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# ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE



Paid for by Sean Barney for Congress

# GUN VIOLENCE

As someone who was fortunate enough to survive being shot through the neck, the issue of gun violence is personal to me. But while I volunteered to join the Marines – knowing full well the danger that might entail – no one volunteers to have their neighborhood turned into a shooting gallery. Just as a lack of leadership a decade ago led to our young men and women getting sent to fight and die in a war that never should have been waged, a vacuum of leadership today has led to far too many shootings and killings in Wilmington, Dover, Seaford, and other communities in our state. This has to stop. Across the nation, there are more senseless and tragic mass shootings. This must end.

We aren't just missing good ideas to rein in gun violence, we are missing courage in Congress to stand up to the NRA. I wasn't afraid to fight for my country, and I won't be afraid of taking on the gun lobby in Congress. Weapons that are built for Marines fighting overseas have no place on the streets of Wilmington, and news headlines that sound like a dispatch from a reporter embedded with a platoon in Fallujah should not be coming out of places like Newton, Aurora, or Santa Barbara.

What Wilmington murders and high-profile mass killings have in common are that they are both exacerbated by the easy availability of guns to people who absolutely should not have them. We have a Second Amendment right to own firearms in this country, and I support that. But I reject any notion that we cannot have strong, common sense, effective gun laws that protect men, women, and children in their homes, in their neighborhoods, at their schools, and where people work, shop, and play. And I will fight to pass new and better laws with every ounce of my being in Congress.

The issue of gun violence is not new to me. When I was policy director to our governor, we took action after innocent children and teachers were mercilessly gunned down in Newtown, Connecticut. We developed a smart package of gun safety measures that closed longstanding loopholes in our gun laws. We fought for them and worked with our legislature. As a result, today we have universal background checks for gun sales. That means whenever a gun is sold in Delaware, the buyer has to go through a background check. And that makes it harder for criminals and domestic abusers to purchase guns through intermediaries.

As a small state on a major transportation corridor, however, Delaware is example number one of why common-sense gun safety requires action at the national level. Our laws are easily circumvented by going to nearby states, like Virginia, with lax laws that allow dangerous people to obtain guns more easily.

# GUN VIOLENCE

As your Congressman, I will work to pass strong national gun laws. We need a national universal background check law for all gun sales. We must end the loopholes that allow criminals, terrorists, and the severely mentally ill to evade these checks. And for anyone concerned about the Second Amendment, my response is simple: the right to own a gun does not extend to terrorists, felons, wife-beaters, and those without the mental capacity to know right from wrong. We will ban military-style assault weapons and large capacity ammunition clips. I've been to war; I fought in Fallujah; I have been under fire; I know the difference between guns that are used by hunters with breath and trigger control to hunt game, and weapons of war that are designed to inflict as much death in as little time as possible.

We will, for the first time ever, make illegal gun trafficking a federal crime and make it easier for city, state, and federal law enforcement to trace the out-of-state guns that are trafficked into our communities in Delaware and add to the body count in our flagship city.

Keeping guns out of the wrong hands is an indispensable first step. Reducing gun violence and saving lives and communities also requires, though, that we address the root causes of gun violence. That means creating jobs, improving police-community relations, and bringing government services to historically neglected communities in our state— changes I will insist upon as Delaware's next Representative in Congress. Some lament that broad, systematic efforts aimed at the root causes of violence are doomed to failure, or will take too long to accomplish. Addressing the root causes of gun violence in Delaware is a matter of basic justice, and essential to the safety and prosperity of us all. Moreover, Philadelphia and other cities have shown that real and dramatic results can be achieved by focusing first on impacting the lives of those youth at greatest risk.

Gun violence isn't just another issue for me. It's personal. And unlike the lifetime politicians in Washington who lament each tragic shooting but cower when asked to actually do something about it, as Delaware's congressman I will fight with every ounce of my being until this country enacts meaningful legislation to reduce gun violence.

# GUNS AND DELAWARE

## Gun Crime and Mass Shootings

With gun-related crime rising in Wilmington and mass shootings becoming a near-daily occurrence across the country, Delawareans want to know what their political leaders will do to reduce gun violence. Shooting incidents and homicides in Wilmington both reached a five-year high in 2015, and for several years Wilmington has had among the nation's highest per capita murder rates for a city of its size. While the prevalence of guns contributes to violence on the streets, it is also a factor in the rising frequency of mass shootings in communities across the country.

## Progress in Delaware

While I served as policy director for Governor Jack Markell, we succeeded in passing important legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands. In 2013 we passed a law requiring background checks before virtually all gun purchases, closing the loophole for private sales and gun shows. This was common sense legislation that is supported by a strong majority of people in our state and backed up by real evidence: in the 18 states that have stricter background checks than federal law requires, there are 48% fewer fatal shootings of peace officers and 46% fewer fatal shootings of women by their partners. That same year we passed a law in Delaware making it harder for those barred from gun ownership to purchase one through an intermediary, limiting so-called "straw purchases" by requiring people to immediately report any lost or stolen guns. And last year, the Governor signed legislation to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers—a vital measure given that for victims of domestic abuse the risk of homicide increases 500 percent when there is a gun in the home.

## Congressional Action

But while Delaware is at the front of the pack on gun safety nationally, our experience demonstrates why progress on this issue remains a national responsibility. We are a small state of less than 1 million people, on the I-95 transportation corridor in between major cities like Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. It is no surprise, then, that according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, 61% of guns seized by Delaware law enforcement between 2010 and 2014 came from out of state. If Delaware is to ensure that only those who can responsibly use guns obtain them, our state's leadership will have to be matched with effective action at a national level.

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## Why Gun Safety is a National Issue Requiring

# MY APPROACH

## My Approach to Gun Safety

As a former combat Marine I both respect the right of law-abiding Americans to own guns, and know first-hand the terrible damage modern weapons can do in the wrong hands. I believe in the Second Amendment, but with rights come responsibilities. And there is no responsibility of any government greater than keeping innocent men, women, and children safe. We cannot do that with the interest group-driven laws that allow the worst elements of society easy access to firearms with no questions asked. As part of an urgently needed common-sense gun safety agenda, I will stand with you and fight in Congress for the following:

- **Requiring universal background checks**

This is the single most effective step we can take, and one that already has the support of the majority of the American people. First, the nation should follow Delaware's example in closing the "private sale" loophole for gun shows and internet sales between strangers. Second, federal law should require and support states to provide mental health records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Third, individuals on the federal terrorism watch list should not be able to purchase guns. And fourth, we should reverse the "default proceed" rule that allows a gun sale to take place if a background check cannot be effectively completed in three days. These measures will make it harder for criminals, the mentally ill, and would-be terrorists to obtain the means to cause damage. Such measures could have prevented the Virginia Tech and Charleston, South Carolina shooters from buying the

guns they used in their mass killings. Just as importantly, this is how ordinary, run-of-the-mill criminals obtain firearms to terrorize our neighborhoods.

- **Banning military-style assault weapons and high capacity ammunition clips**

I know the difference between a gun designed for hunting or personal protection, and one designed to inflict the greatest amount of damage possible. The US Supreme Court has recognized an individual right to bear arms, but also determined that that right does not extend to machine guns or other weapons with a primarily military use. I will support renewal of the federal assault weapons ban, as well as limitations on magazines that hold more than ten rounds of ammunition.

- **Taking on the NRA**

As Congressman, I will fight to end the influence of the NRA over Washington. While the NRA repeatedly argues to the public that we can accomplish violence control by simply enforcing the laws on the books, in Washington it does everything it can to undercut those same laws. I will take on the NRA by fighting to lift the federal bans Congress has put in place, at the NRA's behest on establishing a requirement that gun dealers conduct an annual inventory to discover lost or stolen guns and on allowing the CDC to research the causes of gun violence. I will also fight to free the ATF from roadblocks put in its place by the NRA that limit its ability to crack down on the 5 percent of dealers who sell nearly 90 percent of the firearms used in crimes.

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# MY APPROACH

- **Closing domestic abuser loopholes**

While federal law bars convicted domestic abusers from purchasing firearms, the law is currently riddled with problematic loopholes. One such loophole, the “stalker loophole,” permits those who are convicted of certain stalking offenses to legally purchase guns. Another, the “boyfriend loophole,” allows many unmarried abusers to buy guns. I will fight to close these loopholes and tighten existing laws to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers.

- **Cutting the flow of out of state guns into Delaware by:**

1. making gun trafficking a federal offense; Someone can sell guns out of an alleyway in Wilmington and not be in violation of a single federal law. That is because, unbelievably, there is no federal law making it a crime to traffic in firearms. Delaware’s experience shows that without strong federal prohibitions and enforcement, guns will flow from states with weak laws to those like ours that have taken steps to protect their population. I will support bipartisan legislation to end this traffic that puts guns in the hands of those who can’t pass a background check and by law shouldn’t have them.

**A small minority of gun dealers are responsible for selling the vast majority of the firearms used in crimes.**

minority of gun dealers are responsible for selling the vast majority of the firearms used in crimes. By requiring that all guns used in violent crimes be traced to their source, we will enable law enforcement to uncover and prosecute the 5 percent of gun dealers responsible for feeding into the illegal market 90 percent of the guns used in crimes.

3. cracking down on straw purchasers and suppliers to the illegal market.

Criminals and juveniles who are banned from personally purchasing a gun often get their hands on firearms through “straw purchases” made by other individuals. These straw purchases are a major source of firearms for organized crime organizations. While straw purchases are a felony in Delaware and Delaware’s requirement that lost and stolen firearms be reported gives prosecutors the capacity to build cases against straw purchasers, in many other states straw purchasers are given little more than a slap on the wrist. We need to crack down on straw purchases by aggressively prosecuting the crime at the federal level and making it a federal requirement that lost and stolen guns be reported. Additionally, we need to require that gun dealers conduct an annual inventory to identify and report lost and stolen guns.

2. requiring that guns used in violent crimes be traced; If we are going to be serious about enforcing the laws already on the books, we must begin by understanding the illegal market in guns and the networks of illegal gun trafficking. A small

- Creating a comprehensive youth violence reduction partnership



# MY APPROACH

I will fight as Delaware's Congressman to secure U.S. Department of Justice support for a new and comprehensive youth violence reduction partnership in Delaware, drawing on successful examples in other violence-plagued US cities. Nearby Philadelphia has shown that gun violence is most effectively addressed by coupling traditional law enforcement techniques with a rigorous, multi-agency, and community-based partnership to address the root causes of gun violence. Created in 1999, the Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership brought multiple government agencies and community-based organizations together to focus on providing the youth in the community most likely to kill or be killed both increased supervision and increased support, including job skills training, employment, mentoring, health care, and drug treatment. After creating the Partnership, Philadelphia saw a more than 40 percent reduction in youth homicides in the 24th and 25th Police Districts of North Philadelphia.

Another instructive example comes from Richmond, California, which for many years had among the highest murder rates in the state. In 2007 the city manager worked with community activists to create the Office of Neighborhood Safety, which launched Operation Peacemaker to provide intensive mentorship to youths identified as being most at risk of involvement in gun violence. Participants agreed to take part in targeted services such as anger management counseling, GED preparation, and job training and placement. Arrangements were made with local employers to ensure that those who completed jobs training ended up with jobs. While in the program, participants received a stipend of \$300- \$1,000 per month. From 2007 to 2014 the city's homicide rate dropped 77 percent, to just 11 killings, the lowest number since 1971 and in per capita terms the lowest ever.



Sean Barney is a progressive Democrat and Iraq War veteran who believes a new generation of leadership is needed to fix Congress and find solutions to the urgent challenges facing our country. To make progress in America, we need to send service-oriented leaders to Washington who will put the people first, move beyond the petty politics of the present, and pull our country together.