

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Unveils Sweeping Gun Safety Package

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*Plan Includes \$10 Million Proposal for Community-Based Violence Intervention*

*Package Includes Proposals to Require Firearms Safety Training, Mandate Safe Storage of Firearms, Raise the Minimum Age to Purchase Long Guns to 21, and Establish Electronic Ammunition Sales Recordkeeping*

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today unveiled a sweeping series of reforms aimed at reducing the epidemic of gun violence. The proposals, when paired with previous steps the Governor and members of the Legislature have taken to reduce gun violence, will further solidify New Jersey's standing as a national leader in gun safety.

"Half of New Jersey's gun homicides occur in only five cities, and the number of gun crimes in these cities has skyrocketed over the last year," **said Governor Murphy**. "We cannot sit back when we know there is more to do to address the danger of gun violence in our communities. By taking the steps we are announcing today, we will further commit to making every block and every street in our state safer."

"Everyday gun violence is a constant burden and threat to the public health and well-being of our communities. To solve this problem, we need actions that are informed by research and data," **said Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. "The Gun Safety Package that Governor Murphy has set forth today lays the groundwork for interventions and programs that are designed to save lives and are backed by the necessary funding to help them succeed."

"The measures that Governor Murphy and partners in the Legislature are unveiling today would give us new tools and resources to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals, to combat illegal firearms trafficking, and to expand our violence intervention program," **said Attorney General Gurbir Grewal**. "These tools are essential to ensuring that New Jersey continues to do all that it can do to combat the continuing plague of gun violence. As New Jersey's chief law enforcement officer, my message to gun traffickers, distributors, and even manufacturers has been clear from day one: we will hold you accountable when you violate our laws."

"New Jersey law enforcement is always seeking ways to prevent gun violence before it happens, and the best way to accomplish this goal is through community-driven strategies where law enforcement work hand-in-hand with local government, faith-based leaders, and members of the community to create meaningful intervention programs," **said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police**. "Oftentimes, the greatest obstacle for implementing these strategies is lack of funding and support, which is why today's announcement is welcome news for a New Jersey law enforcement community that is eager to see its outreach programs realized."

In partnership with the Legislature, Governor Murphy has already taken significant steps to combat the epidemic of gun violence. Among other things, New Jersey has established a "red flag" law for gun violence protective orders; criminalized firearms trafficking; strengthened background checks; reduced the maximum capacity of ammunition magazines; banned "ghost guns;" and established the Rutgers Gun Violence Research Center to identify evidenced-based solutions to the gun violence crisis. Governor Murphy today announced support for the following additional reforms:

## **Funding Gun Violence Prevention Measures**

- **Increasing Violence Intervention Funding:** Cities and states across the country have been demonstrating that we can achieve rapid, sustained reductions in shootings by investing in evidence-based, community-driven strategies like group violence intervention, relationship-based street outreach, and hospital-based violence intervention programs. Though the FY2022 budget process, Governor Murphy proposes an additional \$10 million in funding for these initiatives in New Jersey.
- **Dedicating \$2 million to Rutgers GVRC:** Governor Murphy established the Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers University due to the federal government's failure to dedicate funding to research gun violence as the public health epidemic that it is. The Governor's FY2022 Budget proposal will dedicate \$2 million to help the DVRC collect much-needed data in this area.

## **Supporting Gun Violence Prevention Legislation**

- **Requiring Firearm Safety Training:** S-2169/A-5030 (Weinberg/Reynolds-Jackson) would modernize firearm ID cards, as well as require completion of a firearm safety course in order to receive a permit to purchase a gun or receive a firearm ID card. Connecticut, California, Hawaii, Illinois, Rhode Island, Maryland and the District of Columbia all have laws requiring individuals to undergo safety training prior to being able to purchase.
- **Mandating Safe Storage of Firearms:** Owning a firearm for protection in the home can present a substantial obstacle to safe firearm storage, with individuals often opting to keep weapons loaded and easily accessible. Last legislative session, the Assembly passed A-3696/S-2240 (Downey/Gopal) requiring firearm owners to store the firearm in a securely locked box or container; in a location where a reasonable person would believe to be secure; or to secure the firearm with a trigger lock.
- **Raising Minimum Age to Purchase Long Guns to 21:** Under current law, a person 18 years of age and older may obtain a firearms purchaser identification card and a handgun purchaser is required to be at least 21 years old. The bill (A-1141/S-3605, Freiman/Cryan) increases from 18 to 21 the age at which a person is eligible to receive a firearms purchaser identification card used to purchase shotguns and rifles but would still allow for those at least 18 to possess a long gun for purposes of hunting; military drills; competition; target practice; training; or under the supervision of a parent or guardian.
- **Promoting Microstamping Technology:** Microstamping technology provides law enforcement with the tools to quickly link firearm cartridge casings found at the scene of a crime to a specific firearm, without having to recover the firearm itself. The technology essentially creates a "license plate" on cartridge casings to identify the gun that was used to shoot the ammunition. Last legislative session, S-112/A-1098 (Weinberg/Downey)

will require within a year that firearm manufacturers incorporate this technology into new handgun sold in New Jersey.

- **Establishing Electronic Ammunition Sales Recordkeeping:** The State Commission of Investigation (SCI) issued a report in 2016 finding that straw purchases of ammunition were unchecked because firearm IDs lacked photo identification. The SCI also found that sales records were often hand-written into log books — a problem for law enforcement, which should be able to consult an electronic database when it investigates questionable ammunition purchases. A-1292/S-1481 (Greenwald/Weinberg) would require manufacturers or dealers of handgun ammunition to keep a detailed electronic record of ammunition sales, and report ammunition sales to the State Police.
- **Banning .50 Caliber Firearms:** Military-style .50 caliber rifles are banned or restricted in several other states. California has a complete ban on .50-caliber rifles, Connecticut bans specific models and Maryland has some restrictions. S-103/A-1280 (Gill/Greenwald) would revise the definition of "destructive device" under New Jersey law so that it includes weapons of .50 caliber or greater.
- **Closing Loophole for Importing Out-of-State Firearms:** Individuals who move to New Jersey from another state are allowed to bring their legally acquired guns with them without registering the guns according to New Jersey law. A-3686/S-372 (Vainieri Huttel/Cryan) would close this loophole by requiring firearm owners who move to New Jersey to obtain a firearm purchaser identification card (FPIC) and register their firearms within 30 days of residing in this State.
- **Holding the Gun Industry Accountable:** In New Jersey, almost 80% of guns used in crimes are originally purchased outside of the state. However, the gun industry has failed to take any steps to stem the flow of guns to the illegal market through gun shows, flea markets, straw purchasers, and theft. The industry has also failed to make its products safer and has engaged in unscrupulous marketing. A bill recently introduced in the New York Senate would hold gun manufacturers liable for the public harm they cause by amending the state's public nuisance laws to prohibit the gun industry from endangering the safety or health of the public through its sale, manufacturing, importing or marketing of guns. Governor Murphy proposes similar legislation.

#### **Additional Measures**

- **Regulating School Shooting Drills:** New Jersey schools currently are required to conduct active shooter exercises but guidelines are vague on how drills should be conducted. Governor Murphy proposes authorizing the Department of Education to establish trauma-informed and age-appropriate standards for lockdown drills including encouraging preparation over simulation; barring use of simulated gunshots; advanced notice to parents about planned drills; durational limits; training; and prohibiting rewarding children for fighting off potential gunmen during a drill.
- **Reconvening Historic "States for Gun Safety" Summit:** New Jersey was poised to host a multi-state summit in Newark last year on gun-safety issues — a first-of-its-kind event organized by a coalition of states that formed three years ago in response to persistent inaction on gun control at the federal level. The all-day summit was expected to draw governors and officials from New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The multi-state effort has involved a sharing of data among the member states, including the exchange of information about illegal trafficking and about those disqualified from owning firearms. Governor Murphy intends to reconvene the Summit in the Summer of 2021.
- **Announcing Nominations to the Personalized Handgun Authorization Commission:** Governor Murphy today announced that he will soon file nominations to the so-called "Smart Gun Commission." The commission aims to bring together industry experts, business representatives, and advocates for discussion of gun violence in New Jersey.

"The reduction of gun violence has been one of my top priorities in Congress," said **Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.** "I introduced the Safer Neighborhoods Gun Buyback Act in Congress to get states and communities the money they need to buy guns from gun owners and get them off the streets. I applaud Governor Murphy for his actions to reduce gun violence in New Jersey. We need to do everything we can to make our neighborhoods and communities safe."

"Gun violence is an epidemic that has stolen countless lives in our state and across the country," said **Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg.** "I am proud to have spent much of my career fighting for gun safety reforms but there is more work to be done. Today's gun safety package will save countless lives and I will help strongly advocate for its passage."

"Governor Murphy's announcement today continues to put New Jersey at the forefront nationwide for gun safety efforts," said **Senator Teresa Ruiz.** "Far too many lives have been needlessly taken in my district and across the state by the scourge of gun violence. We must do everything we can to not only save lives but also to create programs that will end the cycle of violence and fight back against this national epidemic."

"Governor Murphy's gun safety package represents the next step of common sense reforms that will keep New Jerseyans safe from gun violence," said **Assembly Majority Leader Lou Greenwald.** "No one should have to lose a family member, friend, or neighbor to senseless violence. These measures are needed and long overdue. I look forward to working with the Governor to keep New Jersey at the forefront of the national fight against gun violence."

"We have long stated that we cannot arrest our way out of gun violence, crime, and the tragedy it creates," said **Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka.** "In Newark, we have realized that this crisis is a public health issue, and continue to address it that way, reducing shootings through prevention. Our state and federal partners and leaders are realizing the same thing, and we are seeing this manifested today by Governor Murphy's comprehensive gun safety package. It will do much to improve safety, reduce violence, and save lives not only in Newark, but across New Jersey as a whole."

"The Newark Community Street Team applauds Governor Murphy's proposed investment in complimentary community-based public safety strategies to reducing violence when the state and country is experiencing a public safety and public health crisis," said **Newark Community Street Team Director Aqeela Sherrills.** "Reimagining public safety is not just a tag line in Newark, resident trained as public safety professional working in tandem with law enforcement has produced our lowest crime rate in 60 years! Public safety is a shared strategy and can't be done without the public. Safety is a shared strategy created in communities by the people who live there. I thank Governor Murphy for advocating for investment in community based solutions and employing resident based organization like The Newark Community Street Team to reduce violence and increase wellbeing in the neighborhoods they serve as a direct response to the reimagine public safety narrative."

"We applaud Governor Murphy for his leadership in gun violence prevention and taking this action to champion another comprehensive gun safety package. In a year where we have seen historic levels of gun violence, it is urgent that we come together to pass life-saving measures including mandating safe storage, increasing firearm safety training, and investing in violence intervention initiatives," said **Mark Barden, co-founder and managing director of Sandy Hook Promise, and father of Daniel who was killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy.** "We are proud to continue to work with New Jersey to protect children from violence by passing proven gun safety

laws and bringing our evidence-based Know the Signs programs to more schools.”

“We are proud to work with the Governor and New Jersey schools to protect children from gun violence, including bringing our life-saving Know the Signs programs statewide. As schools implement their emergency preparedness plans, including active shooter drills, it is critical that all of these initiatives are evidence-based, account for diverse needs, and do not harm or traumatize students,” **continued Darden**. “That’s why we commend the state for taking action to require any active shooter drill policies to prioritize a safe and supportive school environments and the mental wellbeing of all students.”

“We are on the verge of a new era of public safety in which it’s clear that traditional law enforcement can no longer be the single point of contact for safety in communities,” **said Will Simpson, director of violence reduction initiatives for Equal Justice USA**. “This is crucial as gun violence continues to rise around the country. We must invest in proven community-based violence intervention and prevention models that treat violence like the public health issue that it is and that expand the public safety ecosystem to truly include the public. Governor Murphy’s announcement marks an important step in that shift.”

“New Jersey, like the country as a whole, has been plagued by gun violence for too long,” said **Shani Nuckols, a volunteer with New Jersey Moms Demand Action**. “Our communities have felt this epidemic deeply, from the tragedy of mass shootings to the daily scourge of gun violence. The governor’s action today is another comprehensive step towards tackling gun violence in all its forms, and if passed would make New Jersey a safer place.”

“This is more than thoughts and prayers, this is robust and life-saving action” said **Laurence Fine, Student Leader with Bergen County SDA and a member of the Students Demand Action National Advisory Board**. “Governor Murphy’s sweeping package will help prevent gun violence and, most importantly, save lives. We thank the governor for taking these important actions and urge the legislature to follow his lead and prioritize the passage of these laws to protect our communities.”

“We applaud Governor Murphy for championing these comprehensive and ambitious actions to prevent gun violence and confirm New Jersey’s place as a national leader on gun safety,” said **Nick Suplina, Managing Director of Law and Policy at Everytown for Gun Safety**. “These policies will help address the crisis of gun violence and the problems New Jerseyans face every day, from city gun violence to firearm suicide. I cannot emphasize enough how important this package would be for New Jersey communities and I hope lawmakers waste no time in voting these bills into law.”

“Thank you Governor Murphy for making an investment to support the community based intervention efforts that have gone uncompensated and unrecognized for far too long. We in Paterson are facing a public health crisis in regards to violence and our residents in areas most plagued by these tragedies deserve a great deal of resources and support to address the trauma they have faced,” **said Dr. Liza Chowdhury, Project Director at Paterson Healing Collective**. “Since we have opened our doors here at Paterson Healing Collective, we’ve had the honor of supporting over 40 survivors of violence and providing them with mentorship, therapeutic services, housing stability, ID’s, advocacy and emergency food resources. Efforts that address social determinants of violence and provide community-based love and care are examples of public safety. They deserve consistent sustainable infrastructure and political support. Thank you to the several grass roots leaders and advocates who have continued putting their lives on the front line to make sure their community is safe. Today marks the future of public safety investment for the state of New Jersey and I am honored to be a part of this momentous occasion.”

“It is encouraging to see to community based violence prevention included in this important legislation,” **said Steven Campos, Community Resource Director for Hudson Partnership CMO**. “Cities are experiencing an overwhelming amount trauma and communities need the resources in order to work on healing and prevention.”

“New Jersey leaders understand our work to stop gun violence is not over,” **said Nico Bocour, Government Affairs Director at Giffords**. “The legislation introduced today is the most comprehensive package championed this year and will make the Garden State’s gun laws even stronger. That’s good news for families and communities concerned about the ongoing gun violence crisis. We applaud New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, and leaders in New Jersey for demonstrating what it means to have the courage to act to prevent gun violence.”

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