



**Mission:** To reduce the public health crisis of gun violence by supporting relevant legislation and educating and inspiring communities across South Carolina to work toward practical solutions.

**Who we are:** Galvanized by the Emanuel AME Church shooting in Charleston, Gun Sense SC is an independent, grassroots group of more than 1,200 South Carolinian health-care professionals, faith leaders, gun owners, teachers and volunteers from all walks of life. We're working together to close the loopholes in the current laws that allow guns to fall into the wrong hands, while continuing to support the Second Amendment right of citizens to lawfully own guns.

## **Gun Violence Is a Public Health Issue**

South Carolina has the 11<sup>th</sup> highest number of gun deaths per capita in the nation (Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2013) and is the sixth leading supplier of guns used in crimes in other states (Mayors Against Illegal Guns, 2009).

Only accidents and chronic disease cause more deaths in South Carolina. (Center for Disease Control/CDC, *Leading Causes of Death*, 2012)

More Americans have died from guns in the U.S. since 1970 than in all wars in American history combined, back to and including the Revolutionary War. (*New York Times*, 2015)

## **What Has Been Done**

From 1984 to 1993, gun murders increased by 55% in the U.S. After background checks were required on the federal level, gun murders decreased by 32% from 1993 to 2006. Over 2.6 million sales to ineligible purchasers have been denied since the law's inception. (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2016)

## **The Current Problem**

Gun regulations apply only to federally licensed gun dealers. *Forty percent of guns are being acquired without a background check* (Harvard Injury Control Research Center, 2015), many of them being sold by unlicensed dealers via the internet, gun shows and classified ads.

A survey of state prison inmates in 13 states who were convicted of gun offenses found that only 13.4% obtained the gun through a licensed dealer, and that 96% of those who were ineligible to possess a gun at the time they committed the crime had obtained the weapon through an unlicensed seller. (Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2015)

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States with expanded background checks, on the other hand, have seen:

- 48% fewer law enforcement officers killed by guns that weren't their own
- 46% fewer women killed with guns by intimate partners
- 48% fewer gun suicides (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2015)

## What Can Be Done

AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, we support the Thompson-King Bill (H.R. 1217) in the House as well as new legislation being developed in the Senate. We also support improving the computerized national database by decreasing the time it takes to complete background checks. While these initiatives have bipartisan support, they face uphill climbs, and the funding necessary to implement President Obama's executive actions will likely be tied up in Congress, leaving responsibility for thorough background checks back in states' hands.

AT THE STATE LEVEL, we need legislation now in order to:

- **Close the loopholes that allow unlicensed sellers to sell guns without background checks online, at gun shows, through classified ads or any other way.**
- **Mandate that no guns be sold until background checks are completed.**
- **Strengthen penalties for violation of gun-sale and gun-possession laws and prosecute "bad apple" gun dealers.** Ninety percent of guns used in crimes are being supplied by 5% of dealers. (ATF Bureau, *Commerce in Firearms*, 2000) Shoplifters, under current SC law, receive increasing penalties for each new conviction, while violators of gun-sale and gun-possession laws receive the same wrist-slap fine no matter how many times they're convicted.

## Conclusion

Eighty-nine percent of South Carolina voters support background checks on all gun purchases, including 91% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats (Public Policy Polling, 2015), virtually the same numbers as voters across the U.S. Eighty-two percent of gun owners nationally support expanded background checks, as well. (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2014) This is *not* a partisan issue. **We are committed to addressing this urgent public health issue with sensible solutions that do not jeopardize our 2nd Amendment right to lawfully possess guns, and to pursue educational initiatives to reduce gun violence in South Carolina.**

**To join our mailing list or to make a donation,** please visit our website at [www.GunSenseSC.org](http://www.GunSenseSC.org). Donations can also be mailed to the address listed in the footer.