Parents Against Gun Violence policy recommendations for addressing gun related violence in the United States.

Parents Against Gun Violence was founded by a nationwide coalition of mothers and fathers hours after the Newtown, CT killings. In the weeks that followed, our members were busy collecting and studying scientific, peer-reviewed research on the causes of gun violence and gun accidents, and strategizing about how to reduce both. At the same time, we have engaged in intensive dialogue with concerned citizens from across the political spectrum. Through this process of research and dialogue, we have developed a set of five policy planks that we believe can gain support across the political spectrum, and that provide a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence.

As parents, we urge lawmakers and the President to consider the following:

Policy Plank 1.) Empower law enforcement

a.) Approve Andrew Traver, President Obama's nominee for Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Without a leader, the Bureau is hampered in its ability to enforce its congressionally mandated responsibilities, such as investigating and prosecuting straw purchasers who buy guns for criminals.

b.) Pass new legislation reversing the Tiarht Amendments. These amendments make it more difficult for police officers to effectively fight gun trafficking. Among other obstacles, the Tiarht Amendments block the Justice Department from requiring that gun dealers conduct annual inventory checks.

Policy Plank 2.) Empower researchers

Remove current restrictions that prohibit the use of federal funds for research on gun injuries, regardless of how the findings of that research could be interpreted or used. Unimpeded, rigorous research can help policymakers target legislation much more precisely, focusing on the particular strategies likely to make the biggest dent in gun violence.

Policy Plank 3.) Issue new regulations on the sale and manufacture of firearms

a.) Require that all gun sales be processed by a federally-licensed firearms dealer. Private citizens wishing to transfer a firearm to a new owner must complete the sale through the intermediation of a licensed dealer, including a permit application and background check at the time of sale. This will eliminate the so-called “gun show loophole” that enables firearms sellers and purchasers to avoid background checks.
b.) As PAGV analysis shows, there is a very strong correlation between firearm magazine capacity and total casualties in mass shooting incidents. Addressing magazine capacity is far more effective than an approach that focuses on banning one type of firearm or another. Approve the high-capacity magazine ban proposed by Congresswoman Diana DeGette. In addition to prohibiting the sale of new high-capacity magazines, include a ban on the after-market transfer of existing magazines with a capacity greater than ten rounds.

c.) Appropriate funds for a nationwide buyback program for high capacity magazines and unwanted guns. People who currently own high-capacity magazines will have one opportunity for remuneration, which will otherwise be lost when private transfers are banned. A nationwide magazine buyback will reduce the overall number of high-capacity magazines in the country. Compensation for voluntarily surrendered firearms and magazines should come in the form of a pre-paid debit card with an expiration date in the near future, ensuring that the money will be spent and will have a stimulative effect on the economy.

d.) Require that all owners of high capacity magazines who choose to keep them must register them by taking them to a law enforcement agency where they will be engraved with a serial number corresponding to a record of ownership in a national database. A registration fee will be collected for each magazine, to offset the costs to law-enforcement agencies.

e.) Require that any store that sells firearms must also sell gun safes.

f.) Add a line to the existing application to purchase a firearm, in which the buyer must affirm that he or she already owns a gun safe, or is buying one with the new gun.

g.) Require that, by 2020, all popular calibers of handgun ammunition be manufactured with frangible bullets designed to disintegrate when they hit a wall or other hard surface. This will apply to .25 ACP, .32 ACP, .380 ACP, .38 Special, .38 Super, 9mm, .40 Smith and Wesson, 10mm, .45 ACP, .45 GAP, .357 Sig., and other calibers as appropriate, but not to .357 Remington Magnum, .44 Remington Magnum, and larger calibers (which may be manufactured with a soft-tipped lead or polymer bullet appropriate for hunting). The use of frangible bullets will help to reduce the incidence of people accidentally killed by stray bullets.

Policy Plank 4.) Empower mental health care providers

Improve the ability of the mental health system to treat severely mentally ill people outside the constraints of the hospital system by creating and fully funding an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program in every major metropolitan area.

Policy Plank 5.) Protect schools

a.) Create a grant program through which schools may apply for funds to hire guards, offer professional development related to crisis management, or install equipment to secure schools and classrooms.

b.) Require all public schools to update their evacuation procedures and to plan new safety drills that prepare students and teachers for a response to an armed attack.
c.) Allow and instruct school counselors to coordinate with Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) programs in their region, informing mental health professionals of students believed to be a potential risk to themselves or others who should receive ongoing treatment.

d.) Endow these federal school safety initiatives through revenue collected from a new federal excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition.