



Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

2018 MGA Legislative Wrap-Up



The Maryland General Assembly finished its legislative session and adjourned on Sine Die at midnight on Monday, April 9th. Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence experienced an incredibly productive, challenging, and emotional session.

MPGV entered the 2018 legislative session more invigorated than ever. Over the past few years, we have watched the violence in Baltimore and other communities escalate higher and higher, reminding us why we need to fight for reform in Maryland. We entered the session hoping to make real progress by passing meaningful legislation. Then in February we were devastated by the horrific shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, a preventable tragedy that reminds us of the life and death stakes of our work. The entire movement was galvanized and gun violence became one of the most important issues of the session.

MPGV made great progress in passing life-saving legislation and stopping any bill that would weaken our state's gun laws and standards. We are proud to announce that our membership skyrocketed and this helped us activate our true grassroots force to demand safer streets and schools from our leaders in Annapolis.

Successes

Bump Stock & Other Rapid Fire Trigger Accessory Ban

With a complete ban on all rapid fire devices, **Senator Victor Ramirez and Delegate David Moon** passed the strongest bill of this type in the entire nation. Many Americans hadn't heard of a bump stock before the horrors of the Las Vegas shooting in 2017, but now multiple states are taking action to regulate these accessories that allow a semiautomatic firearm to shoot like an automatic firearm. While other states have banned only bump stocks or trigger cranks, the Maryland law will ban the entire category of rapid-fire trigger devices to ensure that no accessory can skirt the intent of the federal automatic weapon ban.

Extreme Risk Protective Order (ERPO)

This "Red Flag" legislation, designed to prevent people who pose a danger to themselves or others from possessing firearms, passed through true collaboration between advocacy groups on all sides and endless passion from our members. The policy gives families and law enforcement the tools to request that the courts temporarily remove firearms when a loved one is suffering a crisis and showing signs of being a danger to themselves or others. The Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) is a court-issued civil order that temporarily prohibits the purchase and possession of firearms and requires the removal of any firearms currently possessed while the order is in effect. **Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith** introduced the legislation to prevent gun suicides, which make up more than 20,000 gun deaths a year in the US. In addition, the Parkland shooting highlighted how this policy could also prevent mass community and school shootings by removing firearms from the possession of a person posing a known risk. Leadership in both the House and Senate prioritized this bill and passed a quality bill that will save lives.

Oversight of Handgun Permit Review Board

Maryland has some of the strongest concealed carry laws in the country, but there is little oversight regarding the way in which the Handgun Permit Review Board operates. The Handgun Permit Review Board (HPRB) hears appeals when an applicant is denied a Wear-and-Carry permit by the Secretary of the Maryland State Police. The board consists of five citizens who are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. There are no requirements of legal education or expertise for those appointed to the HPRB. Since Governor Hogan took office, the HPRB has more than doubled granted appeals of concealed carry permits. **Senator Rich Madaleno and Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary** passed legislation to create better oversight and transparency of the HPRB. The introductory version of the bill eliminated the Board and placed the hearings with the Office of Administrative Hearings, but faced opposition in the Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee. We worked out a reasonable compromise in committee to create timelines, require annual reporting, and make the HPRB more accountable for their actions.

GVP LEADERS AND SPONSORS

Speaker Mike Busch
Senate President Mike Miller
Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary
Senator Joan Carter Conway
Delegate Kathleen Dumais
Senator Bill Ferguson
Delegate Brooke Lierman
Senator Rich Madaleno
Delegate David Moon
Senator Victor Ramirez
Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith

Delegate Luke Clippinger
Delegate Marc Korman
Delegate Sandy Rosenberg
Senator Will Smith
Senator Bobby Zirkin

Funding for Evidence-Based Gun Violence Prevention Programs

Beyond gun laws preventing firearms from flowing to Maryland streets, we also need public health programs aimed at stopping the spread of gun violence. **Delegate Brooke Lierman and Senator Joan Carter Conway** sponsored a bill to provide funds to city and community organizations to fund evidence-based programs like Safe Streets and Cure Violence and Ceasefire models. An advisory council will administer the funds to eligible cities and non-profits through the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Protection.

Successfully Opposed Bills

There were over 30 gun bills introduced this session that, if enacted, would have weakened Maryland's strong laws. MPGK prevented all of them from passing. MPGK focused on fighting laws that would allow guns in schools and churches and weaken state standards for concealed carry permits. We defeated bills that would have validated concealed carry permits from neighboring states with much weaker laws and standards and we blocked bills that would have weakened our concealed carry permit standards by allowing an unverifiable claim of self-defense to become a 'good and substantial reason' for issuing a permit. Currently, a person would need to show documentation of a specific threat against him or herself. This expansion of the definition would have weakened our high wear-and-carry permit standards significantly by allowing just about anyone to carry a firearm in Maryland.

MPGV also stopped a bill that would have reduced the requirement of 16 hours for a wear-and-carry class to 8 hours. Carrying a firearm is an immense responsibility. Maryland's wear-and-carry courses teach the permit holder gun safety, increasing competency and efficiency for defensive gun use, marksmanship skills, assessment of risk, reasons why using a firearm should be your last choice, and an overview of Maryland's gun laws. Eight hours would not be enough to give each of these important safety issues the time they need for a permit holder to be completely proficient.

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence will continue each year to fight any 'bad gun bills' that threaten the public health and safety of the residents of our state.

Legislative Losses

Unfortunately, there was one important bill that did not make it through: definition of transfer. This seemingly small fix would have significant impact in preventing illegal guns from flowing to the underground market. With no definition of transfer in Maryland law, courts have found it difficult to convict illegal handgun sales committed without a background check due to the defense claiming that the transaction was merely a loan. This bill will be an important priority for Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence in the 2019 legislative session.

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