



GUN SAFETY

Henderson County
North Carolina

Gun Safety in the U.S.

One of the saddest aspects of American life today is the speed with which we have accepted the awful gun violence sweeping our towns and cities. Homicides and mass shootings are now tragic features of everyday life in the U.S. Meanwhile, disagreements – often partisan – over the causes of gun violence stalemate serious efforts to reduce the slaughter.

But contrary to angry NRA press releases and the lame excuses from some politicians, we know how to reduce gun violence. **Decades of experience show that states with weak gun regulations suffer far higher rates of gun violence than states with tough laws.** Data for 2018 is just the latest evidence contradicting claims that unregulated guns make our lives safer:

Gun Safety Laws and Death Rates – 2018 – U.S.		
Gun Law “Grade”	Deaths from Guns (per 100k population)	# of States
“A”	5.8	7
“F”	17.5	22

Source: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Deaths include homicides, suicides, accidental deaths and domestic terrorism

Gun deaths in states with lax gun regulations (“F” rating) are three times higher than in states with a tough “A” rating. And as gun deaths in states with an “F” rose 10% from 2017 to 2018, “A” rated states experienced a decline. This is hardly surprising when so many states with lax regulations make purchasing an AR-15 easier than applying for a driver’s license.

North Carolina

In 2017, firearms killed 1,430 North Carolinians - the 23rd highest gun death rate in the U.S. Noting that our loose regulations also encourage sales of “crime guns” to other states, the Giffords Law Center gave North Carolina a “D” for failing to:

- Require background checks for long guns purchased from unlicensed sellers.
- Prohibit transfer/possession of assault rifles, 50 caliber rifles and high capacity magazines.
- License or significantly regulate firearms dealers.
- Limit firearms purchased at one time or require owners to report lost or stolen guns.
- Give local law enforcement discretion to deny a license to carry firearms.





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The Art of Compromise

A reasonable compromise to reduce gun violence would require strong protections for gun owners **and** sensible safeguards to improve public safety. A majority of Americans, including Republicans and Democrats, already back commonsense regulations like denying guns to the mentally ill and those on no-fly and watch lists; background checks for private and gun-show sales; and a ban on sales of assault-style weapons.

What We Believe

Ease of access and weak regulations are the factors driving rampant gun violence in the U.S. Americans with access to a gun are three times more likely to commit suicide, and almost twice as likely to die in a homicide. We are not crazier or more violence-prone than other nations. We've simply permitted guns to flood our homes and our streets.

We are only 4.4% of the world's population, but we own 42% of the guns.

We can reduce the awful toll of gun deaths and injuries, but we will have to apply the lessons we learned years ago from the automobile. Annual motor vehicle deaths peaked in 1937 at 31 per 100,000 population. Eighty years later, government regulations, law enforcement and industry research have reduced the death rate to 12 per 100,000 - despite far higher speeds and more traffic. Few of us today seriously question the fairness of revoking the license from a drunk driver.

We can apply these lessons to gun safety, honoring the Fifth Commandment without diminishing the Second Amendment.

We owe it to our families.

Sources:

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3. <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/scorecard/>
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firearm_death_rates_in_the_United_States_by_state
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