



CLINTON COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

NEWSLETTER

APRIL, 2023

In light of the tragic events at MSU, this newsletter will pay special attention to the issues of gun violence in our society.

Government Responsibility – Keeping Citizens Safe from Gun Violence

Theresa Kidd



Why would government not have a role in protecting innocent people from gun owners who turn violent and threaten their fellow citizens? Should owning a gun take precedence over living in a society as free as possible from massive gun violence when people don't feel safe in schools or places of worship, shopping, or going about the daily business of living? When our country was created in 1776, our forefathers stated in the Constitution *“that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”* As it is now, it seems that a gun owner has more rights than the person living their life without needing a gun. It isn't easy to pursue happiness when worrying that your child is not safe at school and for the many other reasons gun assault seems prevalent in our society.

A gun owner's rights should not take priority over any other person's safety. A person who chooses *not* to own a firearm should have as many rights as those who feel they need that high-capacity, human-killing firearm that can destroy many people in an extremely short period of time. Some solutions seem extremely reasonable, and lawmakers need to step up and do their part in keeping people safe from gun violence.

Our forefathers instituted the ways and means to help us live in a society that should be as free as possible from the violence we witness today related to guns. They went on to establish in the Constitution, *"that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."*

A ban on assault weapons was supported by former Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, himself a victim of gun violence.

Democrats in Michigan recently passed legislation that will strengthen background checks and require safe storage of firearms, which the governor is expected to sign into law soon. More work is needed to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. These solutions cannot wait, or gun tragedies will continue to occur. When is enough, enough?

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Michigan GOP Compares Gun Control to the Holocaust

The official Twitter account of Michigan's Republican Party posted an image comparing gun control to the Holocaust. Despite widespread condemnations of the post, by Democrats and Republicans alike, Michigan Republican Party Chair Kristina Karamo doubled down on its message. She defended the post, and, according to M.L. Elrick, writing in the Detroit Free Press, "fanned the flames, accusing Democrats of being, among other things, pro-slavery." The Michigan Republican Party likewise defended the post, labeling the criticism as a "bogus authoritarian frenzy." The post was published a day before the Anti-Defamation League reported that more antisemitic incidents were recorded in 2022 than in any year since it had begun tracking them in 1979. For an in-depth analysis of this issue, see Anna Gustafson's [recent article](#) in the Michigan Advance.

Letter From the Chair Kathie Elliott

Chair's Message

Friends and Supporters of the Clinton County Democratic Party,



We're proud to share our April 2023 newsletter, a true labor of love from some of the most incredible, devoted, and long-serving Democrats you could find. When our Communications Committee met to discuss our focus for this edition, the terrible violence on campus at MSU was still fresh in our minds, as it will be forever in our hearts. We knew without question we wanted to speak to emerging legislation in Michigan meant to reduce the incidents and victims of gun violence. These steps are, unfortunately, too little and too late for many communities and families. However, Democrats in our legislature have introduced—and passed—sensible gun safety legislation that will help to reduce gun violence and save lives. Governor Whitmer has pledged to sign the bills into law. There is a lot more to be done, and we'll all need to step up to let our elected officials and our governor know we support the work they are doing.

April 22, Earth Day, marks the birth of the environmental movement in 1970, and we wanted to acknowledge the reality of the climate crisis we are living in. While the climate crisis should not be a political issue, it has been highly politicized. It has fallen to Democrats to lead the way in meeting the climate emergency. Perhaps, as Terry Link suggests in his excellent essay on page 14, if we prevail in efforts to reduce military spending, those funds could be reinvested in climate mitigation, which would increase the safety and security of our children and grandchildren by addressing urgent climate needs now.

Late last month, we began a strategic planning process for Clinton County Democrats. We want to be the go-to group for people seeking common ground as we work to identify shared problems and shoulder responsibility for finding solutions that will make our community a better place to live and work and raise our families. Visit our [website](#), like our [Facebook page](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#) to keep up with our activities. Better yet, [join the Michigan Democratic party!](#) When you do, you will automatically become a member of Clinton County Democrats.

Now is not the time to sit on the sidelines. In the immortal words of Dr. Suess, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not!"

Join us! There's work to be done!

In solidarity,

Kathie Elliott, Chair

Under the Dome

Legislative Update for Clinton County Democrats

By Tim Hughes



Democrats Deliver! **Democrats Enact Campaign Policy Agenda**

With Democratic legislative majorities and Governor Whitmer in the executive office, Democrats wasted little time enacting legislation implementing the agenda they ran on in the 2022 elections.

As the legislature convened, Democrats introduced bills and held press conferences outlining their top priorities: repealing the retirement tax, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), repealing Right to Work (for less), reinstating Prevailing Wage, expanding the Civil Rights Act to add protection for sexual and gender identity, enacting common sense gun reforms, and codifying abortion rights.



Before the legislature began a three-week recess on March 23, almost all of these items were signed into law or had been approved by both legislative chambers and enrolled for presentation to the Governor for her signature.

Common Sense Gun Reforms Touch Emotions

One of the more emotional issues being addressed by the legislature is a package of 11 bills dealing with three common sense gun reforms. The package was introduced just three days after a tragic shooting incident on the MSU campus that left three dead and five seriously injured.

The 11 bills fall into three main categories:

- requiring universal background checks to close a current loophole in the private sale of guns outside of federally licensed dealers such as gun shows (HB4138, 4142, and 4143);
- creating secure storage laws to keep legal firearms out of the hands of children by requiring guns to be secured with gun locks or in safes (SB 79-82);
- establishing red flag laws providing for extreme risk protection orders allowing courts to temporarily remove firearms from those posing a threat to themselves or others (SB 83-86).

“Sadly, the trauma of another mass shooting has devastated the people and community I serve and the university I love,” said state Sen. Sam Singh (D-East Lansing). “But these tragedies don’t have to continue unchecked, and I am committed to listening to the students that are demanding action. These bills are an initial step to better protect the lives of our fellow Michiganders.”

Although the package is mainly supported by Democratic lawmakers, two former Michigan Republican congressmen, Fred Upton and Dave Trott, declared their support for the Democratic gun safety package. “As strong supporters of the Second Amendment and proud Republicans, we feel it is our duty to come out in support of this legislation,” the two former congressmen said in a joint statement. “Students, educators, and parents in Michigan have suffered through multiple mass shootings in the past fifteen months, and Michiganders deserve action.”



Former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords & elected Democrats rally at the State Capitol for gun reform.

Supporters of the legislation gave emotional testimony in legislative hearings on the bills.

Rick and Martha Omilian of Plainwell, Michigan testified in support of the bills in the Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee. They told of their daughter’s shooting death on the campus of Kalamazoo College in 1999. They said that passage of the proposed legislation “can protect children at home and at school before gun violence occurs. Families can be spared the anguish of the loss of a child, allowing a child to realize their potential in life.”

Katie Cavanaugh and Jayme Taylor, Trustees on the Okemos Public Schools Board of Education, told the House Judiciary Committee, “Our children are afraid to go to school. Our teachers are afraid to go to work. This cannot continue. As parents and as leaders of our district, we each hold our breath when we see an ambulance or police car with sirens on, watching to see if they turn towards our schools. We don’t know how to comfort our children when they say they are worried about a shooter coming to their classrooms. How can we ask our teachers to sacrifice their lives for our kids? How are guns more important than our children?”

Two of the three bills dealing with background checks (HB [4138](#) and [4142](#)), as well as four bills providing for secure storage of firearms, (SB-[79-82](#)) have been passed by the House and Senate and enrolled for presentation to the Governor for her signature. HB [4143](#), one of the background check bills, needs final approval from the House before it can go to the Governor’s desk.

Four bills establishing “red flag” laws will be dealt with by the legislature when they return to session on April 11.

Several rallies in support of the gun reform legislation were held on the steps of the State Capitol, featuring elected Democratic officials, MSU students and former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was shot in 2011 in an assassination attempt. Giffords watched from the Senate gallery when several of the bills were approved.

Tax Cuts and LGBTQ Civil Rights Signed into Law

Repealing Retiree Tax and Working Families Tax Credit – HB [4001](#), sponsored by Representative Angela Whitwer, D-Delta Township, was passed by the legislature in February and signed into law by Governor Whitmer on March 7. The bill phases out Governor Snyder’s retirement tax over four years and ultimately delivers an average of \$1,000 to 500,000 households. The bill also equalizes the exemption on both public and private pensions. The bill also raises the Michigan Working Families Tax Credit match of the federal EITC to 30%, up from 6%. This expansion will deliver an average combined tax refund of \$3,150 to 700,000 families, directly impacting nearly one million children.

Civil Rights Expanded for LGBTQ – SB [0004](#), sponsored by Senator Jeremy Moss, D-Southfield, expands the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) coverage to include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The bill was signed by Governor Whitmer on March 16. Originally passed in 1976, ELCRA currently prohibits discriminatory practices, policies, and customs in the exercise of those rights based upon religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status or marital status.

Worker Protection and Abortion Rights Bills Near Completion

“Right to Work” (For Less) Repeal – A so-called “right to work” law would be repealed under [HB 4004](#) and [4005](#) (affecting public and private employees), sponsored by Representative Regina Weiss (D-Oak Park), and [SB 0005](#) and [0034](#), sponsored by Sen. Darrin Camilleri (D-Trenton). Under RTW, workers in a union shop could stop paying dues while enjoying the wages and benefits negotiated by the union and requiring union officials to represent them in grievances and arbitration. These “free riders” would be able to sue the union if the union didn’t represent them.

HB 4004 and SB 0034 passed the House and Senate and were signed into law by Governor Whitmer on March 24. Because the bills passed along party lines without any GOP support, the changes will kick in 90 days after the end of the legislative session, March 30, 2024.

Restore Prevailing Wage Act – Republicans repealed the Prevailing Wage Act in 2018, a law requiring construction workers to be paid decent wages and benefits on state-sponsored construction projects. Legislation sponsored by Rep. Brenda Carter (D-Pontiac) and Sen. Veronica Klinefelt (D-Eastpointe) would restore the state’s prevailing wage law ([HB 4007](#) and [SB 0006](#)). Together, these bills would reinstate the Prevailing Wage Act and provide for penalties for violating the Act. Both bills were approved by the House and the Senate and were signed by the Governor on March 24. The effective date of the legislation is March 30, 2024.

Codify Abortion Rights – Legislation sponsored by Rep. Laurie Pohutsky (D-Livonia) and Sen. Erika Geiss (D-Taylor) would repeal Michigan’s 90-year-old anti-abortion law ([HB 4006](#) and [SB 0002](#)). That law was overridden by Michigan voter approval of a ballot proposal guaranteeing reproductive freedom. HB 4006 has passed both legislative chambers and has been enrolled for presentation to the Governor.

For the latest information on legislation, check out the Michigan Legislature’s [website](#).

A Brief History of the National Rifle Association:

From a simple beginning, it gets complicated.

Melany Mack

The NRA was founded November 17, 1871, by a group of former Union Army officers, appalled that so many Northern soldiers, often poorly trained, had been hardly capable of using their weapons during the war.

The organization was established as a sporting and hunting association, and at first, its business revolved mostly around target shooting competitions. The idea was to educate a new generation of marksmen, whether for war or hunting or recreational target shooting.

The NRA did not always oppose firearms regulation. In fact, in the 1920s and 1930s, it supported and even sponsored it, playing a constructive role in safety-minded gun ownership

restrictions. The NRA supported the 1934 National Firearms Act—the first federal gun control legislation—as well as the 1938 Federal Firearms Act. Together, the Acts prohibitively taxed the private ownership of automatic weapons, required licensing for handgun deals, introduced waiting periods for handgun buyers, required permits for anyone wishing to carry a concealed weapon, and initiated a licensing system for dealers.

There have been at least three distinct eras over the course of the NRA's 150-year history. At first, the group was mainly concerned with marksmanship, hunting and other recreational activities. Well into the 20th century, the NRA was known primarily for promoting the safe and proper use of firearms, often in some form of cooperation with the government. The Army sometimes donated surplus equipment for training, and these freebies gave gun enthusiasts a powerful incentive to join the NRA.

Do Gun Policy Specifics Matter?

... as gun control positions have crystallized to become part of partisan identity, policy specifics have come to matter less for partisans in Congress than the general pro-gun control or pro-gun rights position that a piece of legislation symbolizes. Today, regardless of the specific policy contents of a bill, a gun vote serves as a signaling device from members of Congress to their partisan supporters that they are either passionate defenders of the Second Amendment (Republicans) or fierce protectors of America's children from gun violence (Democrats). That policy content has lost its relevance for Congressional voting on gun control is evident through the marked decline in vote splitting, the extinction of gun control moderates, and the all-or-nothing voting behavior of partisan shifters—those formerly pro-control Republicans, anti-control Democrats, and gun control moderates who shifted positions over time to vote the party line.

Source: Genevieve Quinn, The Forum 2020; 18(2):249-282



The mid-1970s ushered in a second era. In 1975, the Institute for Legislative Action (ILA), the NRA's lobbying arm, was created. Harlon Bronson Carter, former chief of US Border Control, was named its head. The NRA turned itself into a powerhouse political interest group during the years that anti-immigrant animosity was growing. In 1976 it established a political action committee, the NRA Political Victory Fund. At its annual convention in 1977, Carter participated in a rebellion which ousted the NRA's old leadership and left him as executive vice-president, in charge of the organization. From this point forward, the NRA moved away from its previous support of incremental forms of gun control regulation, becoming ever more political and strident in defense of "gun rights" which it increasingly defined as nearly absolute under the Second Amendment. Protection of guns rights became the NRA's primary cause. The change in mission coincided with a new surge in political money, and the NRA soon became a formidable force in fundraising and campaign spending. In 1980, the organization, with Carter in charge, endorsed Ronald Reagan, the first time in its century-long history it endorsed a presidential candidate. It was also the first time that the Republican party platform opposed gun control. A 1982 report, *The Right to Keep and Bear Arms*, concluded that the Second Amendment had been misinterpreted for nearly two centuries. However, the majority of law review articles used in the report were written by authors employed or represented by the NRA or other gun rights groups. The argument that a new interpretation was not new at all but was instead a restoration of an older, long-lost interpretation, was crucial to the later work of constitutional originalists such as Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

The third era, the NRA's zenith, occurred during the gun-friendly presidency of George W. Bush, who enthusiastically embraced the group's positions. Bush's administration let the ban on assault weapons expire, and it supported the NRA's top legislative priority: enactment in 2005 of special liability protections for the gun industry, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. This law, which protects firearms manufacturers and dealers from being held liable when crimes have been committed with their products, is, according to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#), one of the biggest giveaways to private industry in American history. The most lasting legacy of the Bush administration is his appointment of John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court. Roberts and Alito ruled with the majority in *District of Columbia v. Heller* to find that a DC handgun ban was unconstitutional and to rule—for the first time—that the Second Amendment applies to individuals, asserting a right to own guns for self-defense inside the home. Just a year later, in *McDonald v. Chicago*, Roberts and Alito sided with the majority to strike down a gun ban in the city and ruling—again for the first time—that the gun owner protections of the Second Amendment apply to states as well as the federal government.

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Jill Lepore, in *These Truths*, her masterful history of the United States, explores how the conservative position on guns rose to the status of party doctrine partly because of the role it played in a conservative strategy to take over the judiciary and to institute a new way of interpreting the Constitution. Michael Waldman of the Brennan Center for Justice [concurs with Lepore](#), stating, “The insistence that ‘original intent’ or ‘original public meaning’ is the only legitimate way to read the Constitution came as part of the conservative reaction to expanding rights in the 1960s and 1970s.” Liberals, according to Lepore and Waldman, had won their greatest victories in the courts, especially in the rights revolution that began with *Brown v. Board of Education* and continued with *Roe v. Wade*. Given these circumstances, conservatives decided that changing the courts was the best way to win political victories. Originalism took root in law schools, especially through the Federalist Society, founded in 1982. Originalism also became the official policy of the Reagan Justice Department. Under Attorney General Edwin Meese, the Justice Department functioned as a conservative think tank. The reach of originalism was presented to the public through a sustained campaign of direct mail, talk radio, and cable TV as common sense, and support for gun rights has become a litmus test for Republican conservatism, a major part of the party’s agenda.



Wayne LaPierre

Recently the NRA has suffered a series of scandals, creating a crisis—financial, political, and legal—for the organization. After pouring over \$50 million into the 2016 elections, including \$31 million into Donald Trump’s campaign, things rapidly unraveled. A regularly updated [blog](#) by Giffords, an organization working to end gun violence in America, lists illegal campaign conduct, financial woes, Russian ties, leadership infighting, and other controversies, concluding that the organization “seems to be teetering on the brink, hemorrhaging both money and support.” However, Robert J. Spitzer, writing on the History News Network, believes “only a fool would count the NRA out now as a key force in the gun issue” ... because “the NRA’s political muscle lies less with money than with its loyal and devoted grassroots base, which remains intact.”

No matter what becomes of the NRA, its lobbying work and vigorous advocacy for unlimited gun rights has been a major factor in the gun violence crisis in this country. In the last three years alone, there have been more than 600 mass shootings, incidents in which four or more people were killed or injured—almost two a day on average. Gun violence is now the [leading cause of death](#) for children and teens in this country. While a public health approach helped to drastically reduce deaths from car crashes, [relentless lobbying](#) by the NRA has curbed research that can help prevent deaths from gun violence. The NRA has also [vigorously opposed](#) the collection and centralization of firearms records, effectively knee-capping efforts to collect the data necessary to better understand the gun violence crisis.

Thanks to the Democratic majority in Michigan’s legislature, we are beginning to see some progress on commonsense gun safety laws. It’s up to us to press our senators and Congressional representatives for similar laws at the national level. Let’s make this a safer world for our children and grandchildren!

Assault Weapons: What You Need to Know

Fred Clark

Like any tool, guns are customized for specific tasks. A rifle is well suited for hunting deer and a shotgun is designed to take down birds and small game. An assault weapon, however, is designed to kill people. It is too light for hunting deer and too powerful for small game. The 223 cartridge, used in assault rifles, is, in fact, prohibited for hunting deer in many states.

Assault weapons bring together several features that make them ideal military weapons.

The cartridge is midway between a pistol and a high-powered rifle cartridge. The weapon doesn't kick much and a soldier can carry a lot of ammunition.

Previous military rifles were designed to be deadly at long range and were consequently long, heavy, and awkward. Assault weapons are designed for medium and short-range combat. They are smaller, lighter, and much handier, ideal for urban combat.

Technically, assault weapons are fully automatic, but semi-automatic versions are probably every bit as lethal in a mass shooting and they are widely available. Fully automatic weapons (machine guns) fire continuously with a single pull of the trigger. They can spray several hundred rounds per minute. Semi-automatic weapons fire once with each pull of the trigger. They can fire about 45 rounds per minute. The AR15 is a semi-automatic version of the military M16.

Assault weapons draw rounds of ammunition from a magazine. Magazines are spring-loaded boxes containing many rounds. When empty, the shooter can eject the empty magazine and snap in another in seconds. Magazine size is an issue for both assault weapons and handguns. Many manufacturers produce high-capacity magazines, making the weapons even more deadly.



TYPICAL FIREARM WHEN THE CONSTITUTION WAS WRITTEN

Magazine Capacity	Effective Rate of Fire	Muzzle Velocity	Max. Accurate Range
1	3	1,000	50
Round	Rounds Per Minute	Feet Per second	Meters



TYPICAL MODERN-DAY AR15

Magazine Capacity	Effective Rate of Fire	Muzzle Velocity	Max. Accurate Range
30	45	3,260	550
Round	Rounds Per Minute	Feet Per second	Meters

WAPO/WONKBLOG

Source: Bushmaster XM-15 manual, Journal of the American revolution. David Lux/Bryant University



The 223 bullet is a light, very high-velocity round. On striking flesh and bone the bullet can change direction or tumble, leaving massive wounds. Civilian hospitals are used to dealing with handgun caliber wounds, but they are ill-prepared for the massive wounds assault weapons inflict. Mass shootings often overwhelm the capacity of hospital emergency rooms and many mass shootings in the U.S. involve school-age children.

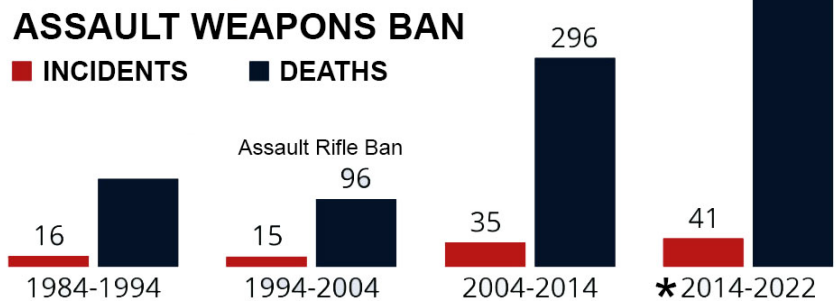
There are many reasons why there are so many assault rifles in the United States. One of the most important is the immense profits gun-makers are reaping. According to [an article](#) by the Associated Press, gun manufacturers have amassed \$1 billion in profits over the past decade from selling AR-15-style guns.

And despite dramatic increases in the number of mass killings, gun manufacturers continue to market assault weapons as a way for young men to prove their masculinity. [An article](#) from CBS News notes that gun-makers use marketing and sales tactics designed to entice civilians into purchasing military-style weapons, often by offering expensive firearms on credit and by “subtly referencing” extremist groups.

In 1994, President [Clinton](#) signed the Federal Assault Weapons Ban, prohibiting 19 [assault weapons](#) as well as other semi-automatic firearms with certain features. Mass shootings temporarily decreased, but in 2004 the Federal Assault Weapons Ban expired, making assault weapons and high-capacity magazines legal once again, with incidents and deaths eclipsing 2004 levels more than four times over. Given these facts, it is difficult to argue that assault weapons have a place or a purpose in the lives of most Americans.

IS IT TIME TO BRING BACK THE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN?

NUMBER OF MASS SHOOTINGS AND THEIR VICTIMS IN THE U.S. FROM 1984 TO 2022



Minimum four killed excluding the perpetrator.
 * Note: Only eight year time span.
 Source: Mother Jones

Q: Can a semi-automatic weapon be converted to fire in full auto mode?

A: Sometimes, but the results are problematic and highly illegal. The Las Vegas shooter used a device called a bump stock to kill 61 people.

A recent Washington Post article, [The Blast Effect](#), reveals how bullets from an AR-15 blow the body apart. **Warning:** It is graphic.

Why Sensible Gun Legislation Here is Critical

Ellen Link

The National Rifle Association, in collusion with the lucrative gun industry, continues to use as its rallying cry the myth that those in favor of promoting firearm safety through well-regulated gun ownership are really just out to take away all guns from their rightful owners, from their dependable hunting rifles to their gun-collecting showpieces—never mind that there are hunters who support the regulation of firearms.

The world has changed drastically since the NRA's beginning, so for its leadership to pretend that the tremendous growth in gun designs, sales and numbers of gun owners does not contribute to the explosion in gun violence in this country is not just disingenuous. It is a ploy that treats all the responsible gun owners out there like morons in the hope that they will blindly continue to buy the products that have made the manufacturers (and certain NRA leaders) rich. As for preventable deaths from guns, they really don't seem to care, even when it concerns the lives of innocent young children. According to the [Joint Economic Committee Democrats](#),

"In 2020, more than 45,000 Americans died from fatal firearm injuries, the highest reported in two decades..."

"In 2020, more than 45,000 Americans died from fatal firearm injuries, the highest reported in two decades...[I]n 2021, the largest publicly traded gunmaker in the United States, Sturm, Ruger & Company, topped \$280 million in profits and set a new company record. Similarly, profits for Smith & Wesson Brands, the second largest gunmaker, reached nearly \$450 million and reached a new company high."

"Guns don't kill people; people kill people." Yet to prevent unbalanced and/or misogynistic people from using guns to kill other people there must be ways of detecting them—like background checks. How does this not make sense? And how is it we can require drivers to acquire a driver's license and for there to be enforceable speed limits and other limitations but are not allowed to place any similar restrictions on gun owners? Shouldn't a gun owner be required to purchase insurance just as a driver must?

One of the main problems with guns is that, for someone who is emotionally unbalanced, temporarily or otherwise, they provide an immediate resolution to their rage or despair. Without access to that immediate "remedy", they are far less likely to cause a fatality. Suicides have long accounted for the [majority of U.S. gun deaths](#). "From 2015 to 2019, half of people that died by suicide used a gun, putting firearms as the main mechanism of suicide deaths in the country. Moreover, when looking at overall gun deaths, roughly two-thirds are attributed to suicides—a proportion that is consistent across most states. Notably, the United States has a gun suicide rate that is 10 times higher than that of peer nations." (American Progress analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Injury Prevention & Control: Fatal Injury and Violence Data.") [Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in Michigan](#).

In 2019, figures from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), showed that a veteran died by gun suicide every two hours, while a report from the DOD showed that, regarding active members of the military, there was close to one gun suicide every day. “Based on available data, the [Center for American Progress](#) found that at least 8,710 former or current military members died by gun suicide from 2003 to 2019... greater than the number of soldiers that died while deployed during the post-9/11 wars—7,057.”

It should also be obvious that proper storage of such weapons could prevent children from finding them and thereby causing irreparable harm to themselves and others, yet another reason why sensible gun legislation is needed in this country where the manufacture of guns—more than one for every American—has run rampant. The fabric of our society will not heal until this and other related problems have been resolved.

Our Congresswoman, Elissa Slotkin is making *sensible gun safety legislation a key issue in her Senate campaign.*

Addressing Our Climate Emergency Would be Investing in Real National Security

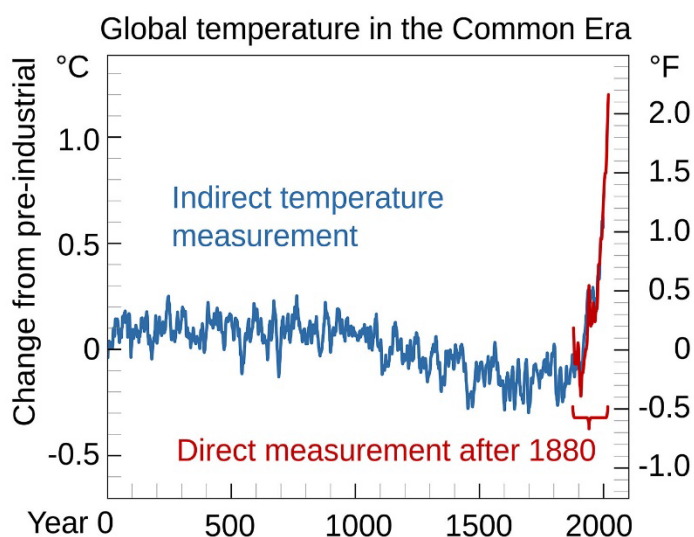
Terry Link

The spring season is arriving here in Michigan with crocuses emerging, red-winged blackbirds trilling, longer days, and the annual bloating of last year’s military budget. The President and Pentagon’s request for \$886 billion is a 9% increase from last year’s request, which our legislators determined was insufficient and so added an additional \$45 billion in petty cash. I’m sure our military contractors have been knocking on staffers’ doors to see if that can be boosted even more again this year.

But an inconvenient truth got even more inconvenient this week with the release of the IPCC’s 6th Synthesis Assessment Report. As the consensus science report clarifies, we are in a climate emergency and we need immediate and dramatic action, not platitudes and promises of someday. Bottom line: we need a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in less than seven years, and then must continue steep reductions from there to stave off the potential end

of civilization as we know it. And to do so we need investments 3-6 times what we are currently investing!

If you read only the [Summary for Policymakers](#) (38 pages) or listen to [Secretary General Guterres' statement](#) upon its release, you should be truly terrified for your children and grandchildren. The IPCC is the best example of solid science we have, with representation from scientists around the world and from every major discipline. It is a CONSENSUS report. If anything, it is a conservative view of the threats.



We go through this circus every year, and every year Congress, which holds the purse strings, decides it's not enough. How much will our bipartisan hawks inflate the threats of the evil empires du jour, so they can bring home even more bacon to their districts and states to show they are "tough"? When it comes to military spending, there is never enough, in their eyes. And just so you realize it, more than half of that spending goes directly to military contractors, not the soldiers and employees of the Pentagon. As Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director for the National Priorities Project reports, that translates into [military contractors receiving 25 percent](#) of the entire discretionary budget!!

Miriam Pemberton, a seasoned researcher on military spending, recently noted that not only is the Pentagon a major [contributor](#) to planet-heating pollution—emitting more greenhouse gases than 140 countries—and other forms of environmental destruction, but a 2019 Costs of War study [showed](#) that "dollar for dollar, military spending creates far fewer jobs than spending on other sectors like education, healthcare, and mass transit."

[The People Over Pentagon Act \(H.R.1134\)](#) introduced by Representatives Barbara Lee and Mark Pocan would reduce and redirect \$100 billion from the Pentagon and military contractors to human welfare and environmental security. Among the seven things Koshgarian lists that could be accomplished with that \$100 billion is being able to power every household in the United States with solar energy.

As the IPCC report released this week highlights, if we hope to possibly keep global temperatures from rising beyond the potentially devastating 1.5 degrees Centigrade threshold, we need action and resources put to this immediately. There are opportunities to address many threatening challenges if we can redirect our spending. Call your elected officials and urge them to support H.R.1134 and to meet the 2030 greenhouse gas 50% reduction targets.

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A Better Ending

We all have to go sometime, right? But if we plan ahead, we can decide *how* we want to bow out. And we Baby Boomers owe it to the younger generations to do so in a manner that honors and protects the earth.

So, forget about one of those big, ornate coffins that will cost your family a small fortune and leach toxins into the surrounding soil and groundwater for years to come. (There's also the maintenance of the cemetery, which often includes chemical applications.) If you think cremation is the answer, think again. Cremation requires the burning of huge amounts of fossil fuel, also not good. What's a person to do?

Opt for a "green burial" instead. There are now a variety of options from which to choose, and you can learn about many of them in this [videotaped webinar](#) presented by the Lansing Area League of Women Voters in January. Watch it, think about it, then make a plan. Time's a-wasting.

