



**UU Faith Action
Gun Violence Prevention Task Force
Annual Report - April 15, 2018**

Overview

The gun violence prevention task force continued its mission to eradicate the American Public Health Epidemic of gun violence, employing multiple strategies. The task force continually worked to raise awareness through forums, memorials and marches. It sought to strengthen NJ gun laws through attending and testifying at hearings in the NJ Assembly and Senate and communicating with legislators through email, phone calls and letters. It offered education to UU congregations and larger NJ communities through speaker programs, worship services and panel discussions. Its approach is interfaith and incorporates the use of music, art and media, in recognition of different learning styles. The task force also recognizes that gun violence doesn't happen in a cultural vacuum. It values the context of race, socio-economics and class and attempts to integrate these human elements into its programs.

Initiatives

- On Sept. 23 rd , one congregation in the Task Force participated in the second Concert Across America to End Gun Violence. This drew nearly 200 attendees and raised over \$1,000.
- Rallies were held following the Oct 1 st Las Vegas Massacre and the November 5th Sutherland Springs, Texas Massacre. These included faith and community leaders.
- Several NJ congregations marked the 5 th anniversary of the Sandy Hook Dec. 2012 School Shooting. This included a worship service and an interfaith youth panel discussion and vigil.
- In Jan. 2018, a number of GVP Task Force members testified at NJ State House Hearings to ban Bump Stocks in NJ. On Jan. 16, Chris Christie signed the bill into law.
- Between Feb. and Mar. of 2018, GVP Task Force members testified on one or more of 6 GVP bills that were reintroduced with the support of our new governor, Phil Murphy.
- On Feb. 21 st , 2018 members held a Marlton, NJ rally, to stand with Stoneman Douglas HS, after the 2/14/18 shooting. This rally of nearly 500 people made the front pg. of the Burl. County Times. Several students, GVP and community leaders spoke, including our TF chair.
- On March 24 th , 2018, TF members marched in one of several locations in NJ and some traveled to DC for the Stoneman Douglas HS Student led March for Our Lives.

Legal Advocacy Signature Legislation

At the Oct. 14, 2017 Faith Action NJ Issues Conference, Gary Nissenbaum, Esq., challenged all Task Force Chairs to bring him an idea for an issue worthy of new legislation. I chose the issue of safe storage of firearms because of its potential to significantly reduce suicides and unintentional gun fatalities. Suicides account for more than 60% of all gun deaths, according to the CDC. Guns account for 39% of youth suicides. Many accidental fatal shootings occur yearly. Too often, a curious child discovers a gun and fatally shoots another child or family member.

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Currently, there is a NJ law that requires all firearm retailers provide a trigger lock or container, with each sale. The purchaser must use the lock only if there is a youth under 16 at his/her residence. The Safe Firearms Storage Bill would require all firearms be locked in a manner inaccessible to anyone other than the authorized user. It has the full support of Rob Gregson, Exec. Director and Nick Lewis, Board President. The GVP Task Force Members voted unanimously to support it at our last meeting. Gary Nissenbaum has written a White Paper which the committee will review and edit. Then we will seek sponsors in the NJ Assembly and Senate.

There are 6 gun bills the NJ Senate is currently reviewing. It may be a challenge to pass the Safe Firearms Storage Bill in 2018 however, we are committed to doing just that.

NJ Legislation Priorities – This package of 6 bills has passed the Assembly and is now in Senate Law and Public Safety Committee. The Senate Committee will hear them on 4/16/18.

1. A.1217/S2259 ACS (McKeon/Greenwald) The Extreme Risk Protective Order Act of 2018 (Red Flag Bill)
2. A.2758/S2376 (Greenwald) Codifies regulations defining justifiable need to carry concealed handgun
3. A.2761/S102 (Greenwald/Quijano) Mandates Reduction of ammunition magazines (clips) capacity from 15 bullets to 10 bullets
4. A.1181/S160 (Jones/Mosquera) Mental health observation and reporting to authorities- duty to warn expanded.
5. A.2757/S2374 (Greenwald) Requires expansion of background checks system to private sales ; “Defines immediate family”.
6. A.2759/S2245 (Greenwald/Murphy) Prohibit use of Body Armor Piercing Ammunition

Federal Legislation Priorities:

1. HR 38 - Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 would allow the concealed handgun laws of the weakest state to override individual state laws. HR 38 passed in the House in Sept. 2017 and was sent to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary in Dec. 2017.
2. Fix NICS Act of 2017 is a United States federal law passed as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 signed as Pub.L.115-141 by President Donald Trump on March 23, 2018. [1] The law applies penalties to government agencies for not reporting to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). It was introduced in the 115th United States Congress, in the wake of the Sutherland Springs church shooting. Universal Background checks has been a priority before this was inserted in the Omnibus bill. Fix NICS is not a substitute and will need to be reviewed for comprehensiveness.

Submitted by Jeannine Clayton Coyne

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