

Why we will vote for sensible gun regulations

By Matt Benjamin and Bob Yates

We are gun owners. We are fathers. And, we are members of the Boulder City Council. As council members, our most sacred duty is to try to protect members of our community from harm. As we are far too aware, some of the greatest harm is caused by gun violence. That is why we, as gun owners, will vote on June 7 in favor of a set of laws that will help protect our community from that violence.

No one can dispute that guns kill. In our country, more than 40,000 people are killed by firearms each year.¹ In the U.S., most people who die of suicide use a gun,² and a majority of deaths by gun are suicides.³ A recent study established that for every self-defense homicide using a gun, there were 44 gun-related suicides, seven criminal homicides, and one accidental death.⁴ Access to a firearm during domestic violence is five times more likely to result in the death of a woman than if no gun is present.⁵ Guns now kill more American kids under the age of 18 than car accidents or anything else, making guns the leading cause of death for our children.⁶

Two weeks ago, 19 elementary school children and two of their teachers were gunned down in their classroom in Texas.⁷ Three weeks ago, ten Black people were murdered in a grocery store by a racist gunman in Buffalo.⁸ And a year ago, ten of our neighbors here in Boulder were shot to death at King Soopers on Table Mesa.⁹ These were people buying groceries and doing their jobs.

The United States is not the only country experiencing mental illness, domestic violence, or racism. But, with our lax gun laws, we have 25 times more homicides than similar, high-wealth countries.¹⁰ The correlation is impossible to ignore.

What we are trying to do with the city's laws is increase the likelihood that more bad things don't happen here. We will do this fairly and sensibly. The laws that we will help pass are not that restrictive, nor are they burdensome. They respect the guaranties made in the Second Amendment. But, these laws could help make our community safer. They would:¹¹

¹ [“Gun Violence in America” by Everytown Research & Policy, May 19, 2020](#)

² [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

³ [“Gun Violence in America” by Everytown Research & Policy, May 19, 2020](#)

⁴ [“Risk of Suicide, Homicide, and Unintentional Firearm Deaths in the Home” by JAMA Internal Medicine, April 13, 2020](#)

⁵ [“Domestic Violence and Firearms” by The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence](#)

⁶ [“In a first, firearms were the leading cause of death for U.S. children and teens in 2020” by NBC News, April 22, 2022](#)

⁷ [“Families in Texas Grieve Loss of 19 Children in Shooting” by New York Times, May 25, 2022](#)

⁸ [“Gunman Kills 10 at Buffalo Supermarket in Racist Attack” by New York Times, May 14, 2022](#)

⁹ [“A tragedy and a nightmare: Ten dead, including officer, after shooting at Boulder King Soopers” by Boulder Daily Camera, March 22, 2021](#)

¹⁰ [“Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-income OECD Countries, 2010” by The American Journal of Medicine, November 6, 2015](#)

¹¹ [Boulder City Council Meeting Agenda, May 24, 2022](#)

- Ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines, replacing similar Boulder laws struck down by a court before the state lifted its pre-emption limitation.
- Ban untraceable “ghost guns,” like those made on 3-D printers.
- Raise the minimum gun purchase age from 18 to 21, and require a 10-day waiting period to allow people intent on hurting themselves or others to reflect.
- Require gun dealers to display a health warning, similar to what is required where tobacco products are sold.
- Require that guns in public places be carried in cases or holsters.
- Prohibit or limit guns in vulnerable gathering places like parks, playgrounds, schools, movie theaters, hospitals, and places of worship.

These are only brief summaries. There are many definitions and exceptions painstakingly built into the proposed ordinances by our city attorneys. If you want to know the exact details, you can read the ordinances yourself at <https://boulder.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=4530&MeetingID=760>.

The growing gun violence epidemic in our country demands that we try every data-driven solution to limit the harm caused by guns. Doing nothing is an endorsement of the status quo. We are confident that these new city laws will reduce gun violence in our community, and we are hopeful they will lead our sister cities to take similar actions.

We recognize that patchwork municipal gun regulations across the state are less than optimal. For example, a type of weapon that legally cannot be bought in Boulder could be purchased in a place that allows it and brought into our town. And, we are painfully aware that those intent on mass murder are unlikely to honor local gun laws. But, with the passage of sensible gun regulations in Boulder and other cities in Colorado, we will pressure our legislature to pass laws statewide, where the most effective gun violence prevention can occur.

We are gun owners. We have been trained in their use, and our guns are stored in safe places, separate from the ammunition and away from children. We share this to disabuse anyone of the notion that the laws described above are being passed solely by people who don't own guns, who don't understand guns, or who hate guns.

Responsible gun ownership is a right in this country. Some people chose to own guns, others do not. But, we should all acknowledge that guns have the potential to be harmful or fatal in the wrong hands or in the wrong places. Let's come together and be sensible about gun ownership, so that our community can feel safe and be safe.

Matt Benjamin and Bob Yates are members of the Boulder City Council.