

POLICY STATEMENT ON GUN VIOLENCE YOUNGSTOWN AREA JEWISH FEDERATION

INTRODUCTION:

The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation strongly calls for action to address and end gun violence in America. We are heartbroken by the horrific deadly shootings this year at a high school in Parkland, Florida, at a newspaper office in Annapolis, Maryland, as well as at many other locations targeting children at schools, students and faculty at institutes of higher education, patrons at local businesses, congregants at houses of worship, and employees at work, dating back to the Columbine shootings nearly two decades ago.

We acknowledge the breadth, diversity, and passionate depth of feeling and informed opinion on gun ownership and gun control, both nationally and in our own community. We recognize and support the second amendment of the Bill of Rights, integral to the U.S. Constitution, which permits law abiding Americans to own handguns and rifles for legitimate purposes. As Jews, we know the pain and fear of gun violence and death by such horrendous actions such as attacks on Jewish agencies, institutions, and people.

But as Jews, we also have a deep and abiding concern for public safety. Driven by our strong fundamental moral belief in the sanctity of life and commandment against murder, (“whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world,”) we are committed to a comprehensive approach to confronting gun violence and believe it is our moral obligation to advocate for change in our nation’s laws in order to save innocent lives and prevent needless injuries. Since no single solution will prevent all future tragedies, we advocate for a balanced, multipronged approach.

However, we recognize that debate on this issue is “*l’shem shamayim*,” for the sake of Heaven, and that disagreement on policy need not be personal or vindictive. We believe that we can focus both on the physical security needs of our schools, community centers, and houses of worship, as well as on gun control regulations that are constitutionally sound and wise public policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Gun Regulations:

- Strengthen the background check system by requiring background checks for all gun sales, including at gun shows, to prevent sales to purchasers who are prohibited by law from acquiring guns because of criminal or mental health history, and by providing funds to assist states in providing information to the background check system.
- Establish appropriate waiting periods and volume sales restrictions to better enforce the background check system.
- Registration and tracking for all firearms at the time of sale or subsequent transfer, and periodic licensing for anyone that purchases, owns, carries, and/or uses firearms.

- Limit the private purchase or transfer of large-capacity ammunition feeding devices, capable of accepting more than 10 rounds, which increase the number of rounds someone can fire without stopping to reload and that serve no other purpose than to inflict maximum carnage.
- Ban the private purchase and transfer of automatic and semi-automatic assault-type weapons.
- Diligent enforcement of firearm regulations and expansion of federal laws, including the imposition of substantial criminal penalties, prohibiting gun trafficking and straw purchases.
- Support robust efforts to ensure that every person in need has access to quality mental health care. This includes fully funding the nation’s mental health system, and requiring true parity between physical and mental health, so that people are better able to get the treatment they need before dangerous situations develop.
- Fund research by the Centers for Disease Control and other scientific agencies on causes and prevention of gun violence.
- Provide funding for training of police officers and others to respond to “active shooter” situations.
- In Ohio, support Gov. Kasich’s six “common ground” policy changes:
 1. Create gun violence protection orders where someone may petition a court to remove firearms from people who pose a threat to themselves or others (aka “red flag laws”).
 2. Mirror federal law to prohibit anyone convicted of a domestic violence crime or under a domestic violence protection order from buying or owning a firearm.
 3. Background checks – enforce requirements that courts submit conviction information to state databases in a timely manner.
 4. Ban “strawman” purchases of firearms for third parties, except as a gift.
 5. Update Ohio law to mirror federal law banning body armor-piercing bullets.
 6. Automatically change Ohio law regarding bump stocks if federal officials act to do so, without the need for separate legislation in Ohio afterwards.

School Safety Regulations:

- Make schools safer by making available more school resource officers and mental health professional in schools, and by providing grants to states to help their school districts develop and implement emergency management plans.
- In Ohio, support policies to include comprehensive school safety legislation, with requisite funding for pre-K through 12 schools, including all nonpublic schools:
 1. Armed and appropriately trained school resource officers in every community and on every campus that requests them.
 2. Physical upgrades to building and campus security, including panic buttons, more effective two-way audio/visual communications, locks, bulletproof and shatterproof glass and window, safe rooms, and other areas, metal detectors, and other hardware.

3. Increased training for staff and students in responding to potential threats and active attacks.
4. Increased health and social service staffing in schools, including nurses and counselors.
5. Breaking down of barriers and walls between social service agencies, schools, and law enforcement so that red flags will not be missed.
6. Robust consideration at what technologies can cost to effectively warn, alert, and defend the school and campus community.

PROCESS AND ADVOCACY:

With respect to the above policy positions, the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation, through the Jewish Community Relations Council Advisory Board, will:

- Communicate with elected officials about existing and potentially new legislation.
- Communicate with the Jewish and general communities through conventional and social media.
- Participate in coalitions with other faith-based and community groups, as well as with law enforcement agencies, for the purposes of advocating for jointly held positions and for reducing gun violence.
- Monitor developments at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Evaluate other possible measures to reduce gun violence.