matters](#)
- **Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence:** [Blog Post: Why We Need to Research Gun Violence](#)
- **Center for American Progress:** [How to Reduce Gun Violence in America: Fund CDC Research \(Video\)](#)
- **CAP and Giffords:** [Gun Violence Research](#)

## Gun Safety Groups to Follow on Social Media:

The groups below are committed to advancing common-sense change that makes communities safer from gun violence.

- **American Medical Student Association** [@AMSAnational](#)
- **Brady** [@bradybuzz](#)
- **Community Justice Action Fund** [@\\_cjactionfund](#)
- **Coalition to Stop Gun Violence** [@CSGV](#)
- **Center for American Progress** [@CAPActionGuns](#)
- **Everytown for Gun Safety** [@Everytown](#)
- **Generation Progress** [@GenProgress](#)
- **Giffords** [@GiffordsCourage](#)
- **March for Our Lives** [@AMarch4OurLives](#)
- **Moms Demand Action** [@MomsDemand](#)
- **Newtown Action Alliance** [@NewtownAction](#)
- **States United to Prevent Gun Violence** [@SUPGVNetwork](#)