



## The League of Women Voters of Delaware Urges Release of HB 300

presented at a hearing of the House Administration Committee on January 24, 2018

### **The League of Women Voters of Delaware urges the House Administration Committee to release HB 300 and to work for its speedy enactment.**

Surely, we all recall that on the night of October 1st, 2017, a gunman opened fire from a hotel room on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel into the 22,000-person crowd at a country music festival in Las Vegas, killing 58 people and injuring more than 500. The gunman fired more than 1,100 rounds of ammunition in 11 minutes, using semi-automatic rifles modified with a dangerous firearm accessory designed to dramatically accelerate the rate of gunfire, commonly known as “bump fire stocks.”

These devices are intended to circumvent the restrictions on possession of fully automatic firearms in the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the National Firearms Act of 1934 by allowing an individual to modify a semi-automatic rifle in such a manner that it operates with a similar rate of fire as a fully automatic rifle. While often marketed as a novelty item for recreational shooters, bump stocks and similar devices that accelerate the rate of fire of a semiautomatic firearm are extremely dangerous and pose a substantial risk to public health and safety.

Since the massacre in Las Vegas, the price of bump stocks and similar devices has more than doubled, and a mad dash to purchase these deadly devices has ensued.<sup>1</sup> Instead of taking responsible measures to ensure that these devices are never again used to commit a mass shooting, the gun industry is profiting from mass tragedy.

There were 339 mass shootings in the United States in 2017, based on defining as a mass shooting one in which four or more people are shot, not including the perpetrator. One of the hardest parts about gun violence in our nation: it’s become so common that only a handful of those mass shootings were even covered by national news. These incidents took place all over the country -- in big cities and small towns alike.<sup>2</sup>

A new study offers one of the best estimates yet of the staggering financial toll that gun injuries impose on our country: \$622 million per year in hospital bills. A third of all firearm hospitalizations are covered by Medicare and Medicaid, at a taxpayer cost of \$242 million per year — more than the amounts paid out by private insurance or self-paying patients. The study also found that the average bill for an individual hospitalization from a firearm injury is over \$20,000 — more than double the cost of a typical hospital stay. “It’s important to recognize that this is a public cost,” the lead author Corinne Peek-Asa

---

<sup>1</sup> Polly Mosendz, Kim Bhasin, “Bump-Fire Stock Prices Double, Thanks to the NRA,” *Bloomberg*, October 5, 2017, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-05/bump-fire-stock-prices-double-thanks-to-the-nra>

<sup>2</sup> Email from Kris Brown, Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, December 27, 2017.

told *The Trace*. “Being admitted for a firearm injury is very expensive, and we see so much of that cost is from uninsured or Medicaid sources.”<sup>3</sup>

Congress has failed to act, so it is incumbent on our General Assembly to protect Delawareans from a mass shooting here.

We need to consider the toll of gun violence in terms of injuries, loss of life, the financial loss to businesses in the communities that are affected, and the effect on the state for medical care charged to Medicaid. The continued presence of these dangerous devices poses a continuing threat to all of us.

We have not seen the total impact on such mass shootings described in the general media. Consider not only those murdered, those injured, and their families. What about the other 20,000 plus attendees at that music festival? They were all traumatized, their lives changed forever.

A Google search found little attention to the trauma experienced by those present during a mass shooting who were not injured. One source was the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) that “believes it is time to broaden the focus of the gun debate to include the social, emotional, physical, and mental health impact of those traumatized by gun violence, especially children and youth.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2017, the *Washington Post* calculated that since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, more than 135,000 children and teens at 164 primary and secondary schools have been exposed to gun violence at school. That doesn’t include other incidents — accidents, after-school assaults, suicides — in which children have been exposed to gun violence. The damage extends to parents, grandparents and siblings forced to cope with trauma. The *Post*’s reporting reveals the hidden trauma that haunts these survivors, whose stories typically receive far less attention than those of the perpetrators and the dead.<sup>5</sup>

According to the [Gun Violence Archive](#),<sup>6</sup> 2017 saw at least 77 incidents of gun violence at American primary and secondary schools. The tally includes any incident in which a gun was discharged.<sup>7</sup> And news outlets reported three additional shootings at schools this week. The latest would fit the definition of a mass shooting.

**The League of Women Voters believes that HB 300 is urgently needed to protect our citizens’ safety *and* health from both the physical and the emotional damage that gun violence threatens.**

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thetrace.org/features/gun-violence-facts-2017/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cwla.org/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-families-communities/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/children-continue-to-be-traumatized-by-shootings-when-will-america-act/2017/06/12/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thetrace.org/features/gun-violence-facts-2017/>