



Position Statement
Assault Weapons Ban
December 2018

Background

More than 14,000 Americans are murdered annually by someone with a firearm,¹ contributing to a gun homicide rate that is far higher than any other developed nation.²

The deadliest gun attacks of the past five decades have been massacres involving six or more fatalities, not including the perpetrator(s).³ Since 1966, gun massacres have claimed more than 900 lives.⁴ These extreme acts of violence now occur with greater frequency; over one-third of mass shootings during the last 50 years have occurred within the past decade.⁵

According to a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice, **“semiautomatic weapons with high-capacity [ammunition] magazines” allow these types of attacks to occur** because they “enable offenders to fire high numbers of shots rapidly, thereby increasing both the number of persons wounded per gunfire incident (including both intended targets and innocent bystanders) and the number of gunshot victims suffering multiple wounds, both of which increase deaths and injuries from gun violence.”⁶

These massacres are preventable.^{7,8} C. Everett Koop, MD, Surgeon General under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, in 1992 referred to gun violence as *a public health emergency*.⁹ Two years later, Congress enacted the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act (also known as **“the Assault Weapons Ban”**), aimed at reducing the incidence of mass shootings. This legislation was allowed to expire in 2004.

Private ownership of military-style assault weapons contributes to gun massacres. Reasonable laws, in compliance with the Second Amendment, must be passed to ban such weapons.

Assault Weapons Ban

The 30-year period spanning immediately before, during, and after the **1994 Assault Weapons Ban** tells a compelling story of the legislation’s impact (see table below).¹⁰

Time Frame	Number of Mass Shootings¹¹	Number of Deaths
1984-1994 (before ban)	19 incidents	155 deaths
1994-2004 (during ban)	12 incidents (37% decrease)	89 deaths (43% decrease)
2004-2014 (after ban expired)	34 incidents (183% increase)	302 deaths (239% increase)

Following the implementation of the 1994 ban, the share of gun crimes involving assault weapons declined by as much as 72% in some localities.¹² Moreover, on a scale of effectiveness of policies to prevent mass shootings, a panel of 32 gun policy experts rated *bans on assault weapons and on high-capacity magazines* highest among 29 policies surveyed in 2017.¹³ Alternatively, as recently as 2016, after the legislation's expiration, **one in four law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty was killed with an assault weapon.**¹⁴

Although the Foundation supports expanded access to high-quality mental health services, the evidence connecting increased services to reduced mass shootings is limited. The National Center for Health Statistics indicates that **people diagnosed with mental illness perpetrated fewer than 5% of gun-related killings** in the U.S. between 2001 and 2010.¹⁵ The connection between mental illness and violent behavior is similarly tenuous.¹⁶

Call to Action

Since its inception, The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation has supported public policies aimed at improving the health of Greater Cleveland residents. Reasonable gun control is one such set of policies.

The Foundation hereby expresses support for federal legislation that would make it illegal to knowingly import, sell, manufacture, transfer, or possess an assault weapon or high-capacity ammunition magazine. Short of a federal ban, the Foundation urges The State of Ohio to join California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C., in implementing an assault weapons ban at the state level.

With this position, the Foundation stands with other organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Bar Association, American Public Health Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Education Association, National League of Cities, National PTA, and U.S. Conference of Mayors.



Susan Ratner
Board Chair

December 20, 2018

Date



Mitchell Balk
President

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- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Deaths: Final Data for 2016.” *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 67, no. 5 (2018): https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_05.pdf
- ² The Global Burden of Disease 2016 Injury Collaborators, “Global Mortality From Firearms, 1990-2016.” *JAMA*, vol. 320, no. 8: 792–814, (2018). doi:10.1001/jama.2018.10060
- ³ Klarevas, Louis. *Rampage Nation: Securing America from Mass Shootings*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2016.
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Koper, Christopher S., Woods, Daniel J., and Roth, Jeffrey A. “Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003.” *Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice*. (2004): <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>
- ⁷ American Public Health Association. “Preventing Gun Violence,” last modified 2018, https://www.apha.org/~media/files/pdf/factsheets/160317_gunviolencefs.ashx
- ⁸ Patel, Deepali M., Simon, Melissa A., and Taylor, Rachel M., *rappoteurs*. Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. “Contagion of Violence: Workshop Summary,” *Forum on Global Violence Prevention*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2012.
- ⁹ Koop, C. Everett, and Lundberg, George D. “Violence in America: A Public Health Emergency,” *JAMA*, vol. 267, no. 22: 3075–3076, (1992). doi:10.1001/jama.1992.03480220093036
- ¹⁰ Klarevas, Louis. *Rampage Nation: Securing America from Mass Shootings*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2016.
- ¹¹ Although there is no formal definition for the term *mass shooting*, these data describe gun incidents involving six or more fatalities, not including the perpetrator(s).
- ¹² Koper, Christopher S., Woods, Daniel J., and Roth, Jeffrey A. “Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003,” *Report to the National Institute of Justice, United States Department of Justice*. (2004): <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf>
- ¹³ Sanger-Katz, Margot, and Bui, Quoctrung. “How to Reduce Mass Shooting Deaths? Experts Rank Gun Laws,” *The Upshot, The New York Times*, October 5, 2017.
- ¹⁴ Violence Policy Center. “New Data Shows One in Four Law Enforcement Officers Slain in the Line of Duty in 2016 Felled by an Assault Weapon,” *Press Release*, February 27, 2018, <http://vpc.org/press/new-data-shows-one-in-four-law-enforcement-officers-slain-in-the-line-of-duty-in-2016-felled-by-an-assault-weapon/>
- ¹⁵ Metz, Jonathan M., and MacLeish, Kenneth T., “Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of Firearms,” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 105, no. 2: 240–249, (2015). doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302242
- ¹⁶ Ibid