Advocating for Safety

Has the gun violence prevention conversation changed after four highly-publicized mass shootings in Texas since November 2017?

Can Texas lawmakers listen to the majority of Texans who want commonsense, evidence-based policies that stop gun injuries and deaths?

These questions were largely answered with “No” during the 2019 legislative session, but that may be changing.

After the most recent mass shootings in El Paso and Odessa/Midland in August 2019, Texas Gun Sense (TGS) is pushing for change throughout Texas!
Events Leading Up to 2019 Legislative Session

The Texas Legislature meets every odd-numbered year from mid-January through May. In 2019, the Legislative session started January 8th and ended May 27th. The Governor had until June 16th to act on bills.

Between the 2017 and 2019 legislative sessions, Texas experienced two widely-publicized mass shootings, defined by the independent Gun Violence Archive as four or more people shot or killed, excluding the shooter.

1. November 5, 2017: 26 Texans were killed and 20 injured at a shooting at a church in Sutherland Springs, TX.
2. May 18, 2018: 8 students and 2 teachers were killed and 13 were injured in a shooting at Santa Fe High School.

The Sutherland Springs and Santa Fe killings and injuries are only part of the tragedy in our state. There were 18 mass shootings in Texas between the end of the 2019 legislative session on May 27, 2019 through November 4, 2019.

Following the Sutherland Springs and Santa Fe shootings, the Texas Senate held special committee hearings and the House Criminal Jurisprudence committee also met. In addition, the Governor held three roundtable discussions with some lawmakers and leaders from the affected areas. TGS was the only gun violence prevention organization invited to attend a roundtable; the one held on May 22, 2018.

The Governor issued his School and Firearm Safety Action Plan on May 30, 2018 after three days of roundtable talks. While the plan includes some relatively minor smart policy recommendations, the 2019 Legislature largely ignored them. In addition, there was legislation proposed in the 86th session that could have saved lives but did not pass. See the “Missed Opportunities” section below.

In the 2019 legislative session, Texas elected officials actually chose to make it easier to access firearms in Texas.
Texas Gun Sense and the 86th Legislative Session

During the 86th legislative session, TGS was at the Capitol or otherwise working on legislative issues every single day. That is not an exaggeration. A mighty team of TGS staff, board members, and terrific supporters worked tirelessly to make a difference—and we did! Contacts from our supporters to their elected officials and statewide policy makers were crucial in reinforcing the importance of taking action.

Here are some of the key activities TGS engaged in at the Capitol during the 86th legislative session:

• TGS visited legislators and committee staff prior to the session. Pre-filing of bills began November 12, 2018.
• TGS analyzed all 134 House bills and 59 Senate bills that related to firearms along with many amendments. Of bills that received a committee, we supported 32 bills and opposed 27.
• TGS advocated for changes on several omnibus bills such as the budget (HB 1), the supplemental budget bill (SB 500) and the school safety bill (SB 11). SB 11 is a mixed bag. It included some important expansion of school mental health services and community collaborations but with too much focus on mental illness as the cause of violence. Unfortunately, SB 11 ultimately allowed for funding school marshals. School marshals are minimally trained adults who are allowed to bring firearms to school; they have other full-time jobs at schools such as teachers, custodians, and administrators.
• On opening day of the Texas Legislature, TGS delivered a TGS brochure to every legislative office. We then made it our mission to stay in contact with legislative offices frequently. TGS provided essential data and analyses on safe storage of firearms, intentional and unintentional shootings, and policy options.
• Whenever a gun-related bill was set for hearing in a committee that we supported or opposed, we provided information on the bill to every member of the committee and the committee staff. We worked with staffers to strategize on commonsense gun bills and to improve or stop bad bills.
• When the full Senate or House calendar included firearm-related bills we supported or opposed, we visited every Senate or House office to provide information and urge responsible bill voting.
• We met several times with the Governor’s policy staff to discuss commonsense, evidence-based policy options and specific legislation.

• We asked key legislators on the joint budget conference committee to support a $1 million rider on the Department of Public Safety budget to fund a safe firearm storage campaign. The rider passed in the budget. See “Legislative Successes” section below.

Some of our written testimony or handouts to legislators can be found here.

**Highlight: Two Board Members at the Capitol**

TGS board member Leesa Ross is a gun owner and NRA member, but she is also a survivor of gun tragedy. Leesa’s son died in an unintentional shooting in a college town. She knows that safe firearm storage saves lives. She was a force at the Capitol during the latest legislative session working on gun safety issues. Leesa created a terrific educational program called **Lock Arms for Life**. It is a safe firearm storage program directed at older children and young adults in a way that focuses on educating everyone about gun safety.

**Contact TGS** for more information and/or to schedule a Lock Arms for Life presentation in your school or community.

Louis Wichers is another invaluable TGS board member who spent many hours at the Capitol during the legislative session. Louis is a former school teacher, former law enforcement professional, and a recreational shooter.
Leading Collaboration

Advocating for gun violence prevention in Texas is very challenging. Advocates must work together to deliver consistent messaging and to amplify our voices to succeed.

Texas Gun Sense developed and led a core group of organizations in policy calls every Friday morning during the legislative session. The group strategized, shared information, and planned for victory. Involved organizations included: Children’s Defense Fund, Jewish Federation of San Antonio, League of Women Voters of Texas, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Texas, and the Texas Council on Family Violence. Since the 2019 session ended, the Criminal Justice Action Fund and the Texas Pediatric Society have joined.

TGS also invited national GVP groups to participate in the weekly calls during the legislative session. Everytown for Gun Safety and Giffords staff participated in the calls frequently. The Coalition to End Gun Violence and Sandy Hook Promise participated occasionally.

TGS created and leads the Texas Coalition to Reduce Gun Violence. The Coalition has met quarterly since December 2015 to share information among a wide range of organizations as well as legislative staffers and interested individuals. In preparation for the legislative session, the Coalition met on December 11, 2018. More than 500 folks viewed the meeting on Facebook Live.

The Coalition also met on April 2, 2019 which was TGS Advocacy Day at the Capitol. In conjunction with the April 2nd meeting and Advocacy Day, TGS led a press conference with 6 elected officials. Almost 500 folks watched the press conference on Facebook Live.

As part of Advocacy Day on April 2, close to 40 supporters attended presentations, visited key legislators, and stood in the House Gallery as Rep. Goodwin read a proclamation in honor of TGS. See Appendix 1 for the text of the proclamation.
Notes on Firearm-Related Bills from the 86th Legislature

The 2019 Texas Legislature ended with some safety successes. It also ended with missed opportunities to pass good bills, and, problematically, bills passed that make Texans less safe.

Gun Tragedy Prevention—Legislative Successes

Safe Firearm Storage Campaign—Big Success: TGS worked diligently on a bill and then budget rider to fund a $1 million safe firearm storage public health campaign through the Texas Department of Public Safety. Rep. Howard proposed HB 316, which was voted out of the House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee with bipartisan support. The House Calendars Committee did not put HB 316 on the full House calendar. Sen. Alvarado had the companion to HB 316 on the Senate side, SB 1573, but it did not get a hearing in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee.

When HB 316 was clearly not going to be placed on the House Calendar, Rep. Howard was instrumental in placing a rider in the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) budget that would fund the safe firearms storage campaign. Rep. Howard sits on the House Appropriations Committee. TGS worked closely with Rep. Howard’s office. We reached out to key members of the budget conference committee to provide information to support the safe firearm storage as a life-saving policy.

The final budget that went to the Governor contained the $1 million rider to fund the statewide gun safe storage campaign at DPS. The Governor can line item veto any part(s) of the budget. We spoke with the Governor’s policy staff several times about the data-based argument for a safe firearm storage campaign. On June 16, 2019, the Governor signed the budget, without a single veto.

The statewide safe firearm storage campaign will begin in September 2020 and last through 2021 to address unintentional shootings, suicides, and stolen guns.

Unintentional shootings: According to the Gun Violence Archive, from May 27, 2019 to November 6, 2019, Texas had 74 separate incidents of unintentional shootings. All injuries are preventable, including unintentional shootings. Safe storage saves lives.

Firearm suicide: Safe firearm storage delays or denies access to the deadliest means of suicide—firearms. According to the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, more than half of all suicides in Texas (58%) are by firearm and the firearm suicide rate in Texas has increased 18% over the last decade. Seventy-eight percent of veteran suicides in Texas in 2017 were by firearm according to the Veterans Administration.
Lost and stolen guns: Texas *leads the nation* in the number of guns that are lost or stolen each year. The number of guns reported stolen in the Lone Star State nearly doubled between 2007 and 2016, from at least 13,225 to at least 26,004, according to the National Crime Information Center, an FBI database used to track stolen property. Note that any statistics on the number of guns reported stolen are surely undercounted because Texas does not mandate the reporting of lost or stolen items to law enforcement.

**Highlight: Good Bills that Passed**

Suicide prevention: [HB 3980](#) introduced by Rep. Hunter and then signed into law effective immediately requires a deep dive into state data on suicide, an assessment of programs and recommendations. The bill is impressively comprehensive and TGS looks forward to working in the process to be sure that access to firearms is addressed.

Domestic violence: The link between domestic violence and firearms is well known. According to the [Texas Council on Family Violence](#), in 2018, 174 women in Texas were killed by a male intimate partner—59% of those murders were by firearm. Texas does not have a widely used court mechanism for disarming domestic abusers who are subject to a protective order or are found guilty of a domestic-violence related crime. In addition, there are gaps in the criminal justice system such that domestic violence protective orders and violations are not reported timely or are not readily available to law enforcement and other affected parties.

There were a number of good bills introduced in the 2019 session that would have helped processes related to domestic violence. One that passed that TGS worked on diligently is [HB 1528](#) by Rep. Rose as signed by the Governor included language from [SB 415](#) by Sen. Huffman. The bill strengthens court procedures and reporting for misdemeanor family violence.

Another good bill, [SB 325](#) by Sen. Huffman, relates to establishing a protective order registry and the duties of court personnel and other persons and entities in regard to the registry.

**Success in Defeating Bad Bills**

Bills that made Texans less safe were in abundance in this legislative session. As noted above, TGS worked to stop at least 27 of these bills that received hearings.
SB 406 by Sen. Birdwell and SB 243 by Sen. Creighton are examples of bills that came dangerously close to passing. The bills would have endangered students and staff at schools. They would have allowed school marshals to carry a concealed handgun on their person and not securely stored as current law requires. TGS worked very hard to stop these dangerous bills.

**Missed Opportunities**

More than 20 commonsense bills proposed in the House and the Senate could have saved lives but were not passed.

Here are some of the important gun safety measures that did not pass:

- **Airport public safety:** The Governor vetoed HB 1168 by Rep. Anchia, a bill that passed the Senate and the House. The bill would have expanded restrictions on possessing a firearm in certain secured areas of an airport.

- **Closing the “gun show loophole.”** These bills would have required all sellers at gun shows to do a background check on buyers. Rep. Anchia HB 1169, Rep. Reynolds HB 195

- **Outlawing “straw purchases.”** These bills would have prohibited a person from legally purchasing a firearm in order to give it to another person who is prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Rep. Anchia HB 1171, Sen. West SB 388


- **Mandatory reporting of lost or stolen guns:** Rep. Rodriguez HB 1207


- **Prohibiting some irresponsible firearm-related behaviors:** Rep. Rosenthal’s HB 1445 would have prohibited carrying a firearm while intoxicated and Rep. Martinez’ HB 86 would have prohibited celebratory gun fire.
Improving Texas’ Child Access Prevention law: In his May 2018 School and Firearm Safety Action Plan, the Governor recommended three improvements to the state’s Child Access Prevention law: (1) raise the age so that children younger than 18 (instead of younger than 17) are addressed; (2) clarify the “readily dischargeable” statutory definition; and (3) increase the penalty level to a 3rd degree felony when access results in death or serious bodily injury. None of the bills addressing these issues passed—note that none of the bills addressed all three improvements the Governor recommended., SB 158 Sen. Rodriguez, SB 204 Sen. Huffman, HB 854 Rep. Moody, HB 4341 Rep. Collier

Prohibiting “lie and try,” and, required reporting. Lying on the background check application to try to purchase a firearm would have been prohibited by state law if one of these bills passed. The bills also required the federal firearm licensee who became aware of the “lie and try” to report the attempt to DPS. Rep. Hinojosa HB 95, HB 4496

Enacting Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) law: An ERPO law would allow a civil court judge to order a person who is a danger to themselves or others to temporarily surrender their firearms. Rep. Moody HB 131, Sen. Rodriguez SB 157

Deferred adjudication: This bill would have made it a criminal offense for a person placed on deferred adjudication community supervision for certain violent crimes to possess a firearm. SB 2007 Sen. Lucio

Unforgivable! Seventy-eight percent of Texas Veteran suicide was by firearm.

(Too Many) Bad Bills that Passed

Even in a legislative session that followed the highly publicized mass shootings in Sutherland Springs and Santa Fe, the Texas Legislature and the Governor made it easier to access firearms. In particular, there were eight bills that passed that will make Texans significantly less safe.

Limiting the Right to Prohibit Firearms in Private Establishments

HB 121 by Rep. Swanson was dubbed the “oops” bill. It allows for a defense to prosecution if a person with a handgun ignores prohibitive posted signs and enters the private entity. According to this law, if the individual carrying a handgun illegally “promptly” leaves the property
once the “owner or someone with apparent authority to act for the owner” has notified them of the prohibition.

Responsible gun owners do not ignore gun-related signage. In a similar scenario, a person driving a vehicle and who does not see a stop sign and gets stopped by law enforcement does not get this “oops” defense to prosecution.

**SB 772** by Sen. Hughes provides an incentive for private entities to allow handguns on their premises. The law immunizes a private entity from civil liability against a claim arising out of not choosing to prohibit handguns.

HB 121 and SB 772 have a combined effect with **SB 535** by Sen. Campbell to negatively impact safety at places of worship.

After the Sutherland Springs mass shooting, the Texas Attorney General issued an opinion on December 21, 2017 saying that places of worship, like any private entity, must post relevant signage to prohibit the open or concealed or both carry of firearms. SB 535 codifies that Attorney General opinion.

Taken together, HB 121 and SB 535 mean that places of worship must post signs prohibiting open and/or concealed carry, and, if a person ignores the signs and carries a handgun into a place of workshop, the “owner or a someone with apparent authority to act for the owner” must ask them to leave. If they leave promptly, HB 121 allows a defense to prosecution. This begs the question, who at a place of worship fits the category of an owner or person with the apparent authority to act for the owner? Would that person be the leader of the service in the place of worship? How disruptive would this be to services?

SB 772 in combination with SB 535 means that places of worship are incentivized to allow handguns on their premises by reduced liability.

**Allowing Permitless Carry During a Disaster**

**HB 1177** by Rep. Phelan allows permitless carry of a handgun for seven days after a disaster declaration in the disaster declaration area. Permitless carry in this seven-day period is allowed in emergency shelters if the person carrying the handgun, “follows the rules and regulations of the owner, controller, or operator of the premises that govern the carrying of a handgun on the premises.”

In the event of a disaster, every responsible gun owner should have a plan for securing their firearms that does not put anyone at risk. Carrying handguns into an emergency shelter
heightens existing safety concerns and creates new ones. Many people in shelters are traumatized and the operation can be chaotic. Focus is on feeding and housing and otherwise caring for the immediate needs of people in the shelter. The operator of the shelter should not have to be concerned with the presence of handguns. Also note that some shelters are large and may have extensive law enforcement presence but many do not. Handguns have no place in any shelter and they compromise the safety of community members, volunteers, law enforcement, and staff in the shelters.

**Endangering Students and Staff at Schools**

One of the most dangerous bills passed this session allows for unlimited school marshals. School marshals are minimally trained adults with full-time jobs at the school such as teacher or custodian who are allowed to have guns at school. Prior to the 2019 legislative session, the number of school marshals was limited based on the number of students and buildings.

**HB 1387** by Rep. Hefner was amended through the legislative process so that ultimately it allows for schools to have an unlimited number of school marshals/guns in schools. Arming school teachers or staff introduces new risks into schools. There is danger to students and staff from unintended injuries when guns are not appropriately handled and stored. Also, in the event of an active shooter, civilians with guns can create confusion.

**HB 1143**, also by Rep. Hefner, allows the transportation or storage of a handgun or other firearm or ammunition by a handgun license holder in a school parking areas. Texas has a high incidence of stolen guns. Stolen guns from a school parking lot are a danger to students and staff but also to the surrounding community where stolen guns can be used to commit crimes.

**Compromising the Safety and Security of Foster Homes**

**HB 2363** by Rep. Harris permits certain foster homes to store firearms and ammunition in the same locked location. The amended version of the bill that the Governor signed states that if a firearm and ammunition are stored together, there must be a trigger lock on the gun. Gun manufacturers and gun safety experts agree that guns and ammunition should always be stored securely and separately. Being a foster parent is not a right and children in the foster care system are much more likely to be vulnerable and have suffered trauma; guns should be stored in the safest possible way to protect the foster children and the foster families.
Strengthening the State’s Ability to Stymie Local Commonsense Gun Ordinances

HB 3231 by Rep. Clardy expands a 1987 firearms regulation preemption statute that made state laws preemptive of any local regulation regarding selling, owning, carrying, and storing firearms. HB 3231 is what may is referred to as “extreme” preemption. HB 3231 prohibits municipalities and counties from regulating commerce in firearms—and added air guns, knives, or ammunition. The bill spells out that the current law's prohibition on regulating the transfer, transportation, licensing, or registration of firearms includes possession, carrying, or storage.

Preemption forbids local authority and applies a sweeping singular approach to a complex regulatory environment. Texas is an enormously diverse state with urban, suburban, rural and frontier counties; huge cities and very small towns. One size in anything hardly fits all when it comes to firearm safety in Texas. Local policy makers know their communities best.

Lessons from the 2019 Legislative Session

• Ground was definitely gained on calling attention to gun violence prevention issues that related to safe storage, suicide prevention, and disarming domestic abusers. There is a significant foundation on which to build.

• TGS developed and led a workgroup of advocacy organizations with a strong interest in gun violence prevention. The group worked in a purposefully collaborative way with regular communication. This collaboration has continued post-session.

• It is important to combat proposed legislation that incrementally eats away at gun safety because, taken together, there is significant deterioration of safety.

• Lawmakers often minimize or deny facts and statistics in making gun policy. Data and facts matter and it is incumbent on GVP advocates to relentlessly push the data in policy-making.

• It could have been worse. Texas Gun Sense worked individually and collaboratively to kill 27 bad bills. In the process, every meeting and document provided increased the knowledge base of legislators and staff—and sometimes resulted in the legislator agreeing not to push for their bill to be set for hearing. TGS spent a lot of time educating committee staff and discussing options, which sometimes led to committee chairs agreeing not to hear a bill or not to call for a vote on a bill that had been heard.
Post Legislative Session Activities

On August 3, 2019, a mass shooting occurred at a Walmart store in El Paso, TX. A gunman shot and killed 22 people and injured 24 others. A 21-year-old white male from Allen, TX, was arrested shortly after the shooting and charged with capital murder.

Four weeks later, on August 31st, another highly publicized mass shooting occurred in the West Texas cities of Midland and Odessa. A gunman shot multiple people from a vehicle. Eight people were killed including the perpetrator, and 25 people were injured, including three police officers.

Although elected leaders released statements, plans and directives immediately after and in the months since the shootings; there has been no called special session. The Texas Legislature does not convene again until January 2021. In the interim, the Governor is the only one who can call a special session and outline what is to be considered during the special session. Neither the Lt. Governor nor the House Speaker have called for the Governor to call a special session. Some individual House and Senate members have called for a special session.

TGS has joined some individual lawmakers and some advocates in calling for a special session. As noted above, after two highly publicized mass shootings between the 2017 and 2019 sessions, the 86th Legislature made it easier to access firearms so TGS has cause for skepticism. However, the simple fact is that no legislation can be passed without the Legislature in town. Extreme Risk Protection Order and universal background check laws, as well as other significant policies to address gun violence, can only be enacted by the Legislature, while in session, with the Governor’s signature.

In the meanwhile, more preventable deaths and injuries happen every day in Texas.

The following section details actions that the Governor and the Legislature have taken to assuage criticism for bad legislation in the 2019 session and for failure to make big change in a special session.
Governor

- On August 14, 2019, the Governor appointed a Domestic Terrorism Task Force. The Governor also directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to take immediate action to combat any form of domestic terrorism in Texas through a number of actions he outlined. The first meeting of the task force was August 30, 2019.
- The Governor convened two “safety commission” meetings in August 2019. The safety committee meetings were very similar to the roundtables after the Santa Fe High School shooting so the Governor’s office dubbed them “safety commission” meetings. The first meeting was on August 22, 2019 in Austin and the second on August 29, 2019 in El Paso. The meetings were closed to the public and the Governor’s office picked the participants. Texas Gun Sense was the only Texas gun violence prevention organization invited to attend. TGS board President, Ed Scruggs, attended the August 22, 2019 commission meeting.
- On September 5, 2019 the Governor issued eight executive orders in response to the El Paso and Midland/Odessa shootings.
- On September 12, 2019 the Governor released his Safety Action Report.
- The Governor announced funding to counter terrorism statewide on October 12, 2019.
- No special session called.

Legislature

On September 4, 2019 the Lt. Governor and the House Speaker appointed Senate and House Select Committees on Mass Violence Prevention and Community Safety. The committees operate separately and have different charges.

The House speaker’s charge to the Select Committee required reports: “The committee will be required to submit a preliminary assessment to the Speaker within 90 days of the committee’s creation, produce periodic progress reports thereafter, and submit a final report.” The first report is due on or around December 4, 2019.

The House Committee met on September 17, 2019 in Austin, on October 10, 2019 in Farmers Branch and on November 7, 2019 in Odessa. The archived broadcasts of the hearings can be found at the Texas Legislature Online website. No other hearings are scheduled yet.

The Senate Committee met on September 26, 2019 in Austin, October 17 in Odessa, October 21 in El Paso, October 30 in Austin. The archived broadcasts of the hearings can be found at the Texas Legislature Online website. Another hearing is scheduled for December 4 in Austin;
public testimony allowed for two minutes each and the hearing will be broadcast and archived. No other hearings are scheduled yet.

**Texas Gun Sense**

- TGS has visited with staff of all Senate and House Mass Violence committees at least once and more often for most. We have presented our priorities to each.
- On October 2, 2019, TGS led a Coalition meeting to share information among interested/invited parties and discuss actions going forward.
- TGS provided testimony at three special committee hearings thus far.
  - We are an information resource for the media. We speak to reporters regularly and have been quoted in over 100 news articles locally, nationally and internationally. We have been interviewed for TV and radio shows broadcast across the globe.
  - TGS continues to have weekly calls with GVP advocates to work together.
  - TGS communicates with many legislators who are not on the special committees but have an interest and awareness about the issues to seek their positive intervention.
- TGS continues to engage on social media, including tweeting and posting on Facebook about the commonsense, evidence-based policies we recommend.
- We have followed the implementation of some of the non-legislative items recommended by the Governor.

**Notes on the Recommendations Thus Far by the Governor and Legislature**

While the Governor has not taken the most impactful step of calling a special session, the actions and recommendations that he and statewide officials have pursue demand analysis and response.

- Texas leadership has trouble discussing any restrictions on guns. The titles of the special committees refer to “Mass Violence” rather than the firearms used in mass shootings and the shootings every day in Texas. Similarly, a focus on “domestic terrorism” may be important but it does not address the core of the problem, easy access to firearms.
- Recommendations around analyzing data from social media, tips from individuals, and other sources among local, state, and national law enforcement makes sense for fighting mass violence including gun violence. However, there are significant limitations that have come to light repeatedly at the hearings. First, there are issues of privacy and the First Amendment that need to be addressed and updated. Second, law enforcement and other officials have
stated in testimony repeatedly that there is too much communication traffic to digest and make sense of every time in an ongoing and real-time basis. Third, law enforcement and other officials have indicated a lack of cooperation from social media companies in sharing information. Also, the necessary technology and trained personnel are expensive initially and to update. Finally, Texas has noExtreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) law. An ERPO law would be the best tool to use in identifying and acting on persons exhibiting dangerous behaviors to assess their potential violence with firearms.

• One of the Lt. Governor’s charges to the Senate Select Committee on Mass Violence Prevention & Community Safety is: “Consider the role digital media, dark web networks, and overall issues play in the promotion of mass violence...Research the link between violent video games and recent mass shootings...”. TGS is a proponent of research and evidence-based policies. However, current research shows that easy access to firearms is the far more important precursor of violence than, for example, video games.

• Despite red herrings and tangential issues, there are some small-scale recommendations by the Governor and under consideration by the Special Committees that, if pursued, could help address easy access to firearms in Texas. That’s a big “if.” Some reasonable recommendations include:
  1. Accelerate the development and implementation of the DPS safe storage campaign.
  2. Review enforcement of current laws and looking for ways to enhance the background check system.
  3. Research timely reporting of criminal history, emergency protective orders, and other threat indicators that would prohibit the possession/purchase of firearms.
  5. Consider mandatory reporting of stolen firearms.
  6. Consider a crackdown on criminals who lie on their background check and try to purchase a firearm.
  7. Some good recommendations regarding disarming domestic abusers.

**Texans’ Support for Action Against Gun Violence**

It is important to note that Texans are supportive of commonsense gun policy reforms. For example, a November 5, 2019 University of Texas/Texas Tribune poll found that:

• Requiring background checks for all gun purchases has overwhelming support in Texas, with 81% of registered voters saying that’s a good idea.
• Extreme Risk Protection Order laws are supported by 68% of voters.
Action on prevention and reducing easy access to firearms is needed now, rather than recommendations and hearings until the next legislative session starting in January 2021.

Here are the equations Texas needs to address:

- ✓ Hate + easy access to firearms = danger
- ✓ Domestic violence + easy access to firearms = danger
- ✓ Homicidal ideation + easy access to firearms = danger
- ✓ Suicidal ideation + easy access to firearms = danger

Let's address easy access to firearms as a cross-cutting issue for violence in Texas.

**Conclusion**

Texas voters have a responsibility to elect leaders who understand and will advocate for commonsense, evidence-based gun violence prevention policies. Educating and pressuring elected officials who are in place can change policies as well. Next is a need for elected officials to lead on gun violence prevention.

For Texans, state-level policy is the most impactful. Gun violence prevention bills are stalled at the federal level and some regulations have been rolled back, such as 3D printing. Texas has a very strong local preemption law that was made even stronger against local communities determining gun policy in their area—local officials’ hands are tied.

TGS will continue to lead in state-level policy with the partnership of our supporters. We can make Texas safer. Gun violence is preventable. Join the effort. Sign up at txgunsense.org.