

Maryville Friends Meeting  
A Statement on Gun Violence

To all Friends:

“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world.” In 1660, the Society of Friends sent this declaration to King Charles II of England, a summation of what came to be known as the Friends “Peace Testimony,” and which Maryville Friends continues to hold as an ideal. Along with being a statement against warfare, this is a statement against violence of any sort, and has motivated hundreds of years of Quaker work for social change, justice, and peace throughout the world.

We at Maryville Friends have been saddened and horrified by the spate of violence and murder in the United States that has seemed to grow in volume over the last decade or more, and in particular the ease with which high-profile mass killings have been accomplished with firearms. In praying and considering some possible responses, we recognize we come from a variety of perspectives. We find ourselves with a variety of interpretations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment in our Meeting. We wish to find a way forward that addresses both the concerns of survivors, while not infringing beyond reasonable measures on the freedom of law-abiding citizens. While some may be interested in more strict measures, we feel these at least are reasonable. With prayer and consideration, we propose these for the Friendsville Quarterly and Wilmington Yearly Meetings to recommend to the States of Tennessee and Ohio, and the United States Government.

1. Ban of the sale and purchase of semi-automatic rifles.
2. When such weapons are seized after their use in a crime, or when they are found by law enforcement in the course of pursuing other crimes, they be destroyed upon completion of any testing or other law-enforcement investigative purpose.
3. Ban of the sale and purchase of high-capacity magazines, as well as bump stock accessories, which make mass deadly shootings easier to accomplish.
4. Close the “gun show loopholes” by requiring federal licensure for gun show dealers and requiring background checks for all gun show transactions.
5. Create a National or State-level registry system for any future firearms sales and those which already exist, analogous to vehicle or animal registries, that respects the rights of firearms owners.

We also support calls for greater mental health care resources which have been deteriorating over several decades. We support calls for mental healthcare reform, including perhaps temporary or permanent confiscation of firearms for those at greater risk of self-harm because we recognize that the greatest number of gun-violence deaths are suicides and accidents.

Many of the recent mass shooters have been men that were motivated by a twisted, perverse understanding of masculinity and unfulfilled lives. We also support an increased national attentiveness to the radicalization that takes place among certain young men who find themselves drawn to violent, nihilistic, and often misogynistic ideologies. Such young, or older, men, merit closer specific attention but the larger subculture, and its metastasization via internet communities, requires a deeper, more difficult conversation touching on many areas of our society.

We recognize that for many people, the curtailing of rights and freedoms may seem to be opposed to American history, but we would note that Justice Antonin Scalia held that certain restrictions, including such restrictions as we propose, would not violate the spirit of the Second Amendment. Moreover, coming from a faith-based perspective, we could point to the words of Paul the Apostle, who wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:9 “**Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.**” Despite his freedom in Christ, Paul is willing to forego a freedom in order to protect the spiritual well-being of others; it is the way of Christ to look out for one another, and if that means some restriction in absolute freedom to provide a safer, healthier world for our children, we feel that is an acceptable compromise.

Prayerfully Submitted,

Jeannette Hamby, Clerk

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