

Town of Westfield

Westfield, New Jersey

PROCLAMATION

National Gun Violence Awareness Day ~ June 2, 2016

WHEREAS, the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence issued the grade of A- to the State of New Jersey and consistently ranks it in the top 3 of all states for having strong guns laws in place without compromising 2nd Amendment rights; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey could well serve as a model for other states as its compendium of laws include, but is not limited to: requiring permits for the purchase of any handgun, as well as a separate permit for persons purchasing long guns, both of which require a background check prior to issuance; prohibiting the possession and transfer of assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines; prohibiting the purchase or possession of a firearm by persons convicted of a felony, by persons accused of domestic violence offenses, and by persons subject to protective orders; requiring the licensing of all firearms dealers and their employees; limiting the number of handguns that may be purchased to one per month; imposing a 7-day waiting period prior to the physical transfer of a handgun; requiring firearm owners to report the loss or theft of their firearms; requiring all firearms dealers and ammunition sellers to maintain records of all acquisitions and dispositions of firearms and ammunition; prohibiting the purchase by any person who has ever been committed for a mental disorder to any hospital, mental institution or sanitarium unless he or she possesses a certificate of a medical doctor or psychiatrist licensed to practice in New Jersey or other satisfactory proof that they are no longer suffering from a mental disorder which interferes with or handicaps him or her in the handling of a firearm; and with the restrictions placed on how guns may be sold, rendering gun shows in New Jersey to be nonexistent; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has established the “KeepSafe” program to encourage any person who purchases a firearm from a retail dealer to purchase a trigger locking device compatible with the firearm purchased and to require the dealer to prominently post signage regarding safe storage of all firearms and ammunition. Further, New Jersey law provides that under certain circumstances, “[a] person who knows or reasonably should know that a minor is likely to gain access to a loaded firearm at a premises under the person’s control” is criminally liable if a minor gains access to a firearm; and

WHEREAS, research suggests that strong gun laws are associated with lower gun death rates as 7 of the 10 states with the strongest gun laws also have the lowest gun death rates, including New Jersey ranked #5 in the top 10 states with the lowest gun death rates; and

WHEREAS, according to the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, based on information from the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”), more than 32,000 American deaths per year are associated with guns, approximately two-thirds of which are attributable to suicides, 35% attributable to homicides, and the remainder characterized as unintentional; and

WHEREAS, while the rate of firearm homicide has steadily declined over the past decade, the firearm suicide rate is rising, increasing 13% between 2007 and 2013, and therefore, according to the Brady Center To Prevent Violence, “we cannot make meaningful progress in reducing gun violence if suicide is not a significant focus of prevention efforts.”; and

WHEREAS, a recent letter to the chairs of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees signed by over 100 medical and public health groups representing over a million members calls for the end to the recurring rider language restricting gun violence research and to provide funding for research at the CDC to answer three critical questions: What is the best way to protect toddlers from accidentally firing a firearm? What are the most effective ways to prevent gun-related suicides? And, how are the different states’ policies around safe storage, mental health, public education, and background checks impacting firearms injuries and deaths?; and

WHEREAS, although New Jersey has long had many of what safety advocates refer to as “smart” gun laws on the books, it is understood that gun safety laws matter beyond a state’s borders and gun violence - be it criminal, suicidal, or accidental in nature - affects the well-being of all Americans and all communities; and

WHEREAS, on January 29, 2013, Hadiya Pendleton, a 15-year-old honor student who dreamed of being a pharmacist, was shot in the back and killed while standing with friends taking refuge from the rain in a Chicago park after taking final exams at King College Prep High School. Prosecutors concluded that it was gang related shooting and a case of mistaken identity. Miss Pendleton’s friends and classmates channeled their grief into action by creating “Project Orange Tree” and in her honor encouraged everyone to wear orange, the colors hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves. Inspired by Ms. Pendleton’s friends and classmates, “Wear Orange” was launched in 2015 and June 2, what would have been Miss Pendleton’s 18th birthday, was designated by the organization as National Gun Violence Awareness Day; and

WHEREAS, Nicole Hockley, a mother who lost her beloved first-grader at the unspeakable tragedy in Newtown and one of the founders of the Sandy Hook Promise, so poignantly stated, “I can’t think of anybody who is pro-gun violence, so to have one day that recognizes all those lives that are lost every year to gun violence helps us all to reaffirm the right we have to life.”; and

WHEREAS, the Sandy Hook Promise, “strongly believes in upholding the rights of gun owners – we do not support bans on firearms or believe the sole cause of gun violence is the gun” and whereas the Sandy Hook Promise Action Fund, “advocates for the creation and enforcement of existing gun violence prevention laws, policy and regulations in the areas of: Mental Health and Wellness – identification, intervention and help for individuals who may want to hurt themselves or others; Gun Safety – ensuring that those who should not have access to a firearm are restricted and that all firearms are kept safe and secure; Gun Lethality – reduction in lethality of firearms – specifically in the area of magazine size [New Jersey law restricts ammunition magazines to 15]; and Research – funding needs to be provided for research to identify evidenced-based policy and non-policy programs.”; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Westfield agrees with Ms. Hockley that, “Nobody is pro-gun violence...”;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that I, Mayor Andrew K. Skibitsky, do hereby designate Thursday, June 2, 2016 as *Gun Violence Awareness Day* in the Town of Westfield.



Andrew K. Skibitsky