

**We are a coalition of stakeholders
who represent many perspectives
on firearms in America.**

**We are dedicated to working
together to reduce gun harms
while protecting the rights of
responsible gun owners.**

**We seek to engage local and state
stakeholders to share our carefully
crafted, consensus-driven set of
policies with state legislators.**



EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1:00pm ET

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A Diverse Coalition of Gun Rights and Gun Violence Prevention Advocates Announces Landmark Initiative to Bridge the Divide on Firearm Policy

Boston, MA – In this time of tremendous polarization, especially surrounding the issues of firearm safety, policy, and rights, a unique, groundbreaking coalition of twenty three gun rights and gun violence prevention leaders from across the nation is uniting to forge a new path forward. This initiative, operating under the name **Bridging the Divide on Firearm Policy**, represents a critical, unified effort to move beyond rhetoric and towards a consensus-based policy framework aimed at reducing gun deaths and building safer communities. **The coalition will release its comprehensive gun policy package at a virtual press conference on Thursday, February 26 at 12:00 pm (noon) Eastern Time.**

The Bridging the Divide on Firearm Policy project is an effort to bring gun owners and non-gun owners together to develop balanced, effective firearm policies rooted in mutual understanding rather than division. This project is unprecedented in that it is rooted in creating a policy based on the mutual collaboration of gun owners and gun violence prevention advocates—groups you wouldn't expect to work together. The charge to the panel was clear: to create a comprehensive policy with maximal effectiveness in reducing firearm violence while minimally interfering with the rights of lawful gun owners.

After months of intensive, structured dialogue, the coalition produced a comprehensive, state-level model gun policy that will substantially reduce gun violence while protecting the constitutional and due process rights of gun owners. This collaboration proves that meaningful consensus and real policy impact are possible, even among groups that have been at odds for decades. The project's guiding principle is that a shared commitment to data-driven solutions and responsible action can serve as the powerful bridge that America needs.

“At the core of this effort is a simple idea: Americans can solve hard problems if they’re willing to sit down, listen, and see each other as people first,” said Dr. Michael Siegel, a professor at the Tufts University School of Medicine and the project director. “For too long, conversations about firearms have been framed as a zero-sum battle. But when you bring together neighbors—real people with real experiences—you quickly realize that there’s far more common ground than conflict.”

Speakers at the press conference will include five of the panelists who crafted the policy:

- **BJ Campbell**, Writer for Open Source Defense and RECOIL TV
- **Jonathan Lowy**, Founder & President of Global Action on Gun Violence



- **Richard Aborn**, President of Citizens Crime Commission of NYC
- **Rob Pincus**, Exec. VP, Second Amendment Organization
- **Senator Keturah Herron**, Kentucky State Senator

Early dialogue sessions revealed several shared principles across participants, including the desire to reduce gun-related deaths and a belief that at the core of any gun policy should be the principle that people who have been convicted of a violent crime should not possess guns. By focusing on practical solutions rather than political talking points, the initiative has built trust among participants who rarely find themselves in the same room.

The 67-page policy package comprises model state legislation that addresses a wide range of evidence-based strategies to effectively ensure public safety while still protecting the rights of firearm owners. Among the areas covered in the policy are prohibiting factors for gun ownership, state background checks, extreme risk protection orders, gun dealer regulation and trafficking prevention, firearm suicide prevention, secure storage, gun safety education, and community violence intervention.

The full, detailed policy package as well as summaries of the project philosophy, participants, and novelty as well as each component of the model legislation are available for viewing or download from the project website at **BridgeTheDivideNow.org**.

About the Project

Bridging the Divide on Firearm Policy is a landmark initiative founded on a single, powerful premise: that meaningful progress on gun safety is only possible when a shared, unified path among disparate stakeholders can be forged. In a climate defined by entrenched political divides, this project serves as a proving ground for a new approach—one that moves beyond the traditional stalemate of advocacy and opposition.

This collaborative effort is led by Dr. Michael Siegel from the Tufts University School of Medicine and conducted in partnership with a unique, consensus-building process pioneered by Essential Partners, a leading organization in the field of dialogue and conflict transformation. Instead of seeking to defeat opposing viewpoints, we have created a neutral and respectful space for open dialogue. Our work is not about compromise for its own sake, but about building genuine consensus on a data-driven policy framework designed to reduce gun deaths and create safer communities for everyone.

The project will serve as a new model for cooperation on one of America's most polarizing issues. By focusing on shared goals and a common desire for public safety, we are demonstrating that a better, more effective way forward is within our reach.

For more information, visit our website at **BridgeTheDivideNow.org**.

Bridging the Divide

Firearm Policy Outline

Participants of **Bridging the Divide on Firearms Policy** were tasked with the goal of developing a comprehensive platform of state level policies that will be effective in reducing population levels of firearm-related harms while respecting the rights of firearm owners. This comprehensive policy addresses eight policy areas that are significant for both gun violence prevention advocates, and firearm owners concerned with protecting Second Amendment and due process rights, broken down into eight separate proposals. While these policy proposals are described separately, they are meant to reinforce each other and are designed as a cohesive package that will be most effective when implemented as a whole. The areas of focus for the eight proposals are as follows.

1. Prohibiting Factors for Firearm Purchase and Possession

Because people at the highest risk of committing violence are those with a history of violence, those with such a history are the focus of this policy.

- Prohibits gun possession by those convicted of a violent crime at the misdemeanor level while removing state restrictions on those convicted of non-violent felonies
- Removes prohibition of gun purchases by persons who use marijuana; removes redundancy with federal laws

2. Background Checks

Because the federal NICS background checks system is often inadequate in flagging prohibited purchasers and is not required for private sales, this policy establishes a comprehensive state-level background checks scheme.

- Creates a state-level background check system for private sales
- Establishes logical exemptions from background check requirements

3. Extreme Risk Protection Order

Because firearms pose a danger when in the hands of those deemed an imminent risk of violence to themselves or others, this policy aims to restrict firearm access from those individuals.

- Establishes a unique extreme risk protection order policy that addresses both firearm access and mental health access
- Provides clear due-process safeguards for gun owners

4. Dealer Regulation and Gun Trafficking

Because 5% of firearm dealers are responsible for selling 90% of traced crime guns, this policy focuses on ensuring legal compliance by these small minority of irresponsible dealers.

- Focuses law enforcement on the small number of dealers from whom the majority of traced crime guns originate
- Provides protection from liability for responsible gun dealers

5. Child Firearm Access Prevention and Responsible Gun Storage

Because significant numbers of firearms owners inadequately store their guns, this policy aims to enculturate safe storage and staging practices through a wide range of methods while avoiding uniform storage mandates. It also addresses safe staging practices which are essential for many gun owners who own guns for self-defense.

- Encourages secure storage and staging best practices through a variety of means
- Provides tax incentives for gun safety training and the purchase of secure storage or staging devices

6. Firearm Suicide Prevention

Because firearm suicides make up the majority of firearm deaths, this policy focuses on specifically addressing firearm suicides.

- Implements firearm suicide prevention education and awareness programs
- Removes restrictions on the voluntary transfer of guns from people at risk of self-harm

7. Firearm Injury Prevention Education

Because millions of children in the US live in a household with firearms, this policy aims to educate them on age-appropriate safe practices.

- Implements evidence-based public health education on firearm injury prevention in schools
- Ensures accessible, age-appropriate education for all students aimed at saving lives

8. Community Violence Intervention

Because community gun violence makes up the majority of gun homicides in the US, this policy aims to directly address this issue.

- Provides funding for community violence intervention and hospital-based violence intervention programs
- Provides funding for behavioral threat assessment, mental health resources, safety, and security measures in schools



Bridging the Divide

ON FIREARM POLICY

Who We Are

Kelilah Armstrong, MS is the senior program manager of Brady's End Family Fire Program. She has extensive experience in non-profit, public education, and DEI consulting.

Keturah Herron, MA, the first openly out LGBTQ+ person elected to the Kentucky General Assembly, is a Kentucky State Senator and one of the leaders of the Legislators for Safer Communities coalition.

Lara Cullinane-Smith, JD is the National Spokesperson for the Liberal Gun Club, where she supports efforts toward root-cause violence mitigation while protecting Second Amendment Rights. She is also a litigator focused on commercial disputes.

Madelyn Cobb is a Federal Affairs Manager at GIFFORDS, where she advances federal gun violence prevention priorities and works to ensure policymaking is grounded in the experiences of impacted communities. In her previous role at March for Our Lives, she partnered with grassroots organizations, youth, and community leaders to develop and advance community-driven gun safety reforms.

Mark Beckwith, DD is the Bishop Liaison for Bishops United Against Gun Violence, author of Seeing the Unseen: Beyond Prejudices, Paradigms and Party Lines, and a leadership team member in Braver Angels. He is the former Bishop of Newark, New Jersey.

Nick Wilson, MPP is the senior director for Gun Violence Prevention at American Progress. He has formerly served as the executive director of States United to Prevent Gun Violence, the Maine Gun Safety Coalition, and has worked at the Baltimore City Mayor's Office.

Paul Roessling, MBS, MPH is a firearms instructor with 10 years of training in the tactical firearms field, and a mental health technician and EMT.

Richard Aborn, JD is the president of the Citizens Crime Commission of NYC, where he leads efforts to improve public safety through legislation. He has previously served as the President of Handgun Control, Inc (now Brady) where he was a key strategist behind the Brady Bill, and as the President of the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence.

Rob Pincus is the Executive Director of Personal Defense Network, Vice President of the Second Amendment Organization, and founder of ICE Training Company and Avidity Arms.

Ryan Weiss, MA is an Active-Duty Air Force Officer, gun-rights activist, and a self-proclaimed "gun nerd" who has built a private gun range in his home in Oklahoma.

Steven Klitzman, JD, MA is the founder of the DC Temple Sinai Gun Violence Prevention Group and co-founder of the DC Area Interfaith Gun Violence Prevention Network. He has previously worked as an attorney and a law professor in several universities.

Arnitta Holliman, MS, LPC, CPC, is a violence prevention and mental health professional currently working as the Deputy of People and Culture at Cities United.

Robert 'BJ' Campbell, PE, MS, is a long-time gun owner and writer for Recoil Magazine and Open-Source Defense, as well as a licensed practicing civil engineer.

Cedric Dark, MD, MPH is a board-certified emergency physician, associate professor at the Henry JN Taub Department of Emergency Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, a gun-owner, and author of Under the Gun: An ER Doctor's Cure for America's Gun Epidemic.

Christopher Carita, MPH is a former veteran detective with 19 years of law enforcement experience who specializes in investigating threats of gun violence and ERPO implementation, and the current law enforcement advisor for 97Percent.

David Thomas is a business owner, a federally licensed firearms dealer, and NRA-certified firearms trainer.

David Yamane, PhD is a sociology professor at Wake Forest University, a nationally recognized scholarly authority on guns in America, and author of Gun Curious: A Liberal Professor's Surprising Journey Inside America's Gun Culture.

Eric Fleegler, MD, MPH is a pediatric emergency physician and researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital, a firearm injury prevention researcher, and co-editor of Pediatric Firearm Injuries and Fatalities: The Clinician's Guide to Policies and Approaches to Firearm Harm Prevention.

Jeremy Stein, JD is a seasoned litigator, a nationally recognized gun violence prevention expert and the Executive Director of States United to Prevent Gun Violence.

Jonathan Gold is a longtime handgun instructor, gun-safety policy advocate at the national and state level, and the founding member of the Michigan Giffords Gun Owners for Safety chapter.

Jonathan Lowy, JD is the President of Global Action on Gun Violence, and an experienced litigator representing victims and survivors of gun violence. He has also served as the former Chief Counsel and VP of Legal at Brady.

Joshua Beckmann, MPH, MSW is a deer hunter and advocate for laws promoting public safety, and an engineering consultant.

Karen Michelle Errichetti, DrPH, MPH is an Assistant Professor at Tufts' Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, active participant of the Republican Party in Massachusetts, and an avid public supporter of Second Amendment Rights.

Leadership

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