



Background Guide

United States
Congress
Committee (USCC)

1 | Gun Control: Addressing the Second Amendment in the 21st-Century USA

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Committee Introduction

Honorable Senators, welcome to the first United States Congressional Committee (USCC) to ever be held in South Korea! This section will explain the expectations and the process of USCC so that by the time the conference starts, you will be equipped with the knowledge necessary to thrive in the committee. An easy way to think about USCC is to imagine it as a combination of the UNA-USA procedure and the Crisis Committee procedure, meaning that you will be expected to react to Crisis Updates while drafting Bills.

As Senators, you will notice that the pace of debate is greatly heightened compared to other committees due to the USCC's multifaceted nature - you will have to handle two issues, the Bill drafting and Crisis response - while going through three different types of discussion modules: Moderated Caucuses, Unmoderated Caucuses, and the Consultation of the Whole. Moderated and Unmoderated Caucuses are commonly used in other committees, so it is expected that Senators are comfortable with these two styles of debate. The Consultation of the Whole, however, may be new to many delegates. As the conference date approaches, the delegates will have a chance to look over the rules of procedure and ask any unanswered questions through information sessions.

Being in the role of political leaders of the United States of America, it is your priority to keep your position of power while assuring the general welfare and happiness of your people by identifying their needs and wants. Delegates' top priorities should be to understand and fuse themselves with the stances of individual Senator stances, the stances of the two parties, and of course the topic and how you as a Senator reacted to the issue. Holding roles as Senators in the Senate means that you would have to conduct significant research on your Senator's authoritative powers. The fact that you are representing real senators in an existing Senate means that you are permitted to use first-person pronouns, and you will be taking actions that will have direct consequences, whether that be the expulsion of a Senator from the Senate, detainment, or a trial - the possibilities are endless.

To conclude, remember that your role as Senators in this committee is not just to navigate the intricacies of legislation and crisis management, but to uphold the core values of democracy and the welfare of your people.

Agenda Introduction

Ratified on December 15, 1791, the Second Amendment reads: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Simply put, it guarantees that every American citizen has the individual right to bear arms, which the government is not allowed to infringe. Today, these 27 words of the Second Amendment remain fundamental to solidifying the rights of law-abiding citizens who own firearms.

For decades, the Second Amendment has been an extremely contentious topic due to the ambiguity of the language that allows subjective interpretations and applications. On one side is the *individual right theory*, which asserts that the phrase "right of the people to keep and bear arms" grants an individual a constitutional right to possess firearms. According to this view, the United States Constitution should limit the legislative bodies' power to ban or heavily restrict gun ownership, as it would be considered an unconstitutional act. In contrast, the *collective right theory* focuses on the Amendment's prefatory language: "A well-regulated Militia." Supporters of this interpretation believe that the main purpose of the Amendment is about state defense rather than protecting personal gun ownership. Under this view, local, state, and federal legislative bodies do have the authority to restrict firearms without implicating a constitutional right. These clashing views have caused intense societal and legal debates about the intended scope of gun ownership rights and thus a stark polarization in public opinions, along partisan lines.

However, as the toll from gun violence continues to grow, the polarization also deepens. Looking at the mass and school shootings over the past few decades, two things are alarmingly clear; firearm violence is steadily becoming more prevalent and deadly—evidenced by statistics such as a 50% increase in gun-related deaths among children and teens from 1,732 to 2,590 within two years from 2019 to 2021. Such stronger imperatives of public safety and the protection of individual rights are what worsens the bipartisan divide.

Supporters of stricter gun control, primarily Democrats, argue that regulations should be enhanced to ensure public security while also respecting the rights of responsible gun owners. They advocate for expanding and strengthening background checks for all gun sales, which would prevent guns from being easily obtained by terrorists and individuals with histories of violent crimes or mental illnesses. On the contrary, for Republicans, firearms represent tools for not only self-defense but also personal freedom and protection against potential government overreach. Thus, concerns are voiced that an increase in regulations could infringe upon constitutional liberties and limit individual's abilities to safeguard themselves and their families. This partisan divide is one of the reasons why finding common ground in between is a challenging task.

Letter from the Chairs

Senators, welcome to GECMUN XI! This is Diane Seyeon Lee, Jiyeon Baek, Jung Woo Park, and Hwandong Hyun who will all serve as your chairs for the United States Congress Committee. As a committee that follows both the parliamentary and crisis procedures, we look forward to the diverse debates and schemes that will take place in this committee.

Hi all, my name is Diane Seyeon Lee, a junior at Branksome Hall Asia. I have been doing MUN since 7th grade and have been a part of around 20 conferences as a delegate, a chair, and a secretariat. Each conference I attended was such a remarkable experience, and I want you to leave the conference with an unforgettable memory from this committee like I did with all the other conferences. Jiyeon, Jungwoo, Hwandong, and I will try our best to make this committee enjoyable.

Hello, my name is Jiyeon Baek, and I am a junior at Branksome Hall Asia. This year marks the fourth year of my MUN journey, during which I have attended various conferences as both a delegate and a chair. MUN has always been an incredible community and a powerful educational opportunity for me. I hope you all also leave the conference having made many connections with others and having enriched your knowledge about our agenda. See you in March!

Hello, my name is Jung Woo Park, a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju. This is my third year participating in MUN conferences. Although I have a relatively short MUN journey, MUN means not only an academic journey to me but also a room to step out of my comfort zone and make new friends, which I want you to focus on while doing MUN. See you all in March!

Hey guys! My name is Hwandong Hyun, currently a senior at KIS Bangkok. As the current secretary general at my school's MUN club, I've been to various MUN conferences throughout my high school years. This experience has consistently led me to create new connections, and have greater opportunities leading up to who I am today. Diane and I have chaired and delegated at ThaiMUN for USCC twice, and have a strong foundation in formulating debate in the congress. I am always more than happy to help to support delegates; see you soon!

As this is the first time USCC is happening in Korea, we will conduct information sessions and provide assisting materials for you to refer to as we prepare for the conference and support you all as best as we can. We look forward to intense discussions, back-stabbing directives, active negotiation, and creative solutions when faced with tough decisions and American lives at stake. But always remember that enjoying this special experience of meeting and freely cooperating with different delegates from all around comes first. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

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Key Terms

Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act

A federal law enacted in 1933 requires firearm purchasers to undergo background checks and imposes a five-day waiting period before receiving products to prevent individuals with serious crime convictions from purchasing firearms.

Everytown for Gun Safety

A non-governmental organization that advocates for gun control to prevent gun-related violence by promoting gun control laws, supporting education and technology for safety, and running awareness campaigns.

Ghost guns

Firearms that are secretly manufactured or distributed without a legal serial number, making them untraceable. Since no background checks are conducted when purchasing ghost guns, there is a high possibility of them being used in crimes. Furthermore, individuals may modify these firearms to enhance their original power, increasing the potential damage they can cause.

Gun Owners of America (GOA)

An organization that aims to preserve the Second Amendment rights of firearm owners by actively lobbying legislatures and supporting political candidates with pro-firearm stances. In 2022, the GOA spent more than 3 million dollars on lobbying, and as a result, gun control remains a challenging and controversial issue.

Gun show loophole

A term that refers to a legal blind spot of federal law, allowing people to purchase firearms without any background check, mostly related to private sellers and gun shows. This is considered problematic as it allows purchasing firearms without any background checks, also making it difficult to trace firearms when used in crimes. Recently, in April 2024, the White House officially demanded the closing of these loopholes to prevent selling firearms without background checks.

Mass shooting

Crime that involves the use of firearms, mostly resulting in a high number of casualties. Notable mass shooting incidents in the past include the Las Vegas shooting and the Pulse Nightclub shooting. These events had a significant impact on both American society and politics, reigniting controversial debates on gun control.

National Rifle Association

A gun-rights advocacy organization with the primary goal of “promoting and encouraging rifle shooting on a scientific basis.” The NRA is known for its strong political influence, particularly aligned with the Republican party, to protect the Second Amendment.

Red Flag Law

The Red Flag Law, Extreme Risk Protection Order Law, is a gun control safety measure aimed at preventing potential gun violence with the prohibition or removal of firearms from individuals considered at risk of harm or threat.

Second Amendment

The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution states, “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” This protects individuals' right to possess firearms for self-defense and their property. As the Second Amendment does not specify nor limit to what extent the right to bear arms should be protected, it is controversial whether arms related to militia service and various gun measures should be protected as well.

Historical Background - Brief Overview

Since the founding of the United States, the right to bear arms has been a distinctive attribute of the nation's historical and political identity. During the American Revolution, ordinary armed colonists played a major role in achieving the independence of the United States following their struggle against the powerful British forces. This history established the fundamental belief of American society that an armed citizenry is necessary for maintaining liberty and defending against potential tyranny. Moreover, a foundation of American democracy and liberalism is the natural law principle that all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, including "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Inherent to this principle, as enshrined in the Second Amendment, is the right to self-defense, or to forcibly resist infringements on such inalienable human rights. Therefore, to this day, the Second Amendment acts as a safeguard for individual and national liberty, protecting citizens' rights from external threats and possibly the tyranny of their own government.

However, the increasing death toll from mass and school shootings raises questions about whether the Second Amendment, intended to safeguard individual national security, is still serving its righteous purpose in modern American society. For instance, in 2017, the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history occurred when a lone gunman opened a rapid-fire barrage of bullets on a crowd attending a country music festival in Las Vegas. This incident killed at least 59 people and injured more than 500 other people. As such tragic incidents increase in frequency and deadliness, the debate over gun control is more intense than ever before.

Historical Background - Legislations

For over 200 years, the Supreme Court addressed the Second Amendment only occasionally and in relatively narrow circumstances. However, a series of relatively recent decisions, including the two landmark rulings *District of Columbia v. Heller* and *McDonald v. Chicago*, provided more guidance in understanding the scope of the constitutional provision.

December 15th, 1791- The ratification of the Bill of Rights	The Second Amendment became a part of the Constitution of the United States when Virginia became the 11th state to ratify the Bill of Rights in 1791. The amendment was initially part of the Anti-Federalists' efforts to prevent the new federal government gaining excess power and encroaching upon individual liberties by allowing the populace to defend themselves from a potential tyranny.
1876 - United States v. Cruikshank	In 1873, there was an incident where a mob of white residents attacked a courthouse in Colfax, Louisiana, and murdered an estimate of 100 black citizens. The terrorists were initially accused of violating African Americans' rights, especially the second amendment rights to bear arms; however, these mob members could not be charged as, according to the Court, the Second Amendment only protects against a potential tyranny by the federal government not infringements by state governments or individuals. This ruling thus highlights the challenges in protecting civil rights and responding to individual acts of racial violence.
1886 - Presser v. Illinois	In 1879, Herman Presser organized an independent militia in Illinois, holding that the act is his second amendment right to protect himself from tyranny. Nevertheless, he was accused of violating Illinois state laws, which essentially stated that without a special recognition from the governor, one cannot organize a militia. Regarding this case, the Supreme Court ruled that while the federal government could not limit "well regulated militias" the state government has the authority to infringe on such rights for public security.
1939 - United States v. Miller	The cultural conversations revolving around gun ownership started to shift towards the types of guns a private citizen unaffiliated with military or any law enforcement can reasonably carry, with increasing use of guns in gang crimes. The succession of incidents such as the notorious St. Valentine's Day Massacre (1929) had led the federal government to impose strict regulations on certain types of firearms like machine guns, short-barreled rifles, and all other concealable weapons, also known as the National Firearms Act (NFA).
1968 - Haynes v.	The NFA of 1934 required people to not only pay taxes on but also

United States	report certain restricted types of firearms to the government. However, the Supreme Court Haynes v. United States case ruled that such regulations violate the Fifth Amendment, or protection against self-incrimination, which refers to an act that exposes oneself to a criminal prosecution. This made some parts of NFA unenforceable.
1977 - Political shift of the NRA	The National Rifle Association (NRA) was founded in 1871 “to promote and encourage rifle shooting on a scientific basis,” and, surprisingly, the NRA supported gun control in its early years. However, the “Revolt at Cincinnati”, where reformers overthrew the old leadership led to a dramatic shift in the group’s interpretation of the Second Amendment to a way that emphasizes individual gun ownership rights.
1990-1994	Efforts to ensure public security, such as the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, and the Gun-Free School Zones Acts, continue.
2003 - The Tiahrt Amendments	The Tiahrt Amendment prevents the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from releasing firearm trace data and demand inventories from gun dealers. This brought a significant chilling effect by restricting the ability of law enforcement to investigate and prosecute gun crimes.
2008 - District of Columbia v. Heller	Provisions of the District of Columbia Code outlawed carrying an unregistered firearm and required owners of registered firearms to keep them nonfunctional at home. While some asserted that the Second Amendment protects the right to keep firearms in the home for self-defense purposes, others believed that the amendment can not limit the legislature’s power to regulate usage and ownership of weapons for nonmilitary purposes.
2010 - McDonald v. Chicago	The US Supreme Court ruled that the Second Amendment applies to not only the federal government but also state and local governments. Built upon the Heller decision, this ruling extended an individual’s right to possess firearms for self defense purposes, which was under the federal law, to state and local levels. Thus, the power of municipalities and states to restrict gun ownership was greatly limited.
2022 - Bipartisan Safe Communities Act	The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is the first significant gun violence reduction legislation passed in nearly three decades. It includes common sense reform policies aimed at reducing domestic and community violence, addressing mass shootings, and increasing funding to improve the mental health of young people.

Current State of Affairs

It is estimated that around 44,000 gun-related deaths occur in America annually (Gun Violence in America). Gun control has always been a subject of controversy, but in recent years, the increasing frequency of gun violence and firearm-related deaths has made the debate fiercer than ever.

The primary question is the debate between the right to life and the right to bear arms. With countless school/mass shootings leaving devastating damage on innocent civilians, there is a growing concern regarding the future of firearm regulation. Advocates for gun control argue that public safety should come first, as firearms contribute to significant loss of life. They propose measures like comprehensive background checks, restrictions on high-capacity magazines, and limitations on certain firearms, suggesting these would reduce the likelihood of guns ending up in the hands of those who pose a risk to society. Conversely, supporters of gun rights emphasize that the right to bear arms is essential for personal protection and freedom, as written in the Second Amendment. They argue that responsible gun ownership provides individuals with the means to defend themselves against threats, and they believe that government regulations should focus on targeting criminals rather than restricting firearms for all.

The issue of gun control is not only restricted to the problem of harming other people: suicide by gun is the leading cause among all reasons of death by gun, reaching up to 57%. Gun suicides are concentrated in states with high rates of gun ownership (Opoliner et.al), with possession of guns tripling the risk of suicide (Anglemyer et al.).

However, gun-related deaths do not even go among the top 10 reasons for death in the US, meaning that it causes a relatively small proportion of deaths compared to health-related issues. This means that there may be more urgent issues to address than gun control and that it may be better to focus the federal funds on healthcare-related sectors rather than gun control initiatives. Adding on, tougher screening when purchasing guns, which is often regarded as a potentially effective solution, may be considered discriminatory by categorizing certain demographics as 'not adequate' to handle them.

Emerging technological developments are also a notable aspect of the committee discussion. Technologies such as smart guns, which are equipped with fingerprint scanners that only allow authorized users to fire them can prevent unauthorized users from using the weapon. However, gun rights advocates fear that this may be used by the government to forcefully restrict access to firearms and go against the idea of the 'security of a free State,' as written in the Second Amendment. Tracking and microstamping, another way of monitoring firearm usage, is based on inserting unique codes into the gun to trace bullets back to the gun. However, this comes with risks of fraud and high implementation costs considering that approximately 32% of American adults personally own a gun and an even greater percentage

of around 40-44% of Americans live in a household with one or more guns. The fact that it is impossible to implement these firearm tracking methods to ghost guns undermines the policy even further. Made using 3D printers, ghost guns are home-built guns/firearms that do not have serial numbers, making them untraceable by the government. This means that they can easily fall into the hands of individuals who are ineligible to own a gun.

The present situation regarding gun control in the U.S. is marked by extreme political polarization, which has stymied progress and intensified division within the government. The partisan divide has entrenched and starkly opposed views on gun regulation, contributing to consistent congressional gridlock on the issue. Even relatively small legislative proposals face significant obstacles in passing due to strong disagreements on the issue, making it challenging to secure the simple majority vote needed to advance firearm control bills. Elections exacerbate these divisions, as candidates often receive financial support from organizations with strong stances on gun control. This support incentivizes candidates to promote more extreme positions to align with these organizations' agendas, making compromise even harder. One example of such an organization is the National Rifle Association (NRA). NRA exemplifies this influence through its grading system, which assigns an A-F rating to lawmakers based on their voting records on gun regulation. This scoring system is quite significant, especially in conservative districts where gun ownership is deeply embedded in local culture. For many Republican politicians, any score below an A+ may jeopardize their electoral prospects. Therefore, senators representing states with a strong pro-gun culture may resist national policies that run counter to their electors' values, while senators from states with stricter gun laws push for tighter regulations. This state-level diversity only deepens the divide, making it increasingly difficult to achieve consensus on national firearm policies.

Stances of Parties

Democrats

Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Democratic Leader Chairman of the Conference

Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer has always shown unwavering support to ensure the safety of New Yorkers, especially by counteracting America's epidemic of gun violence. To this end, he was involved in various efforts, ranging from writing the original bill that required background checks on gun sales from federally licensed manufacturers to reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, throughout his career. As a lead negotiator, Schumer greatly contributed in signing into law the first significant gun safety legislation, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, in a few decades. This act of 2022 incentivizes states to invest in community-based mental health and support services, protection for victims of domestic violence, enhanced background checks for buyers under the age of 21, and so forth.

Richard J. Durbin (D-IL), Majority Whip

Richard J. Durbin is the state's senior senator who advocated against military style assault weapons in civilian use and has long fought for common sense reforms far before they were even publicly discussed. He was always an avid sponsor of federal legislation to combat illegal trafficking in firearms and straw purchasing to prevent guns from being supplied to the dangerous criminals. For years, straw purchasing, or the act of buying a gun for someone who legally cannot, was treated as a minor paperwork misdemeanor rather than a major crime; however, Durbin has argued that the investigation and prosecution of straw purchases, which supply firearms to individuals with felony convictions in the Chicago areas, should be prioritized.

Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chair of Policy & Communications Committee

Debbie Stabenow, the Senate Majority Whip and Michigan's senior senator, supports stricter gun laws on a federal level paired with expanded mental health services. She advocates sustainable investments in community behavioral health clinics that would enable them to offer more consistent services, such as 24 hour psychiatric crisis support, rather than relying on temporary grants. Stabenow believes that with such services in place, individuals in crisis can receive proper care instead of being sent to jails or emergency rooms, which are places that are not designed to handle mental health crises specifically.

Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Vice Chair of Conference

Since 2019, Elizabeth Warren has put forward a sweeping gun control plan of reducing gun deaths by 80%. Her plan includes not only the commonly discussed measures such as universal background checks or ban on assault weapons, but also more transformative policies that make risks of gun access more visible and accountable. For instance, these include substantially raising taxes for gun manufacturers on guns and ammunition from 10%

to 30% and 11% to 50%, respectively. Another element of the plan calls for creating a federal licensing system, which limits the number of firearms one could buy, holds manufacturers liable, and raises the minimum age to purchase a gun. These comprehensive legislations will contribute to ending the deadly epidemic of gun violence by ensuring responsible usage and storage of guns and holding the gun industry responsible.

Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Vice Chair of Conference

Senator Mark Warner has a complicated relationship with gun issues; while he was historically a strong advocate of gun rights and once held an “A” rating from the NRA, his stance began to change as mass shootings became more prevalent and deadly. Following the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, Warner declared his support for “reasonable restrictions,” particularly on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Despite this change, his caution for broad restrictions or relaxations is evident in some of his legislative decisions such as voting against firearms in Amtrak checked baggage and some assault weapon bans.

Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chair of Steering Committee

Senator Amy Klobuchar is the first woman elected to represent the state of Minnesota in the US Senate. Since 2013, Klobuchar has led the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims act, an effort to close the “boyfriend loophole.” This loophole refers to a gap in federal law, which prohibits domestic abusers from purchasing a gun but applies only if the offender shares a child with their victim or is a current or former spouse. She recognized the urgent need to update the definition of “dating relationship” to a way that it includes any continuing serious relationship of an intimate nature, and these provisions were successfully signed into law as part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022. Moreover, she has long maintained that closing the Charleston loophole, banning bump stocks, and restoring rules to prevent those with severe mental illnesses from possessing guns are crucial steps to take to ensure gun safety.

Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Chair of Outreach

The Vermont senator Bernie Sanders is serving his third term in the US senate after being re-elected in 2018. While Sanders has a lock on most progressive democratic policy positions, about gun control, his current stance aligns with where the party stands; however, he had, at times, supported the NRA's agenda by voting against background checks, a waiting period to purchase a firearm, and legislations to punish gun manufacturers, which forces him to continue facing questions regarding his past to this day. Regarding his complicated history, Sanders argues that he simply followed and represented local sentiments of Vermont that virtually had no gun control legislation until 2018. Now, he endorses the implementation of common sense gun safety laws to end the “epidemic of gun violence”.

Catherine Cortez Mastao (D-NV), Vice Chair of Outreach

Senator Cortez Mastao has long been a staunch advocate for investing in mental health and, especially, addressing the student mental health and suicide crisis to reduce gun violence and keep communities safe. Throughout her senate career, she introduced legislation to ensure mental health care is accessible and available to marginalized groups, fund virtual peer support behavioral health programs, and mitigate the shortage of school based mental health professionals. Mastao applauds the senate passage of the landmark Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022, which includes provisions led by herself to further strengthen mental health care.

Joe Manchin (D-WV), Vice Chair of Policy & Communications Committee

Joe Manchin is a centrist senator from West Virginia who advocates for the “Manchin-Toomey” proposal yet opposes more expansive gun control measures. He firmly believes that the “Manchin-Toomey” proposal, a pared-down proposal to expand background checks for only commercial transactions he co-authored in 2013, is the most effective and feasible solution. Manchin asserts that it is not only supported by aisles of both sides but also has a better chance to pass the 50-50 Senate compared to other more ambitious proposals to prohibit assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Cory A. Booker (D-NJ), Vice Chair of Policy & Communications Committee

As the toll from the epidemic of gun violence and mass shootings grows, Senator Cory Booker has introduced the Federal Firearm Licensing Act since 2019 to this day. This legislation would require federal firearm licenses from individuals before purchasing or receiving a firearm, ensuring that firearms are only available for individuals who pass a standard check and are adequately trained. Therefore, Booker maintains that reflecting this common sense idea on the federal level would aid in significantly reducing gun-related deaths.

Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Secretary of the Conference

As a representative of a state with proud hunting traditions and a responsible gun owner herself, Senator Tammy Baldwin passionately believes that a safer community can be achieved while respecting the Second Amendment. She specifically supports further restrictions on law-abiding citizens, including strengthened background checks for all gun sales. Moreover, she endorses the red flag legislation, which would establish court procedures to prevent certain individuals adjudicated to be imminent risk to themselves or others from possessing firearms and ammunition.

Brian Schatz (D-HI), Deputy Conference Secretary

Senator Brian Schatz, a strong gun safety champion, has consistently supported the common sense bills since joining the senate in 2013. Recognizing the immense youth suicide death rates involving firearms, Schatz first introduced the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act in 2021 and continues to put emphasis on solving such underlying problems. This legislation would establish a grant program to fund suicide prevention initiatives; ensure health care providers are adequately trained to prevent lethal means injuries, deaths, and

suicides; and create a centralized hub to inform at-risk youth and the support networks about safety and suicide prevention information.

Republicans

Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Republican Leader

Mitch McConnell has served as a Senator from Kentucky since 1985, holding the position of the Republican Leader in 2021. He consistently showed cautious and conservative stances toward gun control. Instead of strict gun legislation or a ban on firearms, McConnell focuses on alternative solutions such as enhancing school safety. However, he expressed openness to the 'red flag' law, and even responded that including the state and local juvenile records in background checks for the youngest gun buyers was "a step in the right direction". Still, his overall stance advocates for protecting the Second Amendment rights.

John Thune (R-SD), Republican Whip

John Thune is the Republican Whip, mainly working to assist the party leadership in managing legislative priorities. He has served as Senator from South Dakota since 2005. He is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and the individual's right to possess firearms. Thune has voted against expanding background checks and other gun control legislation, such as the 2013 Manchin-Toomey bill, expressing concerns that such laws would infringe on constitutional rights without effectively reducing gun violence. Furthermore, he sponsored the Firearms Interstate Commerce Reform Act (FICRA) to address regulations on interstate gun sales, aiming to expand gun rights. Thune believes that the focus on gun control should be on improving mental health care and enforcing existing laws, which he argues to be more effective in preventing further violence, without compromising individual rights and freedom.

John Barrasso (R-WY), Republican Conference Chairman

John Barrasso is a U.S. senator from Wyoming, who has served since 2007 and is a member of the Republican party. He consistently showed opposition to gun control measures, strongly supporting the Second Amendment. He claims that "The Second Amendment is freedom's essential safeguard. Without it, there can be no liberty and no security". With his strong stance against gun control, in 2022, Barrasso voted against the Cornyn-Murphy gun bill, a bill aimed to enhance background checks for gun purchasing. Instead, he advocates for improving mental health services and enforcing current laws to prevent gun violence. Hence, Barrasso proposed the Safe Kids, Safe Schools, Safe Communities Act', to promote a safer community without threatening the Second Amendment.

Joni Ernst (R-IA), Republican Policy Committee Chairman

Joni Ernst is a Republican U.S. senator from Iowa, serving since 2015. Before her political career, she served in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Iowa National Guard for 23 years. Ernst shows strong support for the Second Amendment, while supporting several gun safety measures. She voted for the Democratic caucus, which was to advance a gun package in

order to reduce gun violence, conduct background checks, and funding for mental health services. Ernst stated that the bill does not violate individual rights, but rather helps keep the community safe. On the other hand, Ernst opposed extensive gun control measures, also showing support towards the FIND Act (Firearm Industry Non-Discrimination Act). Ernst believes that mental health issues should be prioritized as a solution to reduce gun violence, rather than having strict legislation.

Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Vice Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference

Shelley Moore Capito took responsibility as a Republican Senator in 2015, being the first woman elected from her state. Capito consistently emphasized the protection of the Second Amendment rights, while showing support for the bipartisan gun safety measure. In 2022, she voted for the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, claiming that "the bill does not take away, restrict, or prohibit the rights of any law-abiding citizen from owning or possessing a firearm". With her vote, she highlighted that the legislation includes a focus on mental health and school safety, recognizing those as the important factors for a solution to gun violence. Hence, Capito showed support for some gun safety measures, prioritizing mental health and school safety, while recognizing people's rights.

Steve Daines (R-MT), Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman

Steve Daines is a Republican Senator from Montana who has served since 2015. He is a strong advocate for the Second Amendment, consistently opposing legislation that he views as an infringement of gun rights. He stated that he "strongly [opposes] any efforts from Washington to restrict our Second Amendment rights...". With his solid stance, He voted against the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which included enhanced background checks and funding for the red flag law. In 2022, he even introduced a bill to protect Montanans' right to possess firearms. Daines positions himself as a defender of the Second Amendment, opposing most bills on gun control measures. Instead, he aims to focus on addressing mental health, school safety, and enforcement of the existing laws.

Ted Cruz (R-MT), Republican Senator

Ted Cruz has served as a Republican Senator from Texas since 2013. He is a staunch supporter of the Second Amendment, viewing the right to possess firearms as a fundamental constitutional right of individuals. Cruz opposed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022. Instead, he promoted alternatives; he introduced the Safe Kids, Safe School, Safe Community Act, which was to dedicate \$38 billion to address gun violence at schools. Cruz claimed that violence can only be prevented by violence, strongly supporting the Second Amendment. He is focusing on mental health initiatives and school security to address gun-related violence.

Bill Hagerty (R-TN), Republican Senator

Bill Hagerty has served as a Republican U.S. Senator from Tennessee since 2021. He is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment. He believes that the Second Amendment is one

of the most important freedoms, claiming that he would always protect the right to possess arms. In 2024, Hagerty introduced the 'Protecting Privacy in Purchases Act', which aimed to protect the privacy of firearm purchasers. He also opposed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022, constantly showing opposition to gun control legislation. Hence, Hagerty focuses on protecting the constitutional rights of firearm owners, attempting to protect the Second Amendment rights.

Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), Republican Senator

Marsha Blackburn is a Tennessee U.S. Senator and a member of the Republican Party. She has been serving in the Senate since 2019 as the first woman to ever be elected in her state. Blackburn strongly supports the Second Amendment, believing that firearms are crucial for citizens to protect themselves. She showed a focus on alternative approaches to gun control, such as addressing mental health issues and enhancing security at school. Recognizing the seriousness of gun violence, Blackburn co-sponsored the 'Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) Protection Act', enhancing penalties for criminals stealing firearms. She claimed that "Stiffening the penalties for those who steal firearms from federally licensed retailers would ensure accountability and make our communities safer". Likewise, Blackburn focuses on alternative approaches to address gun-related violence while strongly supporting the Second Amendment right.

Mike Braun (R-IN), Republican Senator

Mike Braun has served as a Republican U.S. Senator from Indiana since 2019. He is a strong defender of the Second Amendment. In 2021, Braun introduced the "Right to Protect and Bear Arms Act," aimed at preventing the federal government from using emergencies or incidents as a reason to impose gun control measures. Instead of gun control measures, he focuses on transparency in purchasing firearms. As a result, Braun also introduced the "ATF Accountability Act," to provide transparency to firearm owners. With those bills proposed, he stated that the "Constitution protects our God-given rights to live our lives and raise our families as we choose," showing his strong support towards the Second Amendment.

Mike Crapo (R-ID), Republican Senator

Mike Crapo is a Republican Senator from Idaho, since 1999. With his strong support for the Second Amendment, Crapo consistently voted against bills that aim for gun control. For instance, in 2013, he voted against a bill to expand background checks to all firearm purchasers. In 2022, he also opposed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Crapo argues that the gun control measures are ineffective in reducing gun violence cases, stating that "burdening law-abiding Americans with additional firearm restrictions is not the answer to safeguarding the public." He focuses on mental health initiatives and stricter enforcement of existing policies.

Ron Johnson (R-WI), Republican Senator

Ron Johnson is a Republican U.S. Senator from Wisconsin and was first elected in

2010. As a supporter of the Second Amendment, he consistently spoke and voted against multiple gun control measures. Johnson argued that background checks are unnecessary as they currently exist in some cases, saying “What we ought to do is enforce the laws that are on the books.” With his stance, he voted against a 2013 proposal requiring background checks for all firearm purchases and opposed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022. For alternative approaches to gun control measures, he suggests addressing mental health issues and enforcing existing laws.

Possible Solutions

While disagreements on the specifics of proposed bills are inevitable, it is important to find common ground amid a dispute. Here are some general ideas of possible solutions that senators with varying stances might find easy to agree upon.

Enforcing security in schools around the US

Increasing school security can achieve a middle-ground in the gun control debate by focusing on protecting students and staff without directly restricting firearm access. Increasing school security by utilizing measures such as security cameras, controlled access points, and school resource officers can serve as both a preventative measure and a rapid response mechanism in case of emergencies. Moreover, strengthening school security addresses safety without directly affecting gun ownership laws or being intrusive to Second Amendment rights.

Mandatory Waiting Periods

The main purpose of this proposed solution is to gain extra time for thorough background checks. Some background checks may take longer than others, particularly if additional verification is needed for an applicant's criminal history, mental health issues, or other factors that might come into consideration. A mandatory waiting period before obtaining a gun ensures that background checks can be completed accurately, reducing the risk of someone slipping through before the process is complete. Additionally, these mandatory waiting periods can help prevent impulsive violence. Research has shown that waiting periods can reduce impulsive acts of violence, particularly suicides and crimes of passion. The waiting periods act as a 'cool down' for individuals who might seek to buy a firearm in a spontaneous burst of intense anger, distress, or suicidal intent.

Following these possible solutions is not mandatory; the chairs highly encourage the development of creative solutions that reflect the unique stances of individual senators and parties. These possible solutions are here as guidelines for when senators are lost, so please add your own personal touch to them!

Questions to Consider

1. What is some evidence that exists regarding the effectiveness of gun control measures such as conducting a background check, red flag law, and banning certain firearms?
2. How can a balance between the right to self-defense and the need to protect public safety be established?
3. What are the primary causes of gun violence, and how can they be addressed?

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