

Resolution on Gun Violence Prevention
Adopted by the 2020 JCPA Delegates Assembly

Rooted in our belief in the sanctity of life, the Jewish community relations field has fought for decades to prevent gun violence, which has become heartbreakingly, unacceptably common. Gun violence, including mass shootings, have reached epidemic levels, impacting people from every walk of life in almost every community in our nation. The Jewish community has itself experienced the deadly effects of gun violence. Americans are now 25 times more likely to be killed by guns and eight times more likely to kill themselves with a gun than people in other developed countries. Each year, over 36,000 people are killed by guns and gun-related homicide remains the leading cause of death among Black teens and adults, ages 15-34.

JCPA's work on gun violence prevention began in 1968. Over the next four decades, JCPA repeatedly returned to gun violence prevention, building consensus within the Jewish community to support commonsense regulations while opposing repressive crime control measures. Based on the 2013 Resolution on Mass Violence, JCPA penned an open letter to Congress in 2018, signed by 22 national Jewish agencies, including the four main denominations of Judaism, calling for stronger measures to end gun violence.

The Jewish community has a deep and abiding concern for public safety. Driven by our belief in the overriding sanctity of life and the commandment against murder, the Jewish community relations field is committed to a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence, and to condemning mass shootings as domestic terrorism.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes that:

- As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel phrased it, Judaism calls upon us to take “a leap of action.” The time for us to act is now.
- No single reform will prevent all future tragedies, which is why we therefore advocate for a balanced, multipronged approach that includes, but is not limited to, the following measures:

- Banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
- Robust universal background checks for all firearm sales and transfers, including those by private or unlicensed sellers or transferors.
- Closing loopholes in federal law so that adjudicated abusers and stalkers are no longer able to purchase or possess firearms.
- Federal and state Extreme Risk Protection Orders or “red flag” laws, which enable families, household members, current or former intimate partners, or law enforcement officers to petition a court to temporarily remove a person’s access to firearms when they are in crisis, before they harm themselves or others.
- Strategic violence intervention and prevention programs that reduce gun violence in the most impacted communities.
- Registration and tracking for all firearms at the time of sale or subsequent transfer and licensing for anyone that purchases, owns, carries, and or uses firearms.
- Extended waiting periods and volume sales restrictions.
- Effective, universal safe storage laws, including safes or gun locks in homes and cars where children reside or are present.
- Diligent enforcement of firearm regulations and expansion of federal laws prohibiting gun trafficking and straw purchases.
- Authorization and funding for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to research the effects of gun violence as a public health issue.

- Development and adoption of evidence-based gun technology by gun manufacturers and law enforcement to reduce violence.
- Mandatory gun safety and training programs required for all gun purchasers.
- Banning guns that can evade detection, such as those that can be downloaded or printed.
- Government firearm buy-back programs.
- Unrestricted open and concealed carry decreases public safety. Open carry should not be allowed in urban areas without a permit and concealed carry permits should be limited to persons with a permit only after appropriate training and background checks. Studies show that states with limited restrictions have higher rates of violent crime and gun homicides. In addition, the presence of visible firearms can escalate violence and has been known to confuse law enforcement responding to shootings.

The Jewish community relations field should:

- Educate our communities about how gun violence overlaps with issues like hate, crime, domestic violence, and law enforcement shootings, with unique manifestations and impacts on different individuals and communities.
- Join and participate in broad coalitions to advocate for reforms and elevate and center those most impacted.
- Urge Congress and the Administration, as well as state and local governments, to pass laws to reduce gun violence (as outlined above) and to enforce existing gun laws.
- Advocate for full funding for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) as well as a full-time director.

- Advocate for full and open communication and coordination between federal, state, and local agencies charged with enforcement of gun laws.
- Educate the public, especially the Jewish communities we serve and represent, about the impacts of gun violence and common-sense solutions, including safe storage and gun locks.
- Work with gun manufacturers, distributors, law enforcement, and other relevant stakeholders to support and adopt evidence-based gun technology to reduce violence.