



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, June 2, 2024

Fewer Guns in the Wrong Hands

All of us must do more to end violence in the home and to find ways to help victims break out of the pattern of abuse. As bishops, we support measures that control the sale and use of firearms and make them safer (especially efforts that prevent their unsupervised use by children or anyone other than the owner), and we reiterate our call for sensible regulation of handguns.

-Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2000

Ethan's Law for Safe Storage of Firearms is named after Ethan Song (15) who was accidentally shot while he and his 14-year-old best friend were playing with a gun. "Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens, with **nearly 4.6 million children living in homes with unsecured weapons**. Responsible gun ownership must include safe and secure storage to prevent access for minors and others who cannot lawfully possess a firearm....

Safe and secure storage of firearms not only saves lives by preventing accidental shootings, it can also reduce the likelihood of suicide and of mass shooting events. The firearm suicide rate in children and teens has risen by 66% over the last ten years, with **80% of those suicides using a gun that belonged to a family member**. And according to the Secret Service, 76% of school shooters acquire their guns from their own home or a relative." (*Mercy Justice Team*, Sisters of Mercy, 1/31/24).

S. 173 Ethan's Law and H.R. 660 Ethan's Law were introduced in the House and Senate on 01/31/2023 and have been referred to the Senate Committee and House Committee on the Judiciary. As of May 10, 2024, there was bipartisan support in the House. [Urge Congress to pass Ethan's Law.](#)

A July 2023 report on a study by the Southern Poverty Law Center looking at young Americans' attitudes towards and experiences with guns "showed that, **on average, young Americans know one person who has been injured or killed by a gun**. As a result of this trauma, 59% of a follow-up focus group of 44 study participants reported feeling motivated to curtail gun access. Respondents' desires for prevention-focused measures were prevalent across our new qualitative findings, as many young people lamented the reactive and unrealistic nature of the crisis mitigation strategies being implemented at their schools." (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2/6/24) [Read the full report here.](#)

In Pennsylvania, "there are few requirements to own a firearm. While almost every purchase requires a background check, there is no requirement to know how to use a firearm or prove you have training first. You can walk into a gun store and buy multiple firearms within minutes. Once you own a firearm, you can carry it openly in almost every part of the Commonwealth without needing any safety training.... **There is no requirement to secure your firearm in a safe or with a gun lock, increasing the risk of an unintentional shooting.** Owners do not need to report if their firearm is missing or stolen, fueling illegal firearm trafficking used in community violence. These policy failures combined with the fact there are more guns than people in the US (393 million firearms at last count) have contributed to a fatal situation." [Tell your state lawmakers to pass the CeaseFirePA Common Agenda.](#) (Colleen Dauerbach, *May Monthly Digest*, SSJ Justice, 5/6/24)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.