

End Gun Violence!

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by Congressman Danny K. Davis

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Americans have had enough. The tragic, senseless deaths of 20 children and 6 staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut have finally pushed aside all the denials of the epidemic of gun violence which infects our nation.

No more excuses.

There have been more than 70 mass shootings since the January 8, 2011, massacre in Tucson, Arizona. And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

We lose on average 32 people a day to gun murders in the U.S. And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

The homicide rate in the U.S. is 6.9 times higher than 22 other high-income, high population countries, combined. And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

Over a million people have been killed with guns in the United States since 1968, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated. And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

2,694 children and teens were killed by gunfire in 2010; 1,773 of them were victims of homicide and 67 of these were elementary school-age children. And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

Since 1979 when gun death data were first collected by age, 119,079 children and teens have been killed by gun violence. That is more child and youth deaths in America than American battle deaths in World War I (53,402) or in Vietnam (47,434) or in the Korean War (33,739) or in the Iraq War (3,517). And still we, the Members of Congress, offer no answer: what will it take to begin to end gun violence in America?

We know that keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide by a factor of 3 to 5 and increases the risk of suicide with a firearm by a factor of 17.

We know that keeping a firearm in the home increases the risk of homicide by a factor of three.

We know that gun violence, especially in poor communities, drives thousands of vulnerable young people into the pipeline to prison.

And let me tell you what I know, first hand: in the community I live in, just one of the 77 community areas in Chicago, we have recorded 32 homicides so far this year. Thirty of them by gunshot. Twenty three of the victims were less than thirty years old. The youngest only seven years old.

Let me tell you what I know, first hand: I am sick in my heart from attending the funerals of young people and children killed by gun violence.

I refuse to accept the status quo.

I refuse to accept that there is nothing we can do about this epidemic of gun violence.

It is time to ban private ownership of assault weapons.

It is time to ban large capacity ammunition clips.

It is time and past time to ban all private gun sales without prior background checks.

It is time to end gun running in the United States by limiting gun purchases to one gun purchase per month per person.

It is time to ban armor piercing ammunition.

It is time to require that every gun in America be equipped with a trigger lock.

The answer to gun violence is not more guns. It is time for a Surgeon General's report on gun violence, for funding studies of gun violence and how to end it by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health.

No more excuses, no more waiting. It is time for this Congress to act.