

OPINION

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

K-9 NEWS



BEN FISHEL

Red flag laws can help prevent the next mass shooting

Reps. Salud Carbajal and Lucy McBath

Special to USA TODAY

Before the recent mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, there were warning signs. Before the attack in Parkland, Florida, there was a dangerous YouTube channel and multiple FBI tips from friends and strangers alike. Before Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech and Columbine, there were prior threats against family members and students,

And beyond these most infamous attacks on our schools, research shows that time and time again, a shooter has told someone their plans before they carry them out. Someone knows the shooter has weapons. Someone knows the shooter was filled with violent thoughts, or even that a person is thinking of taking their own life. But too often, despite someone knowing, families and law enforcement officers are powerless to do anything about it.

That is why, in the wake of another tragic shooting of schoolchildren in our nation, the House will vote to advance measures we've written that promote a bipartisan and data-backed solution that can curb gun violence and keep our communities safe: extreme risk protection orders, otherwise known as red flag laws.

What are red flag laws?

Extreme risk protection orders allow judges, via a petition from loved ones or law enforcement, to restrict individuals from acquiring or possessing a firearm when these warning signs constitute a threat to themselves or others.

This isn't a new idea. Federal law already prevents individuals with certain criminal convictions or histories of mental illness from purchasing firearms. But there are well-documented loopholes to those restrictions, and they do not take into account crises that could develop after a purchase.

That is why we have both proposed legislation – which the House will vote on this week – to create a process for extreme risk protection orders at the federal level, incentivize states without these laws to set them up and support the 19 states and Washington, D.C., that already have them on the books to ensure their existing laws are protecting their citizens.

There is a history of support from both parties on these solutions to protect communities from violent attacks and reduce rates of suicide – with Republican and Democratic states, from Florida to California, implementing red flag laws after attacks on their schools.

The club no family ever wants to be a part of

Gun violence affects every family in every community. No one is immune to this, and we are no different.

One of us lost a son to gun violence. Jordan Davis was just 17 years old when he was murdered by a man with hate in his heart who didn't like the “loud music” that he and his friends were playing. And across the country, far too many parents are being forced to bury their babies. It is the club no family ever wants to be a part of.

The other, at age 12, found his older sister, Carmen Carbajal, after she took her own life using a firearm owned by their family – one of the tens of thousands of Americans who die by suicide using a gun every year, making up more than half of all U.S. gun deaths in recent decades.

As advocates in our communities, we've seen veterans, active-duty military service members and others whose support networks have known they were struggling but remained powerless to help.

That's why we have championed extreme risk protection orders in Congress – because we know the devastating loss that gun violence can have on any family in America, and we know that red flag laws can help prevent it.

After the Parkland school shooting in 2018, Florida's Republican legislature implemented its red flag law. And law enforcement officials have used extreme risk laws more than 8,000 times to restrict and remove firearms from dangerous situations with known threats of violence and suicide, undoubtedly saving countless lives in the process.

For the sake of thousands of lives

After a man with a wide range of warning signs killed six at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2014, California implemented a red flag law that has since been used to prevent mass shootings at workplaces and in hundreds of other instances of threatened violence. And in other states, like Indiana and Connecticut, passage of a red flag law was followed by a notable decline in suicide by firearm.

That is why red flag laws have received support from Senate Republicans, law enforcement officials, teachers, doctors and gun safety advocates.

The vast majority of Americans support these measures that have already been shown to reduce gun violence. And by getting these measures signed into law, we can increase awareness of these emergency orders that can help more families and officers intervene to prevent tragedy.

For the sake of the thousands of lives that we have lost to gun violence, including those in our own lives, we fight to get these measures to President Joe Biden's desk.

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and lobbying has resisted gun control for decades.

1 Request assault weapon owners to voluntarily surrender their assault weapons and pay them a reasonable sum for a period of one year.

2 Thereafter, make possession of assault weapons by anyone other than military and policing agencies illegal, punishable to confiscation of the weapons, a suitable fine and, if constitutionally appropriate, criminal sanction of incarceration.

Stan Sanoff, Palm Desert

They're just as guilty

Do not think for one minute that Republican lawmakers can just talk their way out of the carnage that took place in Texas. Twenty-two killed at the hands of an 18-year-old that was allowed to purchase an assault rifle.

Gov. Greg Abbott and all those Republican lawmak-

EDITORIAL THE DESERT SUN

Finally, a new sign of hope for the valley's own university

For decades, community leaders across the valley have been pushing for our own four-year university.

We don't have one yet, but a deal just reached by state lawmakers is a big step toward that dream, and one we're glad to see.

Senate and Assembly members said last week they've agreed to budget \$59 million to build a long-sought 23,000-square-foot student center at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus.

Assuming it survives review by Gov. Gavin Newsom and final tinkering by lawmakers, the center would help make the case even stronger for a true Cal State Palm Desert. (Or Cal State Coachella Valley, anyone?)

Any decision on a standalone university is still years away.

Regardless, the student center would be good news for the valley and make for a better college experience at that Palm Desert campus – whatever it's eventually called.

Up until now, four-year higher education in the valley has been a do-it-yourself affair, quite literally: According to CSUSB's own history, the first Palm Desert campus dean registered students out of the trunk of her car.

That was in the 1980s, when the campus started on land leased from College of the Desert.

In 1994, the city of Palm Desert donated 55 acres so CSUSB could have its own desert campus. Another 114 acres from the city came in 2015.

Over 30 years after this mission began, most of that land is still empty. And the four things built so far, a theater and three classroom buildings, were paid for with millions of dollars raised from community donors.

Now the governor and Legislature could finally be starting to do their part.

And if the state doesn't make this kind of commitment this year, when it has a budget surplus nearing \$100 billion, when will it ever?

CSUSB Palm Desert has about 1,900 full-time students, and the new center could help get that number to 4,000, supporters have said. It would include an expanded library, a bookstore and room for tutoring, mentoring, studying and more.

Having a strong four-year university is important to the desert for two related reasons.

First and most importantly, it provides more educational opportunities for residents, especially those from lower-income families and communities of color. Students at CSUSB's Palm Desert Campus are almost 70% Latino and just 10% white.

Second, it could help keep people in the valley, contributing to the educated workforce of the future. A significant number of young people leave the valley for college, and some never move back.

Assuming it wins the funding, the opening of the student center is likely still years away, given the usual slow pace of planning, review and construction at a public college. And while we're pleased at this news, it remains frustrating that progress on a valley university has been so slow and halting.

The two Assembly members who've most vocally pushed the student center, independent Chad Mayes and Democrat Eduardo Garcia, also tried to win funding last year. First they asked for \$100 million, then \$40 million – but they got nothing.

During an April kickoff for the latest funding push, Mayes said he's been trying to get state money for a standalone valley campus for his entire eight years in the Legislature.

One of the major differences this year, he and Garcia said, is that CSUSB's top leaders are fully on board in the request for student center funding.

It also can't hurt that two years ago, the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership and the city of Palm Desert created a new nonprofit, Priority One Coachella Valley, to push for a standalone campus.

That kind of unified front is what officials across the valley need to keep presenting if they want to win a desert university one day. One day soon, we hope.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Talking around the real answer

The media is filled with suggestions from many so-called experts about raising age limits and requiring background checks before anyone can purchase a firearm.

No doubt these changes would partially mitigate mass killings and other homicides. But they would not have enough effect to substantially make us reasonably safe from mass shooters. Too few reports articulate the real remedy we need: Make it extremely difficult to acquire assault weapons.

Except for military and policing forces, possession of assault weapons should be eliminated from society as much as possible. Congress needs to get its act together, pass legislation as follows and overcome the influence of the NRA, which by payment to legislators

ers in Texas are just as guilty of murder as that 18-year-old. Listening to Abbott's press conference sickened me as they all talked around the reason such tragedies happen.

The laws in Texas allow some people to buy guns without background checks, and they allow most adults to carry a gun openly.

How in God's name can anyone justify those types of laws? Unfortunately, we also have problems here in California. We need tougher gun laws that will not allow anyone to purchase an assault weapon, no matter what age.

The NRA was established to promote good marksmanship, but somewhere along the way they became an organization that throws money at politicians to keep guns in the hands of anyone just for profit.

The only way to stop this is to stop electing officials that support these ridiculous laws.

Roxie Bivinetto, Palm Desert

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