



Americans Against Gun Violence
P.O. Box 661252
Sacramento, CA 95866
(916) 668-4160 / (888) 286-8122
www.aagunv.org / info@aagunv.org

Press Release

Americans Against Gun Violence Responds to Santa Fe High School Mass Shooting

Sacramento, California, May 21, 2018: Americans Against Gun Violence extends heartfelt sympathy to the families, friends, classmates, and colleagues of the eight students and two teachers who were mortally wounded during the mass shooting on May 18, 2018, at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas. We also extend our sincere wishes for a prompt and complete recovery to all the other victims of the shooting.

The regular occurrence of mass shootings, including shootings on school campuses, is eminently preventable. The United States is the only high income democratic country in the world in which such mass shootings occur on a regular basis.¹ The overall gun homicide rate in the United States is 25 times higher than the average rate in other high income democratic countries.² The gun homicide rate for U.S. high school aged youth is 82 times higher.³ The reasons for the extraordinarily high rate of gun violence in the United States are not higher rates of mental illness or substance abuse,⁴ not a higher level of socioeconomic disparity,⁵ and not a more violent society in general.⁶ The reasons for our extraordinarily high rate of gun violence are our extraordinarily lax gun control laws as compared with all other high income democratic countries, the associated extraordinarily high number of guns in circulation in our country,⁷ and what the late Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut referred to 50 years ago in a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate as “the ridiculous ease” with which almost anyone in our country can acquire almost any kind of a gun.⁸

Other high income democratic countries have reacted swiftly and definitively to mass shootings. Following a mass shooting in the resort town of Port Arthur in 1996 committed with assault rifles, the Australian government took just 13 days to decide to ban civilian ownership not only of all automatic and semi-automatic rifles, but also of all pump-action shotguns of the type used in the Santa Fe mass shooting.⁹ The legislation also included strict regulations concerning storage of guns, which would have prevented the Santa Fe mass shooting. There have been no further mass shootings in Australia since 1966. Following a mass shooting at the Dunblane Elementary School in Scotland committed with handguns in 1996, Great Britain, which already had stringent regulations on civilian ownership of handguns, passed legislation within two years to ban handguns completely.¹⁰ A handgun was also used in the Santa Fe mass shooting. The rate of gun related deaths in Great Britain is on fiftieth the rate in the United States,¹¹ and there have been no further mass shootings in Britain involving handguns since the handgun ban was enacted.¹² Despite scores of horrific mass shootings on U.S. school

campuses over the past half century, the U.S. federal government has failed to take any definitive action to prevent these massacres from recurring on a regular basis.

In the same speech on June 11, 1968, in which he referred to the “ridiculous ease” of acquiring guns in our country, Senator Dodd stated:

Pious condolences will no longer suffice....Quarter measures and half measures will no longer suffice....The time has now come that we must adopt stringent gun control legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country in the world.¹³

When the next horrific mass shooting occurs in our country, we shouldn't ask ourselves why these tragedies keep occurring. Rather, we should ask ourselves why we choose not to prevent them.

¹ Max Fisher and Josh Keller, “What Explains U.S. Mass Shootings? International Comparisons Suggest an Answer,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2017, sec. Americas, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/07/world/americas/mass-shootings-us-international.html>.

² Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, “Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-Income OECD Countries, 2010,” *The American Journal of Medicine* 129, no. 3 (March 1, 2016): 266–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2015.10.025>.

³ Ashish P. Thakrar et al., “Child Mortality In The US And 19 OECD Comparator Nations: A 50-Year Time-Trend Analysis,” *Health Affairs* 37, no. 1 (January 2018): 140–49, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0767>.

⁴ L. Andrade et al., “Cross-National Comparisons of the Prevalences and Correlates of Mental Disorders,” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78 (2000): 413–425.

⁵ “OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD): Gini, Poverty, Income, Methods and Concepts,” OECD, accessed November 29, 2017, <http://www.compareyourcountry.org/inequality?lg=en>.

⁶ “Assault Rate in OECD Countries: 2013 or Latest Year Available, % of Adults Assaulted in the Past 12 Months,” OECD, accessed September 18, 2016, <https://figure.nz/chart/yd9BelUz6xKvNpW>.

⁷ Christensen, “Why the US Has the Most Mass Shootings”; “Guns in the United States — Firearms, Gun Law and Gun Control,” GunPolicy.org, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/united-states>.

⁸ Thomas Dodd, “Text of Speech by Senator Thomas Dodd on Floor of U.S. Senate: The Sickness of Violence and the Need for Gun Control Legislation” (Office of Senator Thomas Dodd, June 11, 1968), http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/asc/research/gun_control.htm#; Thomas Dodd, “Press Release: Pious Condolences Will No Longer Suffice” (Office of Senator Thomas Dodd, June 10, 1968), http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/asc/research/gun_control.htm#.

⁹ Rebecca Peters, “Rational Firearm Regulation: Evidence-Based Gun Laws in Australia,” in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 195–204.

¹⁰ Michael J. North, “Gun Control in Great Britain after the Dunblane Shootings,” in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 185–93.

¹¹ “Gun Law and Policy: Firearms and Armed Violence, Country by Country,” GunPolicy.org, accessed December 3, 2017, <http://www.gunpolicy.org/>.

¹² North, "Gun Control in Great Britain after the Dunblane Shootings."

¹³ Dodd, "Quarter Measures and Half Measures Will No Longer Suffice"; Dodd, "Pious Condolences Will No Longer Suffice."