

Citizen Engagement Corner

Saving Lives – Gun Violence Prevention

League of Women Voters of Brookline

What do the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, and the March for Our Lives movement have in common? It became clear during the Massachusetts Coalition's fourth annual Peace MVP Awards ceremony held March 28 in Wellesley to honor the work of Massachusetts teen leaders for their advocacy and action to reduce gun violence.

Special guest and keynote speaker David Hogg, a survivor of the Marjory Stoneham Douglas High School mass shooting in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14, 2018, electrified the large crowd. As co-founder of March for Our Lives, now a national movement of youth of all backgrounds, geographic location/zip code, race, religion, and economic class, he kept emphasizing that "all communities are us." His goal is to provide a platform for all voices to be heard, respected, and supported as they work to end gun violence.

As an umbrella organization, the Massachusetts Coalition is also walking the talk. Started in 2013 as a group of six organizations, there are now 80 working to end gun violence across Massachusetts. The LWVMA is a Coalition partner. The LWVMA and the national League have long had a strong position on firearms and public safety. The Coalition has supported Massachusetts' progress toward some of the strongest gun laws in the country, proving that public policies can reduce gun violence and save lives... in fact, Massachusetts has one of the lowest gun death rates in America.

Examples of the state's progress on gun safety include passage of the 2014 Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence and the 2018 ERPO Act (Emergency Risk Protection Order, also known as a "Red Flag" law to allow removal of firearms on a temporary basis when someone is at risk of harming themselves or others — in essence a suicide prevention measure. It can be used in other imminent dangerous situations such as the first 48 hours after a request for a temporary restraining order). These laws built on the existing assault weapons ban and universal background check laws that include firearms sales at gun shows and all private sales in Massachusetts.

Part of the 2014 comprehensive gun reform law was to collect and analyze crime gun trace data through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). That data analysis was

quite limited in scope and failed to address many important areas. The current 2019 Bill H.2045/Bill S.1388 requires a more thorough analysis of crime gun trace data every other year so that we can stay on top of ever-changing patterns of gun trafficking. The current bill will also help the state determine how many crime guns originated in multiple handgun sales. This is extremely important since all crime guns start as legal gun purchases and can be traced back to original owners, making universal background checks even more useful to prevent gun crimes. Hearings have not yet been scheduled.

As a partner organization in the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, the Massachusetts League encourages local Leagues across the state to educate citizens about efforts to reduce gun violence in accordance with our firearms and public safety positions and enable preventive initiatives to support that goal.

Written by Sue McCalley of the Brookline League, who serves as Gun Control legislative co-specialist, LWVMA. The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. All articles can be found at <https://brookline.wickedlocal.com/search?text=Citizen%20Engagement%20Corner&start=1>.