

Issue: VA Gun Violence Talking Points

## Talking Points: Gun Violence Prevention in Virginia

Virginia has experienced some of the worst gun violence in the country, including Virginia Beach as recently as May, 2019. This dismal history should not be surprising since Virginia also has some of the weakest gun regulations in the nation. There is a gun-related death in Virginia every 10 hours, with communities of color bearing a disproportionately heavy burden.

Virginians overwhelmingly favor stronger gun laws with 91% of Democrats and 88% of Republicans supporting universal background checks on all gun sales. The Republican-controlled legislature, however, has repeatedly voted against gun control measures and, in fact, continues to propose further weakening of existing laws.

### Reframing the Gun Violence Debate

Words matter in this politically explosive, frequently taboo subject. Focusing on “gun control” can result in gun owners becoming more strident in defending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, yet ignoring the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s guaranteed right to life and liberty, for example. It may be more effective to talk about “preventing gun violence” and to frame the issue as a “public health crisis,” which, in fact it is, as a substantial number of Virginians survive gunshot wounds every year and face years of physical, mental, and emotional recovery from their injuries, should they not die at the outset.

### Measures to Reduce Gun Violence from Virginia Center for Public Safety

- Extend current Virginia law, which requires federally licensed firearms dealers to complete background checks on prospective gun buyers, to all commercial sellers of guns.
- Prohibit persons convicted of domestic violence or stalking from possessing a gun.
- Create a judicial pathway for restraining orders that would allow families to petition the courts to temporarily remove firearms from a person in crisis that could lead to suicide or violence.
- Conform to federal law prohibiting guns in schools; extend to colleges and universities.
- Require background checks and firearm training before issuing a concealed handgun permit.
- Concealed handgun permit holders should not be permitted to consume alcohol in ABC premises. This ban should also be extended to citizens who “open carry” firearms.
- Rewrite child access prevention laws to enable prosecution of adult gun owner when a minor uses a firearm that was not stored in a secure manner.

### Obstacles

The NRA is headquartered in Virginia and is a major funder of state legislative campaigns. The Republican-controlled legislature consistently kills any bills that seek to regulate guns while introducing bills that make gun purchases ever more accessible and uncontrolled.

The data is clear: Fewer guns = Fewer deaths. If Virginia’s lawmakers do not stand up to the gun lobby, the recent tragedy in Virginia Beach is bound to be repeated.

For further details, see the full report: *Gun Violence Prevention in Virginia*, available on our website at [localmajority.org](http://localmajority.org).