
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 534 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY JOHNSON-HARRELL, McCLINTON, KINSEY, HOHENSTEIN,
ISAACSON, A. DAVIS, KOSIEROWSKI, SANCHEZ, McNEILL, CEPHAS,
SCHLOSSBERG, MURT, FREEMAN, ZABEL, HARRIS, YOUNGBLOOD,
KENYATTA, STURLA, HOWARD, RABB, ULLMAN, FITZGERALD, DRISCOLL,
INNAMORATO, SHUSTERMAN, CIRESI, WILLIAMS, WARREN, CALTAGIRONE
AND WEBSTER, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish an
2 advisory committee to conduct a study on gun violence as a
3 public health crisis and issue a report of its findings and
4 recommendations to the House of Representatives.

5 WHEREAS, Gun violence is more prevalent in the United States
6 than almost any other nation on earth; and

7 WHEREAS, Every day in the United States, more than 300
8 individuals are killed or injured by a firearm, amounting to
9 approximately one individual every four and one-half minutes;

10 and

11 WHEREAS, The gun homicide rate in the United States is 25
12 times higher than in other developed nations; and

13 WHEREAS, The firearm homicide rate in the United States is
14 approximately 43 times higher for individuals who are 15 to 24
15 years of age than in other developed nations; and

16 WHEREAS, The rate of unintentional firearm deaths is 6.2
17 times higher in the United States than in other developed

1 nations; and

2 WHEREAS, According to the Centers for Disease Control and
3 Prevention (CDC), gun violence in the United States took the
4 lives of approximately 39,773 Americans in 2017; and

5 WHEREAS, In 2016, gun violence cost the United States
6 approximately \$229 billion, including health care, law
7 enforcement, insurance, employment and other costs; and

8 WHEREAS, In the Federal Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations
9 Bill for Fiscal Year 1997, the Dickey amendment required that
10 "none of the funds made available for injury prevention and
11 control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be
12 used to advocate or promote gun control"; and

13 WHEREAS, The Dickey amendment has prevented the CDC from
14 researching gun violence as it would normally research an
15 epidemic with the same threat to public health, safety and
16 welfare as gun violence; and

17 WHEREAS, Under the Dickey amendment, the Congress of the
18 United States also redirected \$2.6 million from the CDC's
19 budget, the amount of money that the CDC had invested in firearm
20 injury research during the previous year; and

21 WHEREAS, A number of organizations have proposed repeal of
22 the Dickey amendment and treating gun violence as a public
23 health crisis, but these proposals have not been successful at
24 the Federal level; and

25 WHEREAS, Since 1996, the CDC's funding for firearm injury
26 prevention has decreased 96% to \$100,000 out of the total CDC
27 budget of \$5.6 billion; and

28 WHEREAS, In 2012, former United States Representative Jay
29 Dickey, the author of the Dickey amendment, announced that he
30 had changed his mind and now opposes his own amendment, stating

1 that:

2 We are in strong agreement now that scientific research
3 should be conducted into preventing firearm injuries and
4 that ways to prevent firearm deaths can be found without
5 encroaching on the rights of legitimate gun owners. The
6 same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of
7 lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from
8 smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of
9 deaths and injuries from gun violence;

10 and

11 WHEREAS, In 2018, the Congress of the United States adopted
12 an amendment to a funding bill that clarified that the Dickey
13 amendment only prohibits the CDC from advocating on behalf of
14 gun control, not from researching it; and

15 WHEREAS, The American Public Health Association (APHA)
16 suggests that, similar to how public health officials
17 investigate a communicable disease, researchers should
18 investigate the underlying causes of the gun violence epidemic,
19 how it is transmitted and what potential remedies exist; and

20 WHEREAS, In 2015, a group of eight national health
21 professional organizations and the American Bar Association
22 (ABA) advocated a series of policies to reduce the public health
23 consequences of firearms, including:

24 universal background checks of gun purchasers,
25 elimination of physician 'gag' laws, restricting the
26 manufacture and sale of military-style assault weapons
27 and large-capacity magazines for civilian use and
28 research to support strategies for reducing firearm-
29 related injuries and death;

30 and

1 WHEREAS, The health professional organizations also
2 recommended improved monetary assistance for mental health
3 services; and

4 WHEREAS, The ABA concluded that none of these recommendations
5 for reducing gun violence conflict with the Second Amendment of
6 the Constitution of the United States; and

7 WHEREAS, Millions of guns are sold every year in "no
8 questions asked" transactions; and

9 WHEREAS, It is estimated that 20% of guns sold in the United
10 States are sold without a meaningful background check; and

11 WHEREAS, Violent behavior due to a mental health disorder
12 accounts for only about 4% to 5% of gun violence; and

13 WHEREAS, More than 60% of all firearm deaths are suicides;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, African Americans are nearly 14 times more likely to
16 die from gun violence than white Americans; and

17 WHEREAS, A person is killed with a gun every six hours in
18 this Commonwealth; and

19 WHEREAS, Approximately 79% of all victims of gun homicides in
20 this Commonwealth are Hispanic or African American; and

21 WHEREAS, While African Americans comprise just under 12% of
22 the population in this Commonwealth, they account for more than
23 69% of gun homicide victims in this Commonwealth; and

24 WHEREAS, These statistics indicate that gun violence is a
25 threat to public health and safety in communities of color; and

26 WHEREAS, In schools from Columbine, 1999, to Virginia Tech,
27 2007, to Sandy Hook, 2012, to Parkland, 2018, and other school
28 shootings nationwide since Columbine, the lives of hundreds of
29 students and school employees have been lost to the epidemic of
30 gun violence; and

1 WHEREAS, According to a 2017 article in the journal
2 *Pediatrics*, nearly 1,300 children from 0 to 17 years of age
3 across the United States die from shootings annually, and 5,790
4 are treated for gunshot wounds; and

5 WHEREAS, Schools in this Commonwealth nationwide remain
6 vulnerable to gun violence; and

7 WHEREAS, From 2005 to 2014, this Commonwealth had the fifth
8 highest number of assaults with a firearm against a police
9 officer per capita; and

10 WHEREAS, In this Commonwealth on average, a police officer is
11 assaulted with a firearm every two days; and

12 WHEREAS, Currently in this Commonwealth, gun-related deaths
13 exceed vehicle-related deaths every year; and

14 WHEREAS, From 2012 to 2014, this Commonwealth ranked eighth
15 for the highest number of guns exported to other states and
16 recovered in a crime scene; and

17 WHEREAS, From 2012 to 2014, a total of 5,844 guns sold in
18 Pennsylvania were used in crimes in surrounding states;
19 therefore be it

20 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint
21 State Government Commission to establish an advisory committee
22 to conduct a study on gun violence as a public health crisis and
23 issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the House
24 of Representatives; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission
26 establish an advisory committee consisting of approximately 17
27 members, including representatives of the following:

- 28 (1) the Office of Homeland Security of the Commonwealth;
29 (2) the Department of Education;
30 (3) the Department of Health;

1 (4) the Department of Human Services;

2 (5) the Pennsylvania State Police;

3 (6) the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and
4 Delinquency;

5 (7) the Office of Attorney General; and

6 (8) other agencies, organizations or entities that are
7 knowledgeable of the issues surrounding gun violence and its
8 causes and effects on public health and safety, including
9 representatives who are experienced in the areas of health
10 care, law enforcement and criminal justice;

11 and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission consult
13 with other departments, agencies, organizations, entities or
14 persons, as necessary or appropriate, in seeking further input
15 and information under this resolution; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the report of the Joint State Government
17 Commission contain the following:

18 (1) findings and recommendations relating to:

19 (i) the background information and data described in
20 this resolution;

21 (ii) the causes and prevalence of gun violence in
22 this Commonwealth and throughout the United States; and

23 (iii) intervention and prevention techniques
24 proposed, considered or implemented nationwide;

25 (2) any proposed legislation to reduce gun violence in
26 this Commonwealth; and

27 (3) any other data or information determined to be
28 necessary or appropriate;

29 and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue

1 its report within one year of the adoption of this resolution.