

## **Guest column: Preventing the call every parent fears**

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As a parent of four, the president of a school board, and a human being, I am filled with a deep, gut-wrenching, indescribable feeling every time the news breaks that there has been yet another school shooting. No parent should ever have to receive a call telling them that their child is not coming home, especially when these tragedies can often be prevented.

For too long now, these parents' grief would be extended as they were forced to watch politicians in Washington and Harrisburg fail to take any steps to protect others from the same fate. This is particularly frustrating when there are common sense, broadly supported steps that could be taken to address the gun violence crisis — most even supported by a high percentage of gun owners.

Ending gun violence in America should be our goal. It is not as complicated as the constant inaction has made it seem — we know many of the causes and we have practical solutions. What we need are leaders with the courage to stand up to the NRA and support a comprehensive, holistic, reasonable approach to addressing gun violence. This doesn't involve the right-wing myths of the government seizing lawfully owned guns or overturning the Second Amendment.

The steps required to solve this crisis should not be controversial: we need to address mental health and isolation issues, especially among young men, we need to limit high-capacity magazines that have no legitimate purpose other than causing mass destruction, and we need to require universal background checks, and we need to increase training and licensing requirements for owning a firearm. Again, these are common-sense measures that have strong support among Americans — a recent NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found that 86% of Americans support increased funding for mental health screening and treatment, 82% support requiring background checks for gun purchases at gun shows or private sales, and 74% support red flag laws.

Our goals with these actions are simple — create a culture of safety around guns, prevent guns from falling into dangerous hands, and stop mass shootings — none of these goals infringe on the rights of lawful gun owners.

Last week, a glimmer of hope emerged from Washington, DC, as a bipartisan group of Senators announced an agreement to address a number of these issues. While the scope of the proposal is narrow, it is more than we have seen in decades and takes meaningful steps on mental health issues, school safety, and preventing juvenile offenders from skirting the current background check laws.

If I am elected, I will work with any of my colleagues in Harrisburg, no matter what corner of the Commonwealth or political party they are from, to build on these efforts and protect our students, families, and all Pennsylvanians from the gun violence crisis. It is so rare in public policy that we have the answer right in front of us, especially one that is supported by so many citizens from across the political spectrum. We can and must take action now to make sure that no parent ever receives that dreaded phone call again.

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