



CEASEFIREPA

SPRING 2024

NEWSLETTER



CeaseFirePA leads a press conference with legislative allies unveiling a permanent clock installation in the Capitol that counts up the days of Senate inaction. Photo Credit: The Pennsylvania Independent.

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WE CAN'T WAIT "ONE DAY MORE"

It's been almost 300 days since – thanks to you – life-saving Extreme Risk Protection Order (HB 1018) and universal background check (HB 714) bills passed the PA House with bipartisan support.

For months, the PA Senate did nothing. They read headlines about the shooting of a PA State Trooper in Juniata County, which universal background checks may have prevented. They watched a mass shooting wreak havoc in Lewiston, Maine, which revealed the need for Extreme Risk Protection Orders. But over the wails of grieving parents, they sat on their hands.

Together, we confronted their failure.

Our "Not One Day More Campaign" installed a permanent clock in the Capitol to count up the deadly toll of the Pennsylvania Senate's inaction.

It made a splash. The PA Senate Judiciary Committee Chair, Sen. Lisa Baker, called it "clever" and "compelling." But instead of just talking, we need her to stand up for the Pennsylvanians who have lost someone to this crisis.

So we went back to communities reeling from gun violence.

Our volunteers and partners take the campaign local on page 5.

LATEST NEWS

01

CeaseFirePA at PA Supreme Court

Our lawyer, Jasmeet Ahuja, argued before the PA Supreme Court that preemption violates our constitutional right to live free from gun violence, and that local governments should be allowed to enact gun safety policies.

02

Interfaith Day of Action

The “With One Voice” coalition brought interfaith leaders from across PA to Harrisburg to make the moral case to end gun violence. CeaseFirePA provided strategic direction and support every step of the way.

03

Policy Keeps Moving

With CeaseFirePA’s active involvement, the PA House Judiciary Committee has been historically active, advancing a package of 5 bills to establish safe storage requirements and to stop the flow of crime guns.

04

Investing in Safety

The Governor proposed a strong gun safety budget, with a \$100 million investment in safer communities, including violence prevention grants, funding to inspect firearm dealers, and creating PA’s first Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

05

Court Win for Ending Ghost Guns

Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court upheld the City of Philadelphia’s authority to enforce its 2021 ban on ghost guns, opening the door to other cities across Pennsylvania enacting similar ordinances that address this rapidly growing public safety threat.



A new White House Office Dedicated to Gun Violence Prevention

Our Executive Director joined advocates and survivors in Washington, DC to launch the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, designed to coordinate the response across the Federal Government. Pictured in bottom-left: Greg Jackson, the office’s new Deputy Director.



Expert Testimony on Universal Background Checks

Our Deputy Director for Government Affairs testified to the PA Senate Policy Committee on how a universal background checks policy would stop long guns from getting into the wrong hands.

Leadership Staff

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JOSH FLEITMAN

Campaign Director

CAROL LASTOWKA

Organizing Manager

BECKY WAINWRIGHT

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Board Leadership

ALICIA ANDREWS

Chair

MARYBETH CHRISTIANSEN

Vice Chair

SHAKEETA PURDIE

Treasurer

MAYOR RICK GRAY

Secretary

SAFETY PROGRESS

Philadelphia & Pittsburgh Shootings Down

Why? Look to investments in safer communities.

Gun homicides fell significantly last year: 21% in Philadelphia and 27% in Pittsburgh. That translates into over 100 lives saved in those two cities alone. It mirrors evidence from the CDC, which shows a 9% decrease in all gun deaths nationwide when comparing the first seven months of 2023 (most recent data available) to the same time period in the previous year.

What accounts for this? CeaseFirePA's winning campaign to invest \$170 million over two years in community-based violence reduction programs likely saved lives.

GUN VIOLENCE DOWN

It'd be easy to miss this in the barrage of horrific nightly news coverage that traumatizes communities and survivors. Philadelphia lost 24 children to this crisis in 2023. Shootings at bus stations across Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Guns, for the first time, became the number one killer of kids – surpassing car accidents. The list goes on and on.

People aren't truly safe yet, but multiple analyses find we are safer compared to pandemic-era spikes in gun homicides. In addition to an over 20% decline in homicides in Philadelphia in 2023, the city saw a 28% decrease in non-fatal shootings compared to 2022. Youth homicides dropped by 43% in Pittsburgh. While the toll of this crisis is still far too high, we are seeing historic decreases in shootings that represent significant progress on which to build.



CeaseFirePA works with Lt. Gov Davis on creating an Office of Gun Violence Prevention to help coordinate violence prevention and intervention programs across PA

INJECTION OF RESOURCES MADE A DIFFERENCE

Community leaders and evidence-based violence prevention programs received massive investments starting in 2022. Due to sustained advocacy and education by CeaseFirePA's statewide "Invest in Safer Communities" campaign, the PA General Assembly allocated historic levels of funding to support local initiatives like violence interrupters, street outreach workers, hospital-based violence prevention programs, trauma-informed approaches, and other interventions that mostly had their in-person engagements shut down during the pandemic.

As these efforts built capacity & gained momentum, they increasingly helped steer at-risk youth & others away from violence, de-escalate conflicts, and provide the tools and resources needed to resolve disputes non-violently and build a more stable life for themselves. The sustained investment in these initiatives is beginning to yield fruit.

MUST GO FURTHER

But we cannot give up on funding these strategies. If the pandemic showed us one thing, it's when these face-to-face local programs stop working, violence can explode. It will take a sustained investment to address the systemic roots of gun violence.

Governor Shapiro made a bold budget proposal of a \$100 million investment in gun safety, including funding for these community-based approaches and creating Pennsylvania's first Office of Gun Violence Prevention to coordinate efforts across the state. But last year, the Senate slashed that amount 40%. We're mobilizing our community partners and grassroots network to make sure that doesn't happen this year.

We want students to be safe. The PA Senate had other ideas.

Every year, 1.7 million students across Pennsylvania go to K-12 schools. Each day, parents wonder—will the call from the school be from the nurse about a sore throat, or from the superintendent about an active shooter? This shouldn't be the case. It wouldn't be if lawmakers passed strong policies to keep students safe.

Our Keep Kids Safe At School campaign brought together parents, students, educators, doctors, and law enforcement to prevent youth gun violence through solutions like universal background checks and Extreme Risk Protection Orders. We held a series of five town halls in key legislative districts across the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh suburbs, bringing together local experts, legislators, and Pennsylvanians demanding change. Our organizers and volunteers fanned out across the Commonwealth, gathering petition signatures from concerned citizens to demand their representatives take legislative action.



We pounded the pavement at college campuses, houses of worship, and even retirement communities to make clear to our leaders that we don't want to have to buy bulletproof backpacks to keep our kids safe at school – that's the job of our lawmakers.

And when the PA Senate went in the opposite direction, passing ineffective and even dangerous legislation to mandate armed guards in school, we held them accountable by calling them out in the statewide press for pushing a “false solution.” We made sure their constituents knew that their Senator thinks it's better to have schools with more guns, not fewer.



BACK TO THE DISTRICTS

Keeping up the pressure, remembering the lost

Amid continued obstruction of bipartisan gun safety bills in the Pennsylvania Senate, we took our message of “Not One Day More” directly to the constituents of key legislators. We organized a series of vigils and direct actions in front of their offices and in their communities to make sure that they know their constituents are demanding a vote on life-saving, bipartisan legislation. Faith leaders, survivors, and local elected officials stood side by side to hold them accountable.



“ It is beyond my comprehension why [Sen.] Baker is doing this. Isn't the protection of Pennsylvanians the primary role of the people we vote for? ”

– Margaret Yoma Ullman, a CeaseFirePA volunteer from Newtown, in a Feb 15th Letter to the Editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer

Shifting the Narrative

Introducing **DEADLY** by **DESIGN**

Behind most gun deaths is a system that's designed to kill. That's the fundamental truth revealed by a new video storytelling project we launched in December.

The prevailing narratives about gun violence are rooted in falsity, holding back progress on life-saving solutions. To build a movement that wins lasting change, we need to face the truth: gun violence isn't random or inevitable. It's not driven by mental health, video games, or too few armed guards. It's driven by easy access to guns. And key policies are proven to effectively limit that access for those who shouldn't have it.

THE STORYTELLERS

Now, Pennsylvanians are sharing their stories of the losses suffered under a system that's Deadly by Design. Because they know the best way to save the next life is to change that system. Our deadly system allowed:

- Edie's husband and Dan's step-brother to access unsecured guns during a crisis – their suicide deaths could have been prevented by a safe firearm storage law;
- Jeani's son, Kareem, to be murdered with an illegal gun trafficked by straw purchasers who could have been stopped by a lost and stolen gun reporting law;
- Stanley's son, William, to be killed by someone whose gun access could have been stopped if the state allowed Philadelphia to enforce its local gun safety ordinances.

These are just a few of the stories we have begun to tell.



Stanley Crawford

Too many Pennsylvanians with the power to make change – elected leaders, yes, but ultimately the citizens to whom they answer – sometimes have trouble seeing how policies that seem abstract could concretely prevent specific gun deaths. So we're making the connection directly. We're bringing these stories to the front of the conversation about how all Pennsylvanians can live a life free from gun violence.

Visit DeadlyByDesign.org to hear from survivors in their own words how our system is deadly by design – how their pain could've been prevented if only the solutions at our disposal were used. Then share the videos to help amplify our message and strengthen our movement.



Jeani Garcia

**SCAN TO
WATCH
THE FULL
STORIES**



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Jill Zipin's Planned Giving Journey

You too can give the gift of a safer community through your Legacy Giving

"As a longtime advocate for gun violence prevention and safer gun laws, I knew that I wanted this important work to be part of my legacy planning. My husband, Howard Zipin, and I included CeaseFirePA in our estate plans because we are committed to the long-term safety of our community. What better way to honor our family and our future than giving to an organization that is committed to saving lives? I want my future grandchildren to live in a world where school shootings and community violence are a thing of the past. I know it is possible and am excited to be a part of the movement."



For more information about including CeaseFirePA in your estate plans, contact Becky@ceasefirepa.org

We also want to thank Dr. Howard Spodek for his generous legacy gift to help make Pennsylvania safer from gun violence



**DONATE
TODAY TO
POWER THE
MOVEMENT!**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us for our two biggest events of the year

RSVP at CeaseFirePA.org

Keystone Courage Awards

Thursday, April 18, 2024

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Hotel West & Main

46 Fayette St, Conshohocken, PA

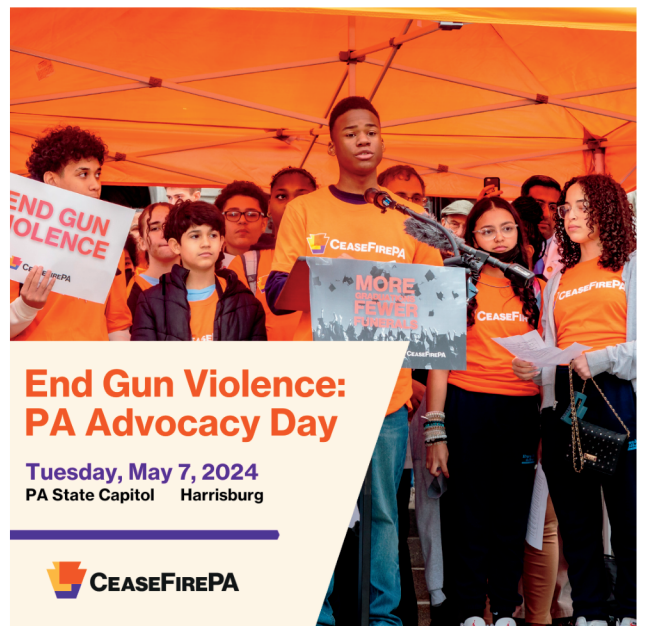


2024 Honorees

Lt. Gov. Austin Davis

Sheriff Sean Kilkenny

Deadly by Design Activists



End Gun Violence: PA Advocacy Day

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

PA State Capitol Harrisburg





CEASEFIREPA

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In my career, I've confronted the powerful for spewing toxic pollution. I've challenged corporate titans for fleecing Pennsylvanians. I've pushed back on legislators – friends & foes – when they endanger lives.

But I've never done something like this.

This past November, we installed a clock in the Capitol that PA Senators have to walk by daily. It's a constant reminder of their failure to prevent gun violence.

They don't have to look hard for solutions. Their House colleagues sent them two bipartisan bills that would make Pennsylvania safer. The next step should be a hearing in the Senate, then a vote. But Senate Leadership has refused.

We won't let that stand. Our clock reminds Senate Leadership of their failure. It reminds Senators who've yet to support these bills publicly of the cost of their waffling. They see it when they are getting lunch, going to a meeting, or headed to their next vote. Our organizers protested outside Senator Farry's & Robinson's district offices, too.

They should vote to save lives. But, if they won't, we will make sure they are reminded of the bloody cost of inaction every single minute of every damn day.

Together, we will stand against gun violence. Together, we will force action.

Adam Garber



CEASEFIREPA

TAKE A STAND

Visit CeaseFirePA.org to learn more