

Peterson, Bobbye

From: Scott Kimmich <ferdkimmich@gmail.com>
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To: JudTestimony
Subject: Gun Control

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Rebimbas and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Scott Kimmich; I am from Norwalk]. I am a member of Democracy for America, and a member of my District Democratic Committee.

In 1997, my grown son bought a gun and killed himself. He had a good job, an angel for a wife, and three loving siblings besides his doting parents. It came out of the blue and we have never gotten over it, let alone divined his reasons. Nevertheless, we believe the easy purchase of a gun facilitated his death.

That is why I want to spare friends and neighbors from going through the same agony. I want all the occupants of every household to be safe from suicide or accidental death. From public health and university studies, we know that a gun in the home can be used to settle arguments with a homicide that can never be retracted. Even toddlers are killed when playing with their fathers' guns.

I find it weird indeed that some people – a minority of Americans – believe that they have a constitutional right to own and carry firearms to the detriment and endangerment of the vast majority of nonowners. Lobbyists from the NRA never quote the full second amendment that begins, "A well regulate militia, being necessary to the security of a free State," which today clearly means the National Guard and its armories, not gun-crazies brazenly cowing the rest of us on our streets and in our workplaces, schools and homes.

How can parents trust that their children will return alive when they go to play in a house where a gun is available? It's like a smoker standing next to you on a ski slope who lights up, and is amazed that you refuse to share his smoke. A single life should be worth more than the entire inventory of privately owned guns here in the US. Compared to other countries, our gun mortality is a shameful disgrace

Within our nation's borders, gun death rates are 7 times higher in the states with the highest compared with the lowest household gun ownership. (Harvard School of Public Health, 2009).

- Keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide by a factor of 3 to 5 and **increases the risk of suicide with a firearm by a factor of 17** (Kellermann, p. 467, p. Wiebe, p. 771).
- The association between firearm ownership and increased risk of suicide cannot be explained by a higher risk of psychiatric disorders in homes with guns (Miller, p. 183).

Most gun-owning Americans think their firearms make them safer. The reality is that access to a firearm increases the risk of suicide for all people in the household. A gun in the home is more likely to be used in a homicide, suicide, or unintentional shooting than to be used in self-defense. Every time a gun injures or kills in self-defense, it is used:

- 11 times for completed and attempted suicides (Kellermann, 1998, p. 263).
- 7 times in criminal assaults and homicides, and
- 4 times in unintentional shooting deaths or injuries.

People who live in U.S. states with high rates of household gun ownership are almost four times more likely to die by gun suicide than in states where fewer households own guns. This relationship remains strong even when

controlling for other factors associated with suicide, like poverty, unemployment, serious mental illness, and substance abuse.

A meta-analysis of 14 different scientific studies concluded that having access to a firearm triples one's risk of death by suicide. This elevated risk applies not only to the gun owner, but everyone in the household.

The U.S. firearm suicide rate is eight times that of other high-income countries. Americans should be educated on the prevalence of firearm suicide, how having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide, and steps they can take to mitigate risk, such as H.B.7218, 7223 and 7219. We have done a great job in decreasing mortality due to cigarettes. Why can't we do the same for guns?

Connecticut's enactment of PTP and comprehensive point-of-sale background check laws were associated with a 15 percent decline in the firearm suicide rate over the following decade. By contrast, when Missouri repealed its PTP law, this repeal was associated with a 16 percent increase in the firearm suicide rate over the following five years. Fifteen per cent reduction is good, but 85%. 95%. 100% would be better

An increase in suicides drove the total number of U.S. gun-related fatalities to the highest level ever recorded in 2017. According to the Center for Disease Control's Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research database, 39,773 people died from gun-related violence in 2017. That's up from the prior record of 39,595 deaths set in 1993. **Suicide was the primary reason for the increase. There were 23,854 gun-related suicides in 2017, up from 22,938 the prior year.**

2017 was the third year in a row that saw rising gun-related fatalities, and the third straight year in which gun-related deaths outpaced car accidents. There were 12.2 gun deaths per 100,000 people last year, the highest rate seen since 1996, when it was 12.8 per 100,000. **Suicide was the primary reason** for the increase. There were 23,854 gun-related suicides in 2017, up from 22,938 the prior ye

"Gun violence is a public health epidemic that requires a public health solution, which is why we must immediately enact and implement evidence-based interventions, like permit-to-purchase policies and extreme risk laws."

Suicide is the second-most common cause of death for Americans between 15 and 34, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An increase in suicides drove the total number of U.S. gun-related fatalities to the highest level ever recorded in 2017.

Suicide Deaths by Method, 2017

Firearm: 50.6 %
Suffocation: 27.7 %
Poisoning: 13.9 %
Other: 7.8 %

Even in the 1980s and 1990s, when violent crime rates were much higher, gun suicides were still a more common cause of death than gun murders. But in recent years, as the gun homicide rate has flattened out, the gun suicide rate appears to be ticking back up slightly.

One of the most compelling studies to this point comes from Israel: There, a study found that suicides among Israeli soldiers dropped by 40 percent when the military stopped letting soldiers take their guns home over the weekend. The change was most pronounced during the weekends, when one would expect the change to have the greatest effect.

Another study, published in Preventive Medicine in 2015, found that laws that require a government-issued permit to purchase a handgun — a license, essentially — were linked to fewer suicides. **S.B. 60 Would further lower suicide risk.**

**ACCESS TO GUNS
RAISES THE RISK OF SUICIDE**

VARIABLE	States with the Highest Rates of Gun Ownership	States with the Lowest Rates of Gun Ownership
Average population 2001-2005	49 million	50 million
Percent of households with guns	47	15
Total firearm suicides	16,577	4,257
Total nonfirearm suicides	9,172	9,259

Source: Miller M and Hemenway D. Guns and suicide in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2008; 359:672-3.

There is no reason for us to fear that we shall not see our kids or grandkids come home from school where some NRA fiend has murdered them.

There is no reason for us to fear that when our kids or grandkids play at someone else's house they run the risk of being shot to death.

There is no reason why guns should be easier to buy than a prescription drug or an automobile.

There is no reason why a gun should be carried, concealed or not, in public areas.

There is no reason why anyone can claim a constitutional right to bear arms when the amendment clearly states otherwise.

There is no reason why guns should be so easily purchased when there is a clear public health danger to all who are exposed to such a purchase.

The table above indicates that gun possession in any household enormously increases the risk of suicide. If suicide prone people did not have access to guns, suicide rates would drop by 50%.

I cannot say that my son would not have found another way to kill himself. But he might not have if the guns had not been so easy to purchase, or if there had been necessity to get a license or a permit.

The H.B. bills 7218 and 7223 that require storage would have also helped deterr him from committing suicide with a fire-arm. H. B.7219 restricting use of Ghost Guns would also have been a deterrent.

Finally, SB 60 helps protect us ordinary, innocent taxpayers and our families from promiscuous carry of guns in public places. We have conquered second-hand smoke. Now we need to conquer second-hand gunshot death, where a majority of Americans find themselves besieged by an NRA motivated by greed (gun sales) and might makes right.

I strongly support H.B. 7218, H.B. 7219 and S.B. 60 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the Judiciary Committee. Sincerely, F.Scott Kimmich

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Explore the romance and adventure of 13th century France in the "Ordeal by Fire" Trilogy by F. Scott Kimmich.