

Dear Members of the Task Force,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony on this crucial issue.

I had a phone conversation with one of the co-chairs of this task force who asked me why I was so concerned about guns. I ask that co-chair of the Task Force on Gun Violence, why, when assigned this important task, are you not?

I reject the argument that it is a basic human right to own assault weapons. A balance must exist between public safety and gun rights. The writers of the constitution did not intend for civilians to carry weapons as technologically advanced as the weapons that are commonplace today.

More guns do not make us safer. States with higher gun ownership have a correspondingly higher incident of gun fatalities. Assault weapons, created with the sole purpose of killing many people as quickly as possible, exponentially increase that risk.

I deny the assertion that stronger gun legislation is futile because a "bad guy" will still find a way to obtain an assault rifle. Enacting sensible legislation will make it more difficult, just like we have a variety of measures to make it more difficult for a drunk driver to cause a drunken-driving fatality.

An NRA rating is not the basis for making decisions about this legislation. Today's NRA leadership is not that of a generation ago. The group's leadership became more extremist and focused on extreme interpretation of gun rights, instead of gun safety and sportsmanship, after an internal leadership coup in the 70's. Since that point in time, NRA leadership has helped to create a culture of fear, in which we are only safe if we all carry guns.

Responsible gun owners want and support better legislation. Hunters and sportsmen don't see the need for assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. And it is only fair to responsible gun owners who purchase their firearms from licensed dealers that universal background checks apply to everyone.

Gun violence has become a public health crisis. Every day, 86 people die from gun violence in the US. Dying by gun massacre should not be a risk of being a child in this country. It should not be on any parent's radar.

We have a grave societal problem when firearm massacres and fatalities happen with regularity. Multiple factors share a degree of responsibility, such as the lack of mental health treatment. But we should not wait until we have perfect legislation written for every factor before adopting common sense gun laws.

I want to live in a country where my children can grow up free from the fear of gun violence. I demand to live in a state that has done all it can to ensure freedom from gun violence by enacting universal background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Thank you,

Lori Fedewa
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