



INTERIM ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

PRESENTED BY
TEXAS GUN SENSE



 **TEXAS COALITION** | *To Prevent Gun Violence*



Social Media

IG: @txgunsense
FB & Tw: @txgunsense



Email

info@txgunsense.org



Website

txgunsense.org

INTRODUCTION

A lot of advocacy in the gun violence prevention space happens through policy. However, legislative sessions in Texas only last 140 days every other year. In the interim between legislative sessions, the work must continue. This toolkit spotlights gun safety advocacy efforts that supporters can take when the Texas Legislature is not in session. Our hope is that it will provide you with the opportunity to make an impact on gun safety year-round.



Overview of TGS mission and goals in the interim

- We know that advocating to prevent gun violence requires long-term strategy and incremental progress. Even in the face of challenge, we will continue to advocate for common sense gun safety policies until they become law. These include background checks on all gun sales, an extreme risk protection order, raising the age to purchase semi-automatic rifles, and more.
- Work with our coalition: We will continue to expand our partnerships across the state and work together to push for change on a state and local level.
- Hold leaders accountable: We will keep building a sustainable movement that educates voters and holds elected officials accountable on gun safety.
- Educate the public: We will continue raising awareness on solutions to prevent gun violence and the critical importance of safe gun storage and responsible practices.
- Address the root causes of gun violence: We will work to reduce daily gun deaths due to interpersonal violence and firearm suicide by addressing root causes, including mental health crises, lack of access to vital resources, and unfettered access to firearms.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

EQUIPPING YOU WITH THE FACTS

Not sure how to talk about the gun violence crisis? Here are some updated statistics:

On average, someone is killed with a gun every two hours in Texas. ([Statistics](#) | [Giffords](#))

In 2022, more than 70% of domestic violence victims were killed with a firearm. ([Texas Council on Family Violence](#))

In 2022, firearms remained the leading cause of child deaths for the third consecutive year, according to provisional data. ([CDC](#))

Black Americans are 12x more likely to be murdered by a firearm than their white counterparts. ([Everytown](#))

Men who own handguns are 8x more likely to die of gun suicides than men who don't, and women who own handguns are 35x more likely than women who don't. ([Stanford Medicine](#))



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Relational Organizing →

Talking to the people in your life about the need for gun safety reform is one of the most important things you can do. Change happens at every level, and personal conversations are an important part of the culture change we need to see.

LTEs to Media Outlets →

You can pitch stories and write Letters to the Editor (LTEs) about gun violence prevention. By sharing your perspective, you can reach a broader audience and spark public dialogue about the urgent need for effective gun safety measures.

CORRESPONDING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS



- Your state and local lawmakers work for you and they need to hear from their constituents on the importance of gun safety.
- Calling and emailing your representatives are both effective ways to make your voice heard. You can also request in-person meetings with lawmakers to establish relationships and have longer discussions.
- In all communications with elected officials, include your name, contact information, and full address.
- [Find your lawmakers with the Common Cause search tool.](#)

SAMPLE LETTER

USE THIS TEMPLATE AS A GUIDE FOR
COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Dear [Title and Name of Representative],

My name is [your name] and I am a constituent in your district. I am writing today because I am concerned about the high rates of gun violence in [Texas/the United States].

For Local Officials: I ask that you support investments in community violence intervention programs [and/or] the distribution of safe gun storage materials in your capacity as a local leader. Please also consider taking steps to establish an Office of Violence Prevention in your municipality.

For State Legislators: I encourage you to support legislation that requires background checks on all gun sales [and/or] raises the age of purchase from 18 to 21 for semi-automatic rifles.

These measures are important to me because [personal connection OR they have been proven to reduce the daily gun violence that plagues communities in Texas].

I appreciate your consideration, and hope I can count on you to champion the cause of gun safety.

Thank you very much for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

*[your name]
[your address]*

**"WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE THE AMERICA
WE WANT UNTIL WE ELECT LEADERS WHO
ARE GOING TO TELL THE TRUTH - NOT MOST
DAYS, BUT EVERY DAY."**

-TEXAS GOVERNOR ANN RICHARDS

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Learn About the Legislative

Process → The Texas Legislature consists of 31 Senate members and 150 House members. The Legislature convenes for 140 days every 2 years, sometimes with 30-day special sessions. Our [legislative advocacy toolkit](#) offers more information about the workings of the #txlege.

Incorporate Conversations About Safe Gun Storage in Your Life

→ Safe storage = storing guns unloaded in a safe or locked container, with ammunition stored elsewhere.

- Safe gun storage prevents unintentional shootings, suicides, and other gun tragedies.
- When bringing children to other people's homes, simply ask, text, or email "If you own guns, are they stored securely?" This one question could save someone's life.

Create Offices of Violence

Prevention (OVP) → Texas municipalities should create local [Offices of Violence Prevention](#) that use proven strategies to address gun violence. Citizens should urge state lawmakers, mayors, city council members, and county commissioners to prioritize programs that reduce violence in the hardest-hit communities.

Ensure Schools Comply with HB 3 to Distribute Safe Gun Storage

Information → The safe gun storage measure Texas Gun Sense led into passage last legislative session is in effect. Help us reach more parents across Texas by contacting [your local school district](#) to ensure they are complying with HB 3 and distributing safe gun storage materials to parents. Let school leadership know how important it is to you to see this implemented so that every parent receives life-saving information.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Organize Community

Events/Rallies → These events provide an opportunity to share personal stories, facts, and advocate for local policy changes. Leave attendees with a call to action relevant to your community. For example, organize a community picnic in a local park, where attendees can learn about how to effectively advocate for change.

Collaborate with Local Advocacy Organizations →

By partnering with like-minded groups like Texas Gun Sense, you can pool resources, share expertise, and amplify your collective impact. Reach out to us at info@txgunsense.org and request a meeting to determine opportunities for collaboration.



Build Alliances with Businesses, Schools, Churches, etc. →

These partnerships provide opportunities to host educational events, engage diverse audiences, and foster a shared commitment to creating a culture of responsible gun use in Texas.

DEBUNKING MYTHS

UTILIZE THESE KEY TALKING POINTS TO EDUCATE PEOPLE

1 *Myth: More guns make us safer, so if we want to reduce gun deaths, we should arm more people.*

- If this were true, we would be the safest country in the world. Instead, we have a gun homicide rate that is 25 times higher than peer nations. Research also shows that states with permitless carry laws saw a 22% increase in gun homicides for the three years following the law's passage.

2 *Myth: Gun violence is inevitable/not preventable.*

- States that pass stronger gun laws have shown a reduction in gun violence. For example, states that require a background check on all gun sales have a 10% lower homicide rate.
- Decades of underfunding research on gun safety prevented law enforcement from cracking down on gun traffickers and tracing guns used in crimes.

3 *Myth: The second amendment means that any restrictions on gun ownership are unconstitutional.*

- Common-sense policies and responsible gun ownership can go hand-in-hand.
- All constitutional rights have reasonable limitations to protect the public. For example:
 - Freedom of speech is prohibited by the incitement of lawless action.
 - Freedom of the press is prohibited by defamation.
 - Citizens have to register to exercise their right to vote.

4 *Myth: Arming teachers will make our schools safer.*

- Educators do not support expanding guns in schools. In a survey by the Texas American Federation of Teachers, 77% of K-12 teachers reported a wish not to be armed.

DEBUNKING MYTHS

UTILIZE THESE KEY TALKING POINTS TO EDUCATE PEOPLE

5 *Myth: Gun violence is caused by mental illness.*

- Most often, those who suffer from mental illness are victims rather than perpetrators of violence.
- Expanding mental health services is one aspect of the many solutions we need in place to prevent gun violence, including laws that keep guns out of the hands of those with documented violent histories.

6 *Myth: Gun safety reform could never happen in Texas.*

- Texans support safe gun laws. For example, 86% of Texas voters support requiring background checks on all gun sales.
- Texas has a long history of responsible gun ownership. In fact, gun regulations in Texas even predate statehood and independence.

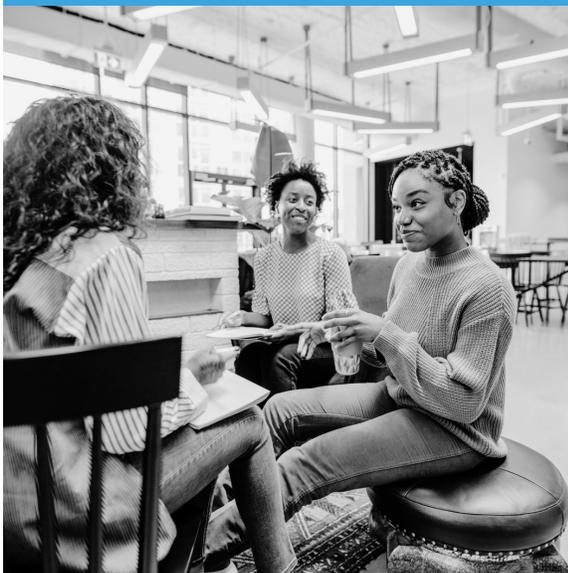
7 *Myth: Most gun violence is gang-related and happens in urban areas like Chicago.*

- Historic disinvestment in communities of color have led to cycles of poverty and an increase in risk of gun violence. Community violence often occurs in under-resourced neighborhoods and disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic communities.
- According to the Chicago Police Department, 60% of crime guns used in Chicago came from other states. ATF tracing data shows that these guns were mostly purchased from surrounding states with weaker gun laws.

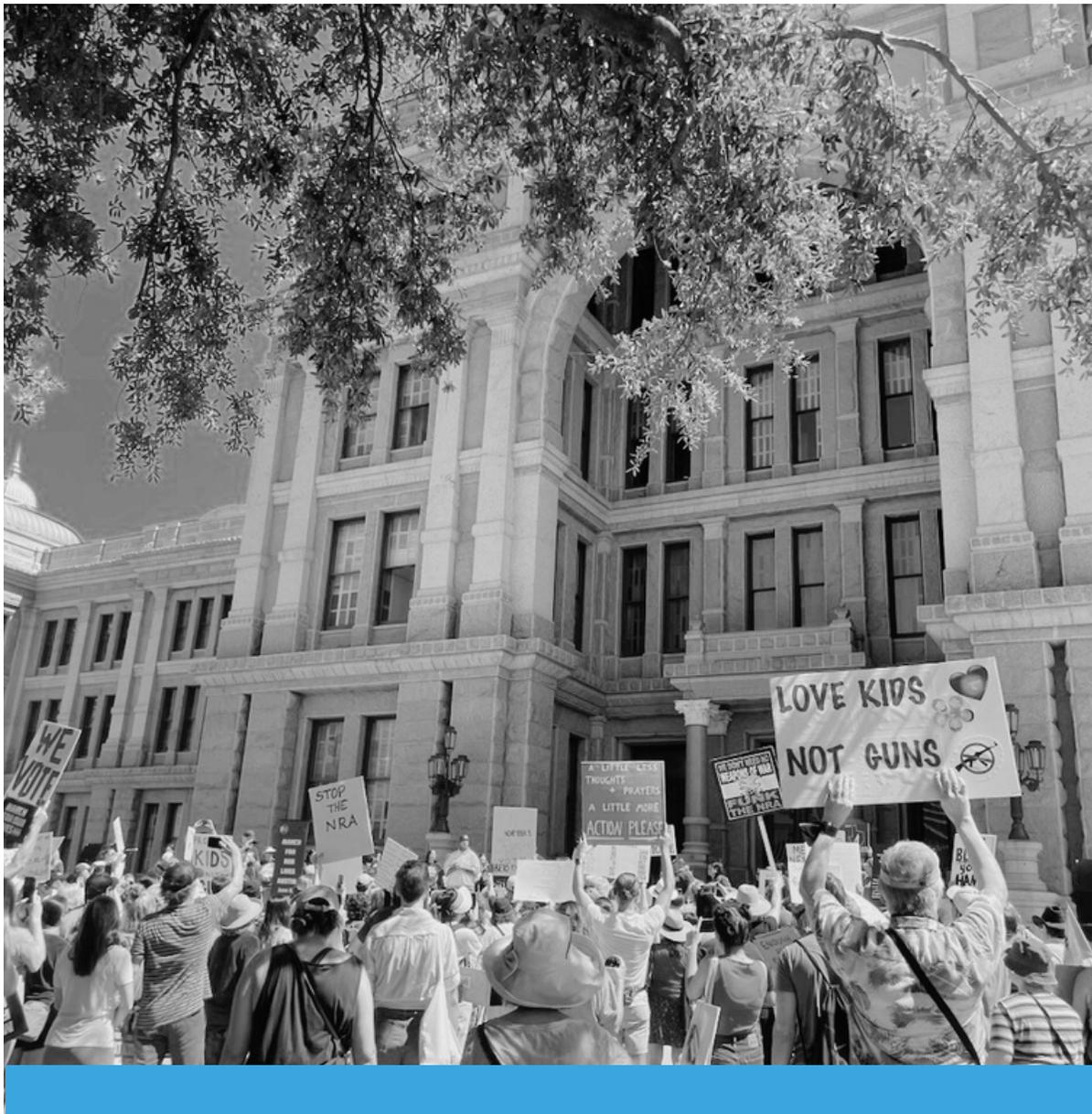
8 *Myth: If 18 year-olds can vote, they should be able to buy semi-automatic rifles.*

- You have to be 21 years-old to purchase alcohol, cigarettes, and handguns, but only 18 to purchase a deadly weapon like an AR-15.
- At a minimum, the age requirement to purchase a semi-automatic rifle should be raised to 21 to match Texas' handgun laws. This measure could have prevented the horrific Robb Elementary shooting in Uvalde.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT



- [Mental Health Resources](#) -
 - National suicide lifeline: 988
 - [NAMI](#) (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
 - [Local support groups available](#)
 - National domestic violence hotline: 1-800-7233
 - [Psychology Today's therapist finder](#)
 - Community Resources
 - [Resources from the Trauma Survivors Network](#)
 - [Survivors Toolkit](#) from Giffords
-



THANK YOU!

We are so grateful to our supporters. Regardless of your level of involvement, your efforts are strengthening our mission to prevent gun violence. We could not do this without you, and we encourage you to stay involved at txgunsense.org.