

JCPA AND JCRC ACTION ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AROUND THE COUNTRY

Gun violence casts a long shadow in the United States. From Aurora to San Bernardino to Orlando to Sandy Hook, it increasingly seems that no community is safe anymore from the scourge of mass shootings. The need for common-sense gun laws that respect the second amendment, but also keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and terrorists has never been more urgent. Advocating for gun control measures has been a top JCPA priority over the past decade, and has passed three resolutions: “Calling for the Passage of Meaningful Gun Safety Legislation” in 2000, “Handgun Violence” in 2007, and, most recently, “Preventing Mass Violence” in 2013. The 2013 Resolution, which calls on the community relations field to join in coalition to help reduce violence in our society, is still relevant today.

The resolution states that:

“The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes: The current spate of mass shootings and the overwhelming carnage is utterly unacceptable. In the context of support for a reasonable balance of interests under the Second Amendment, we recognize and respect the right of Americans to own guns, and we are not seeking to undermine in any respect the right of law abiding Americans to own handguns and rifles for legitimate purposes such as hunting, self-defense, and sport, but we do not accept the current state of affairs. While we recognize the need to increase security at certain places of public and private gathering, we refuse to accept a dystopian environment where schools, houses of worship, community centers, shopping malls, theaters, and other venues are either in lockdown mode or where more guns are considered the preferred solution for public safety.” (see attached for the full resolution).

Throughout the decade the JCPA has supported a wide range of legislative efforts designed to limit unfettered access to firearms such as the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, commonly referred to as the Assault Weapons Ban. While public opinion polls indicate broad support for governmental restrictions on the availability of dangerous firearms, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress have all too often been hesitant to enact much needed gun legislation. Last year, after the shooting in San Bernardino on December 2, 2016, the JCPA started a national petition, which received **1016** signatures, calling on Congress, President Obama, and all citizens to support comprehensive action, including meaningful legislation to limit access to assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines, aggressive enforcement of firearm regulations, and strengthen social services that can help identify troubling behaviors and intercede when necessary.

JCRC Engagement on Gun Control Around the Country

Around the country, JCRCs have identified gun violence prevention measures as a key priority for their local communities. **Below is a brief overview of gun violence prevention activities and policies from a number of JCRC’s around the country.**

Boston

The JCRC issued a [statement](#) following the Orlando attack on June 12, 2016. The JCRC helped advocate for a successful 2014 Gun Violence Prevention Bill that requires universal background checks. After the Newtown shooting in 2012, the JCRC helped organize synagogues to connect with other faith communities and advocacy groups. Together with several organizations, the JCRC collaborated in

starting the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. Furthermore, the JCRC focuses on funding gun violence prevention programs and partnering with groups working on more systemic problems.

Chicago

The JCRC has a [10-point Gun Safety Policy](#), which passed overwhelmingly with one abstention in 1999. In an article, following the events in Orlando, the JCRC encouraged Congress to act on gun legislation and urged constituents to contact their elected officials. The JCRC also launched a petition following the shooting in Newtown which expresses the Jewish community's resolve to enact comprehensive reforms to end gun violence and ensure access to mental health care.

Detroit

The JCRC adopted a policy mirroring JCPA's 2013 Resolution on Preventing Mass Violence. The JCRC monitors legislation regarding guns in the state legislature, opposing legislation that is contrary to its policy and supporting that which is consistent with its policy. Detroit also participate in coalitions, educates the Jewish community about gun violence, and advocates for schools to teach peaceful conflict resolution at all grade levels. Currently, the JCRC is exploring joining a statewide coalition based in the state capital, Lansing, called the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.

Miami

The JCRC wrote letters in 2016 to Senators Rubio (R-FL) and Nelson (D-FL) sharing the JCPA's policy position supporting enhanced control of firearms.

Philadelphia

The JCRC released a statement and an action alert following the shooting in Orlando. In the statement they iterate the need for advocating for improved common sense gun laws. The JCRC works in partnership with Ceasefire PA who is devoted to promoting common sense legislation to curb gun violence. A letter was written to their two candidates for the U.S. Senate outlining key advocacy items. Further, the action alert urged JCRC members to contact his/her legislators in D.C. to promote five policy measures: Universal background checks for gun sales, a renewal and strengthening of the Assault Weapons Ban, a ban on high capacity magazines, banning firearms sales to individuals on the federal Terror Watch lists and prohibiting those convicted of misdemeanor hate crimes from purchasing firearms. They are working in collaboration with Women of Vision to hold a program entitled, "Taking Aim at Gun Violence: It's Impact on Our Jewish Community". On the 3rd anniversary of Sandy Hook, they distributed a call to action urging the state legislature to improve the background check system (by supporting HB 1010 and SB 1049) because no background check was/is required for those seeking to buy long guns (AR 15). A similar ask was directed at the federal level to strengthen background checks. The JCRC took part in organizing a rally and news conference (2013) to combat gun violence which took place on the first day of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The rally was cosponsored by Ceasefire PA and Heeding God's Call (an interfaith organization).

Pittsburgh

The JCRC released a press statement on the LGBT shooting in Orlando in 2016 in which they outlined three courses of action: promote understanding of the LGBT community in SW Pennsylvania; advocate on gun violence prevention locally and nationally while supporting the 2nd Amendment; work to educate the Greater Pittsburgh community on the difference between Islamic extremism and Islam.

Portland

The JCRC is a member of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Gun Violence and actively lobbied and testified in support of SB 941 (Oregon Firearms Safety Act). This bill requires universal background checks for firearm transfers, except between close relatives. In addition, the Alliance supported SB 525, which states that anyone who is the subject of a Family Abuse Protection Act may not possess a firearm or ammunition.

San Francisco

The JCRC has [Guidelines on Gun Control and Gun Violence](#) (1999). Most recently, in response to the massacre in Orlando—the worst mass shooting in U.S. history--JCRC enacted an ambitious social media campaign advocating for “[18 Days of Action Against Gun Violence](#).” #18days, as it became known on social media, offered participants 18 different actions and educational resources related to violence prevention and gun control. The approach garnered tens of thousands of impressions on social media and hundreds of direct interactions. It was also picked up for a story in the *J Weekly*, “[Bay Area Jewish groups push for gun control measures](#).”

Silicon Valley

The JCRC endorsed efforts to pass Measure C in the City of Sunnyvale, a local gun safety ordinance. Prior to its passage in 2013, the JCRC invited the Mayor of the City of Sunnyvale to its board meeting to discuss the Measure and the effects of its passage. In 2016, the JCRC has focused on supporting the Safe Cities Coalition, a local coalition of individuals, organizations, and faith-based congregations seeking to pass the similar gun safety provisions in the City of San Jose.

Southern New Jersey

The JCRC hosted a May 2016 roundtable discussion with political, civic and community leaders to discuss possible educational programs and advocacy efforts that our agency, in cooperation with other community organizations, could sponsor to continue to keep this societal issue on people’s radar. This issue is one that will be included in a prepared question during an upcoming Congressional Election Forum on October 1, 2016.

St. Louis

JCRC of St. Louis has a longstanding [policy](#) opposing conceal and carry, dating from March 1996, and a 2013 Gun Safety [resolution](#). The JCRC of St. Louis has engaged in extensive advocacy on this issue, primarily working to oppose bills and ballot initiatives that would (1) expand conceal and carry and/or (2) make it easier for individuals to lawfully own firearms, regardless of their potential threat to public safety. Most recently, on the last day of the 2016 legislative session, a bill passed that would expand the doctrine of Stand Your Ground and allow permitless carry. The JCRC contacted the Governor’s office urging a veto of the bill, which Governor Nixon vetoed in July 2016. The JCRC sent Action Alerts reaching over 750 individuals and participated in a rally at the State Capitol on September 14 (the state veto session) in an effort to sustain the veto. The JCRC of St. Louis works in coalition with like-minded groups, including the Missouri Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, the local chapter of the NCJW and with a local organization, Women’s Voices Raised for Social Justice. Other faith communities also have been involved, including the Catholic community.

Washington, D.C.

The JCRC has produced and continues to update their [statement on gun control](#) (1999 & 2011). Since 1975, they have consistently supported Federal and State gun control legislation and advocated for the most stringent regulations on the purchase, sale and possession of guns. Urging support for local, state

and national gun control organizations, they hosted a gun control briefing in 2013 to highlight their advocacy measures and take stock of the participants' positions.