

Silence the Violence

Ms. Richards' 3rd Hour
Estrella Middle School
2025-2026 Project Citizen Submission

Introduction to the Problem



Our class chose to address gun violence because it is a big issue that impacts many of our families and our community as a whole. **Gun violence has had a big impact on Phoenix and the people who live there. Over the past few years, the number** of shootings and gun-related deaths has increased in some areas. Reports have shown that homicides and gun violence in Phoenix have risen by about 44% during certain time periods. Even more concerning, “In 2024, the rate of gun-related deaths in Arizona was 33% higher than the overall rate of gun-related deaths in the US.” This shows that the problem is not just local, but statewide. When violence goes up, families lose loved ones, and many people feel unsafe in their own neighborhoods.

One report said, “According to court paperwork, multiple witnesses claimed that the two boys met up the day before the stabbing, where Montoya robbed Aguilar of a firearm. One witness said that Aguilar and his twin brother ‘made statements to murder the victim after the robbery,’ investigators said.” This shows how conflicts involving guns can quickly become serious and lead to deadly situations, even if a gun is not actually fired. Deaths due to gun violence do not always mean someone pulled the trigger. Even if a gun is not fired, having a gun involved can make a situation more dangerous. Deaths connected to gun violence do not always mean that shots were fired at that moment, sometimes a gun is part of the conflict, and the situation leads to other violent actions Overall, gun violence brings fear, sadness, and stress to the community, and many people in Phoenix are working hard to make their city safer for everyone..

Introduction to the Problem



Poverty- Poverty is more than a lack of money; it is a condition that limits access to basic needs like food, education, healthcare, and safe housing, shaping nearly every aspect of a person's life. People living in poverty often face daily stress and uncertainty, making it harder to plan for the future or break cycles of disadvantage. It can affect children especially deeply, influencing their health, learning opportunities, and long-term potential. While poverty exists in every country, it is not inevitable—its causes are tied to economic inequality, limited opportunities, and social policies. Addressing poverty requires not only immediate support but also long-term solutions that create fair access to resources, education, and decent work. Poverty can make people be homeless and have health issues increasing the homeless population.

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Economic Hardship - Gun violence has many causes, and one factor often discussed is economic hardship. As the quote explains, **“Lack of good employment — Unemployment (or underemployment) plays a big role in poverty and income inequality,”** which can increase stress, limit opportunities, and make some communities feel trapped without safe paths forward. When people struggle to find stable, well-paying jobs, neighborhoods may experience higher levels of financial pressure and fewer resources like education programs, youth activities, and mental health support. These conditions can contribute to conflict, crime, and a greater risk of violence, including gun violence. While unemployment is not the only cause—since issues like access to firearms, community support systems, and social environments also matter—it is an important piece of the larger picture researchers and policymakers examine when looking for long-term solutions. Living in a community with poverty can lead others to do bad because they might be educated by others to do bad like gangs this can lead to people's deaths which could be from guns.

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Domestic Violence- Domestic violence and anger may lead to gun violence because when a person can't control their emotions, arguments can turn dangerous fast especially if a gun is nearby. In many domestic violence situations, the abuser already wants power and control, and anger makes them more likely to act without thinking. If they feel disrespected, jealous, or rejected, they may react in a violent way to get back at the other person. That's why domestic violence is often connected to shootings in homes, because the violence usually starts with anger and threats then escalates into gun violence when the person chooses a weapon that can kill instantly. Also, guns make it easier for someone to seriously hurt or kill another person in just seconds. This is why controlling anger and getting help early can prevent violence from b

Introduction to the Problem



Growing up around gun violence – Can increase the chances of more gun violence because it can start to feel normal or unavoidable. When kids regularly see shootings or hear gunfire, they may learn to solve problems with fear or force instead of communication. Constant exposure can also cause stress, trauma, and anger, which can affect decision-making and increase risky behavior. Without strong support systems, safe spaces, and positive role models, violence can repeat across generations, creating a cycle that is hard to break.



Introduction to the Problems



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Bullying- Students who are bullied in school are more likely to have access to a loaded gun than their peers, causing an increased risk for youth violence and self-harm, according to new research. Bullying can play a serious role in increasing the risk of gun violence among young people because it can cause strong feelings like anger, loneliness, and sadness. When students are bullied over and over, they may feel ignored or trapped and start thinking that violence is the only way to be heard. This danger is shown in research that says, “**Students who are bullied in school are more likely to have access to a loaded gun than their peers, causing an increased risk for youth violence and self-harm, according to new research.**” This shows that bullying is not just hurtful behavior, but a serious safety issue. Schools and families need to work together to stop bullying early and make sure students feel safe, supported, and comfortable asking for help.

Introduction to the Problem



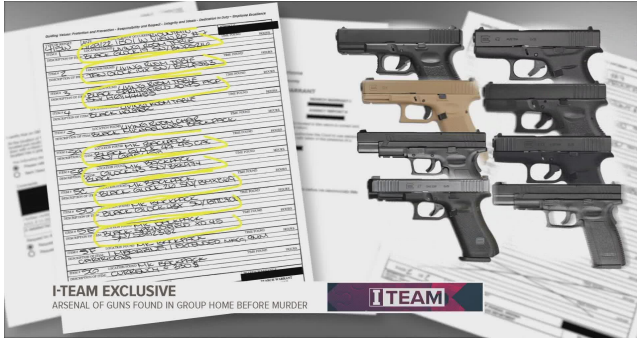
- **Access To Guns** - Gun violence is a serious issue in the United States, especially when it comes to children's safety at home. As one alarming fact shows, **"in the United States, 2,600,000 children live in homes with unlocked firearms that are stored loaded or with ammunition."** This means millions of kids are at risk of accidental injury or death simply because guns are not stored safely. When firearms are left unlocked or loaded, children can easily find them, even if adults believe they are being careful. This shows how Promoting safe gun storage, such as using locks and keeping guns unloaded, is an important step in reducing gun-related injuries and protecting children's lives. Guardians have a responsibility to make their homes safer for kids. Taking small actions can help prevent accidents and save lives. Simple choices today can protect children and prevent incidents in the future.

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Gun Availability- Gun availability is often discussed as a major factor contributing to violence in society. As stated, “Gun availability is a cause because the availability of guns increases the risk of violence because most anyone could get one.” When firearms are easy to access, conflicts that might otherwise remain non-violent can escalate more quickly and become more dangerous. The widespread presence of guns can also increase the likelihood that individuals who are untrained, impulsive, or acting in anger may use deadly force. Because of this, many researchers and policymakers argue that understanding and addressing gun availability is an important step in reducing rates of violent incidents. Guns are really easy to get in a lot of places and that can be scary because not everyone should have one. I think there should be more rules to make sure only responsible people can buy guns.

Introduction to the Problem



- The overall gun death rate increased by 37% in 2023 compared to 2014.
- Arizona had the 14th highest gun death rate in the country in 2023.
- Firearms were the leading cause of death among young people ages 1-17 in 2023.
- In 2022, there were at least 119 domestic violence-related homicides in Arizona. Nearly two-thirds (65%) were by firearm.
- <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/data/state-gun-violence-data/arizona>

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An estimated 1.3 thousand people in 2024, the most recent year for which data is available. This includes homicides, suicides, accidents, and other incidents where a shooting was considered the primary cause of death.

To understand how frequently these deaths happen, it helps to look at the rate at which they occur. In 2024, about 17.3 out of every 100,000 people in Arizona died from a gun-related injury. For context, around 15.9 out of every 100,000 people in Arizona died in a motor vehicle accident that year.

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In 2024, an estimated 1.3K people died from gun-related injuries In 2024, an estimated 17.3 people per 100K died from gun-related injuries Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2024, the rate of gun-related deaths in Arizona was 33% higher than the overall rate of gun-related deaths in the US. In 2024, the gun death rate was 33% higher in Arizona than in the US.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The CDC also reports the intent behind gun-related deaths when known. These intents can include homicide and suicide, as well as other categories like accidents and law enforcement intervention. [Subscribe to get unbiased, data-driven insights sent to your inbox weekly](#) In 2024, 95% of gun-related deaths in Arizona were either suicides or homicides. That year, about 70% of the state's gun-related deaths were suicides.

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Arizona had the 14th highest gun death rate in the country in 2023.

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Families impacted by gun violence speak out Valley family has lost two teenagers to gun violence in recent years. By: Ashley Holden Posted 6:47 PM, Jun 07, 2022 and last

updated 7:55 PM, Jun 07, 2022 PHOENIX — Gun violence is impacting many families here in the Valley. Now, least eight teens have been shot in less than two weeks in [Phoenix](https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/data/state-gun-violence-data/arizona). <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/data/state-gun-violence-data/arizona>

Community Disagreement about the Impact of Gun Violence In Phoenix

People in Phoenix disagree about how gun violence affects their community because some feel scared and think crime is getting worse, while others believe it only happens in certain areas and isn't as serious as it seems. Many students say gun violence makes them feel nervous walking home and worried about their family's safety. Some people think stricter laws and more police will fix the problem, while others believe programs and support for families would help more.

Impact of Gun Violence in Phoenix

- Gun violence in **Phoenix** hurts a lot of families and can lead to people getting seriously injured or killed.
- It makes people feel scared in their own neighborhoods.
- Kids and teens might feel unsafe at school or walking outside.
- Families who lose someone to gun violence can feel sad and stressed for a long time.
- Police and hospitals have to work really hard when there are shootings.
- The city has to spend a lot of money to deal with the damage and try to stop more violence.
- Businesses can lose customers if people don't feel safe going out.
- Seeing or hearing about violence can affect young people's mental health.
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Current Policies on Gun Violence in Phoenix

- [Assault Weapon and High-Capacity Magazine Bans:](#)
- [Safe Storage Laws \(CAP Laws\)](#)
- [Minimum Age Requirements](#)
- [Waiting Periods](#)
- [Extreme Risk Protection Orders \(ERPOs\)](#)
- [Community Violence Intervention \(CVI\) Programs](#)

Disagreements about current gun policies in AZ

Some disagreements about the current policies:

- *Arizona law makes police sell guns taken in crimes, even murder weapons. Some say this is unsafe and hurts families. Lawmakers want to change it so these guns can be destroyed.*

There's a debate about crime guns. **John Kavanagh** wants to change a 2013 law that makes police resell them, saying it's wrong to resell weapons used in violent crimes.

Advocates say **Arizona** doesn't do enough to stop people under domestic violence protection orders from having guns, because judges decide the rule instead of there being an automatic ban.

Since 2010, **Arizona** has let adults carry hidden guns without needing a permit.

In Arizona, there are:



322,354

Active concealed weapon permits



4,041

Suspended permits.



1,205

Revoked permits.

Data as of Oct. 15, 2017.

Source: Arizona Department of Public Safety

Graphic created by: Owen Baldner/Cronkite News



Why should government be involved in reducing gun violence.

The government should be involved in gun violence because it is their job to keep people safe. When there are too many shootings, people get hurt or killed, and families and communities suffer. The government can make laws that help control who can buy guns and make sure they are used safely. They can also fund programs that teach kids about violence and help people solve problems without fighting. If the government does nothing, gun violence can keep getting worse. That is why it is important for leaders to take action and protect the public.



Which level of government is the best to address the issue of gun violence in Arizona?

The **state government of Arizona** is probably the best level to address gun violence because it makes the main gun laws for the state. Arizona can decide rules about who can carry guns, where guns are allowed, and what the penalties are for breaking the law.

However, local governments like cities can help by creating community programs to prevent violence, and the federal government can pass national laws and provide funding. Overall, the state government has the most direct power to make changes in Arizona

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Alternative Policies Introduction

We considered policies to address this problem.

- Waiting Period
- Background Checks

Alternative one Waiting Period

What do waiting periods for guns look like they look like

1. A set number of days

Some states make you wait **1–10 days** after you start the purchase.

Example: A state might require **3 days** to pass before the buyer can take the gun home.

2. Applies to certain types of guns

Some states apply waiting periods to:

- **All firearms**
- Only **handguns**
- Only **semi-automatic rifles**, etc.

3. Purpose of the wait

Waiting periods are meant to:

- Give time for a **background check** to be fully completed
- Create a **“cooling-off” period** to prevent impulsive violence or self-harm



Alternative one



Pros

- *Reduction in Suicide*
- *Reduction in Homicides*
- *Time for Background Checks*
- *Broad Public Support*
- *No Restrictions on Ownership*

Cons

- *Delay self-defense.*
- *Inconvenience legal buyers.*
- *Criminals may ignore the law.*
- *Same rule for everyone, even previous owners.*
- *May not fully prevent violence.*



Alternative Two- background checks

In the United States, background checks are required when someone buys a gun from a licensed gun store. This rule comes from federal law and uses a system called NICS to make sure the person is allowed to have a gun. The background check looks for things like serious criminal records.

Some states have stronger laws than the federal government. States like California, Colorado, and New York require background checks for almost all gun sales, even if the gun is sold by a private person instead of a store. This helps close what people call the “gun show loophole.”

Other states only follow the federal rule. In those states, private gun sales usually do not require a background check. Because of this, gun laws can be very different depending on what state you live in.

Alternative 2



Pros

- Reduces Violence: Background checks help keep guns out of the hands of criminals, potentially reducing homicide and suicide rates.
- Blocks Illegal Sales: Since 1994, the NICS system has prevented over 3.5 million sales to prohibited persons.
- Deters Trafficking: State-level checks can reduce [interstate gun trafficking](#).

Cons

Incomplete Data: The system relies on accurate reporting, which may not always include all disqualifying criminal or mental health records.

- Loophole Exploitation: Prohibited buyers may bypass checks through private, unlicensed, or online sales.
- Delays for Law-Abiding Citizens: [Mandatory waiting periods](#) can delay self-defense needs.



Analysis

At first we considered using background checks to address our problem because they can help prevent people with dangerous histories from getting firearms. However, we chose not to focus on that solution because background checks mainly apply when someone is buying a gun, and our concern is about gun owners who already have firearms stored unsafely where children can access them. We also considered using waiting periods as a possible solution to help address our problem because they can give people more time to think before making a serious decision. However, we ultimately decided not to choose this option because we felt it would not fully solve the root of the issue and might create delays for people who need timely solutions.



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Our Class Policy

Our class policy is to hold gun owners responsible if they leave firearms where children can easily access them. We believe adults should safely store guns to help prevent accidents, injuries, and deaths. An example of a law that supports this idea is the Child Access Prevention laws (CAP) law. CAP laws make it illegal for gun owners to leave firearms unsecured if a child could get to them. If a child gains access because the gun was not properly locked up, the owner can face legal consequences. This policy is not about taking away guns, but about making sure they are stored safely to protect kids and the community.

Daniela and Marlen

YOUTH CRIME

7-year-old boy injured after shooting gun inside Glen Burnie classroom

Eight-year-old boy arrested after loaded gun found at Fort Mohave Elementary School

CHICAGO CRIME

Child dies after finding gun in sister's purse in accidental Kenwood shooting

Home » Anne Arundel County, MD News » Child hospitalized after gun...

This article is about 3 weeks old

Child hospitalized after gun goes off in Anne Arundel Co. elementary school

8-year-old boy finds gun, shoots 7-year-old boy inside Humboldt Park home: CPD

Boy, 8, allegedly brought gun to school, threatened teacher in northwestern AZ

11-year-old shot and killed while playing with brother's gun in Newburgh, source says

2 students arrested, accused of bringing handgun to Colorado Springs-area school

The Benefits of *Restricting Gun Access* for Kids



Benefits of our Law

Laws that restrict gun access to kids have many important benefits.

- First, they help keep kids safe. Most young people are still learning how to make good choices, so having easy access to a gun can be very dangerous. These laws help prevent accidents and serious injuries by making sure guns are kept away from minors or locked up safely.
- Second, these laws can reduce violence in schools and neighborhoods. If kids cannot easily get guns, arguments or fights are less likely to turn into something deadly. This helps students feel safer at school and in their community.
- Third, gun safety laws remind adults to be responsible. Parents and guardians are more likely to store guns safely when there are clear rules. This protects their own children and other kids who might visit their home.
- Overall, laws that limit gun access for kids help protect young people, lower violence, and make communities safer for everyone.

Drawbacks of laws against gun access for kids

1. **Limits on family choices** – Some families feel it's their responsibility, not the government's, to decide how to store and handle firearms in their homes.
2. **Enforcement challenges** – It can be hard for police to know if guns are stored safely inside private homes unless something bad happens.
3. **Punishing responsible owners** – Some people argue that careful gun owners may feel unfairly targeted by strict laws, even if they already keep firearms locked and secure.
4. **Costs of compliance** – Safe storage devices like lockboxes or safes can cost money, and some families may struggle to afford them.
5. **Different state rules** – Laws can vary by state, which can cause confusion about what is allowed and what is required.

Even though these concerns are mentioned, many supporters of these laws argue that protecting kids and preventing accidents is the most important goal. If you want, I can also help you write a balanced paragraph that includes both pros and cons.

Drawbacks of our law

Hard to Prove Responsibility

It can be difficult to prove that someone knowingly allowed another person to get a gun illegally. This can make court cases complicated and sometimes unfair if there isn't clear evidence.

Punishing Honest Mistakes

Some people may not realize a family member or friend would misuse a gun. Strict laws might punish people who did not intend for harm to happen.

Fear of Reporting

People might be scared to report a stolen gun or suspicious behavior if they think they could get in trouble themselves. This could make it harder for law enforcement to prevent crimes.



Examples of Laws...

California – Requires guns to be stored safely. Adults can get in trouble if a child gets access.

Texas – It's illegal to make a firearm accessible to a child under 17.

Florida – Adults must store guns securely if kids under 16 could access them.

New York – Requires safe storage in homes where minors live.



Constitutionality

Our proposed policy does not break any constitutional rights:

Our proposed policy does not break any of the 10 amendments. Actually, the Bill of rights state plenty of reasons supporting our case.

- This does not break the 2nd Amendment because it does not take away gun rights, just requires safe storage.
- The **Ninth Amendment to the United States Constitution** protects rights not specifically listed, but courts say rights can still have reasonable limits for safety.
- The **Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution** gives states the power to make their own laws if the Constitution doesn't give that power to the federal government. Gun safety laws are usually made by states, so they are allowed.

These are just some of the Bill of Rights supporting our case. We are not the only ones using these though, people in court cases agree with our case and can use these Amendments themselves.

Constitutionality

Our proposed policy does not break any constitutional rights- here

It is constitutional to make a law that says guns must be locked up and kept away from kids because the government's job is to keep people safe.

The Second Amendment gives people the right to have guns, but that right is not unlimited. In **District of Columbia v. Heller**, the Supreme Court of the United States said people have the right to own guns, but the government can still make reasonable rules about them. That means laws that protect safety are allowed.

A law that makes people lock up their guns helps stop accidents and keeps kids from getting hurt. Since the Supreme Court said some gun laws are okay, a safe storage law is constitutional because it protects children while still respecting people's rights.

Commonwealth v. Runyan (Mass. 2010)

United States v. Rahimi (2024)

Georgia v. Gray (2024–2025)

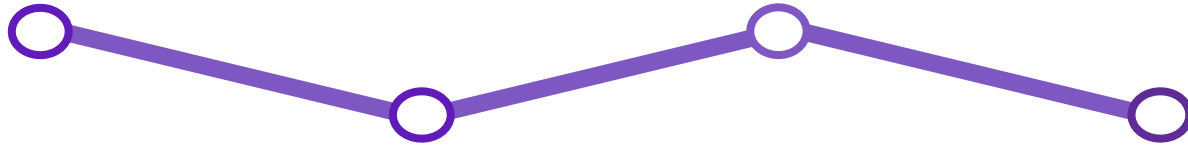
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Action Plan Introduction: Timeline of events

Conduct research

Create a solution and find
available funding sources



Survey the Community

Propose our solution to the
City Council

Step 2- Survey the Community

We researched how our school and community about the problems related to gun violence . This was done to identify the perspectives of our community on this problem. It was important to be sure that this was not just an issue that impacted us but our whole community.



Step 3- Funding the proposed project

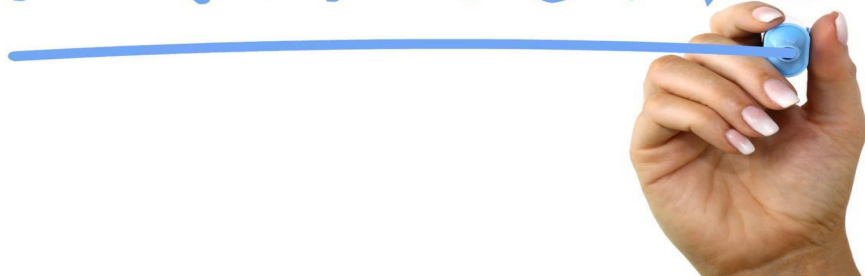
We looked for grants that could help fund this program. We did this so we can implement this project without raising taxes. People may not support this if they have to pay extra tax to make it happen. We searched for grants that would exceed the estimated cost to get our project done.



Step 4- Propose solution to the City Council

Our last step would be to present this solution to the Phoenix City Council for their consideration. We will work to contact a City of Phoenix council member to discuss how to bring this idea up for consideration by the council at a future board meeting.

PROPOSAL



Proposed Costs



- **Making a gun storage law to stop kids from getting guns can cost different amounts of money. Simple gun locks can cost about \$5 to \$20, but big, high-quality gun safes can cost more than \$10,000. States also have to spend money to teach people about the law and enforce it. For example, Illinois spent about \$3.5 million on a “safe gun storage” campaign. So overall, these laws can cost a lot depending on how they are carried out.**

Proposed funding sources

- [Project ChildSafe](#): This NSSF program provides free cable gun locks to individuals through local law enforcement partnerships nationwide.
- Nonprofit Grants: Eddie Eagle GunSafe® Program provides grant funding for educational materials, though it may not cover full, retail-priced safes.
- **Government funding** – Money from city, state, or federal budgets can be used for violence prevention programs, like education and community outreach.
- **Taxes or fees** – Extra taxes on guns or ammunition could help pay for safety programs and research
- **Healthcare funding** – Hospitals and public health programs may invest in prevention since gun violence affects community health.

Government Officials Needing to be Influenced

We would also need to talk to the AZ State legislators to convince them to pass this as a new law because they have the power to vote on and approve local policies, which is necessary to put this solution into action.

We would need to talk to the governor, Katie Hobbs, to be sure that if the bill is passed into law that she would support it and not veto it.

Supporters and opponents

SUPPORTERS

- Firearms Industry & Safety Organizations:
- Law Enforcement
- Medical & Health Organizations:
- Advocacy & Community Groups:

OPPONENTS

- Taxpayers because they don't want to pay more money
- Republican Lawmakers:
- Libertarian Party
- Gun Rights Organizations

Reflections: What was the most difficult part of Project Citizen?

The most difficult part of Project Citizen was conducting thorough research and identifying reliable sources. It required careful evaluation of information to ensure accuracy and relevance to our issue. Additionally, working as a group presented challenges, as we had to communicate effectively, consider different perspectives, and come to a consensus on our proposed solution. Overall, these challenges helped us develop stronger critical thinking and collaboration skills.

