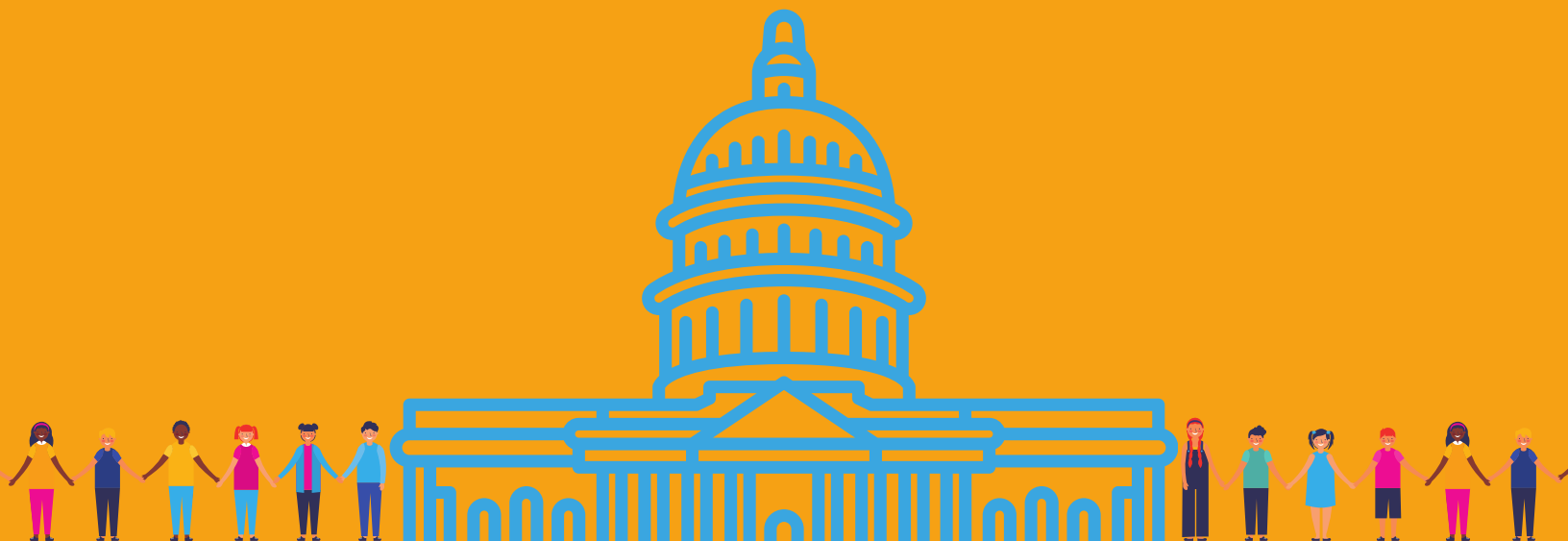


TEXAS
GUN SENSE

89TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



The Texas Legislature

The Texas Legislature consists of 31 Senate members and 150 House members, led by the Speaker of the House, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Governor. The Legislature convenes for 140 days every 2 years with 30-day special sessions that can only be called by the Governor.



House of Representatives

The Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee will likely hear most gun bills.

Senate

In the Senate, gun legislation is often referred to the State Affairs Committee.

How A Bill Becomes Law


1

Drafting and Introduction

A legislator writes a bill and introduces it in either the House or Senate.

2

Committee Review

The bill goes to a committee that studies it, holds public hearings, and may suggest changes.

3

Debate and Vote in First Chamber

The full chamber (House or Senate) debates and votes on the bill. If it passes, it moves to the other chamber.

4

Review and Vote in Second Chamber

The second chamber repeats the process: committee review, debate, and vote. If it's approved without changes, it goes to the governor.

5

Conference Committee (if needed)

If the two chambers disagree on changes, a committee works on an agreed upon version. Both chambers must approve it.

6


Governor's Decision

The governor can sign the bill into law, veto it, or do nothing (in which case it may become law automatically after a set period).

7

Law Goes Into Effect

Once approved by the governor or passed without a veto, the bill becomes law on its effective date.



Contacting Your Representatives



Your lawmakers work for you and they need to hear from their constituents on the importance of gun safety. Look up who represents you and how to reach them.

Things to Remember:

- ➔ Calling and emailing legislators are effective ways to make your voice heard. You can also request in-person meetings with your representatives to establish relationships and have longer discussions.
- ➔ View a map of the Capitol and parking information.
- ➔ In all communications with legislative offices, include your name, contact information, and full address to make sure office log your comments.
- ➔ Reference specific bills and state clearly whether you support or oppose them.

Scripts For Opposing/Supporting Gun Bills

To support or oppose bills, contact committee members. In particular, be aware of hearings on harmful bills that have a chance of passage. If and when a bill reaches the House or Senate floor, you will contact your representatives. Below are sample scripts.

Email

Dear [Lawmaker's Name],
As your constituent, I urge you to oppose [Bill Name/Number]. This bill undermines gun safety measures and risks further harm by [specific concerns with the bill]. Texans deserve to live in a safe environment, and this bill would take us in the wrong direction.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name, City, Contact Information]

Social Media

Texas is safer without this dangerous bill! [Bill Name/Number] threatens our communities. [Let your lawmakers know] OR [tag your representatives] we won't stand for weakening gun safety.
#EndGunViolence #TXLege

Phone Call

Hello, my name is [Your Name], and I'm a constituent from [Your City]. I'm calling to express my strong support for [Bill Name/Number] because I believe it will make our communities safer. I urge [Lawmaker's Name] to vote in support of this bill. Thank you for your time.



Give Public Testimony On Bills



During committee hearings, the public has the opportunity to register a position or provide testimony in support or opposition to a piece of legislation. This is a key opportunity to have your voice heard.

Depending on the hearing, you will get 1-3 minutes to speak. Committee hearings are often posted 48 hours in advance. View the House Committees [schedule](#) and the Senate Committees [schedule](#) for more information.




Sign up to support or oppose a bill.


Prepare notes or a fully written speech on what you will say.

If you can, bring enough copies of your testimony to hand out to each person on the committee.

Introduce yourself and provide your clear position on the bill.



Establish a personal connection to the subject matter and let the committee members know why the issue matters to you.



Back up your position with data and evidence.

Ask them to take action by: amending the bill, passing the bill, or voting against the bill.

Talking Points

Here are some talking points you can utilize in your communications with lawmakers. Be sure to share personal stories to emphasize the human impact of gun laws.

Most Texans Support Common Sense Gun Laws

- Nearly 90% of Texans, including gun owners, support stronger background checks.
- 76% of voters – including 64% of Republicans – support raising the legal age to purchase any firearm from 18 to 21, to match Texas' handgun requirements. This measure could have prevented the Robb Elementary shooting in Uvalde.
- 74% of Texans support Extreme Risk Protection Orders, to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who pose a danger to themselves or others.

Gun Laws Save Lives

- Gun deaths have risen 63% under Governor Greg Abbott as gun laws continue to be weakened.
- In 2022, 2,644 gun deaths were suicides. Texas also has the highest number of unintentional shooting incidents on average. Safe gun storage laws can reduce these tragedies.
- Since 1994, federal background checks have blocked over 4 million gun sales to prohibited purchases. States requiring background checks for all gun sales see 10% lower homicide rates.



Gun Violence is Personal

- Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children and teens in Texas, leaving every Texan community impacted.
- Domestic violence firearm homicides have nearly doubled in Texas since 2013, with more victims killed by guns in 2023 than all other means combined.
- Schools should be safe places for learning, but rising gun violence has turned them into places of fear instead. Texas needs real solutions to keep guns out of schools— not ineffective policies like arming teachers.

Gun Violence Terminology

Say This

Not That

Here's Why

Gun reform / gun safety /
gun violence prevention

Gun control

This reframing centers the focus on saving lives rather than restricting gun ownership.

Background checks
on all gun sales

Universal
background
checks

"Universal" can be associated with mandates. Instead, this wording specifies that private sales would require the same background check a federally-licensed dealer runs.

Raise the age of
purchase for semi-
automatic rifles

Ban semi-
automatic rifles

In the current political climate in Texas, it is extremely unlikely that we could pass a ban. However, there is a chance that we can make progress towards raising the age to 21 to purchase semi-automatic rifles.

Semi-automatic rifle

Assault rifle

This is the term recognized by the ATF and it is how this type of weapon is categorized in most legislation.

The majority of
Texans...

All Texans /
Every Texan...

The majority of Texans support the implementation of: red flag laws, background checks, and raising the age to purchase semi-automatic rifles. When you claim that *every* Texan supports these measures, your argument loses credibility.

Gun extremists

Gun nuts/Crazy
gun people

Gun extremists are a small, vocal minority and do not represent the bulk of gun owners. We want to call them out as dangerous to our public safety rather than poke fun.

I am anti-gun
violence

I am anti-gun

We support common sense, evidence-based policies to prevent gun violence while respecting responsible gun ownership.

Died by suicide
with a firearm

Committed suicide
with a firearm

Neutral language helps to decrease the stigma associated with suicide. The word "commit" implies that suicide is a criminal or immoral act.

Lives taken/stolen
by gun violence

Lost to gun
violence

Talking about a life "lost" to gun violence removes responsibility from the shooter.

Stay Engaged!



Use these materials to start conversations with your friends and family about gun violence in TX. Every conversation brings us closer to change.



Utilize our Lawmaker Vote Tracker tool on our website to stay engaged with gun-related bills at the Capitol all session long.



Follow us on social media and make sure you're signed up for our newsletter where we will distribute actions you can take.



Sign to volunteer with us and join us at the Capitol advocating for gun safety reform.

"We are going to keep defending against harmful legislation, pushing for safe gun storage laws, and fighting alongside the families from Uvalde to raise the age required to purchase a semi-automatic rifle."
-Nicole Golden, Executive Director

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[@texasgunsense](https://www.instagram.com/texasgunsense)

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