To address the public health crisis created by gun violence, the AMA House of Delegates (HOD) adopted new policy to seek a stronger background-check system for firearms purchases.

At the 2018 AMA Interim Meeting, the delegates adopted policy to:

- Encourage the enactment of state laws requiring the reporting of all classes of prohibited individuals, as defined by state and federal law, to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).
- Support federal funding to provide grants to states to improve NICS reporting.
- Encourage states to automate the reporting of relevant information to NICS to improve the quality and timeliness of the data.

“For NICS to be a useful tool in the prevention of firearm injuries and deaths, it needs to contain the records of individuals disqualified under law from possessing firearms—and the data needs to be reported in a timely manner,” said AMA President Barbara L. McAneny, MD. “Inconsistencies in state reporting has contributed to the lack of success in identifying individuals who should not have a firearm.”

NICS was created by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 to facilitate background checks on individuals seeking to acquire firearms from licensed dealers. It was activated in 1998 and is administered by the FBI. State reporting to NICS is voluntary.

“Making sure that relevant information is consistently reported could help save lives,” Dr. McAneny said. “Physicians often see patients at risk of firearm injury and death, including patients at risk of suicide. A stronger federal background-check system will help protect patients.”

The HOD also amended policy to support:
Requiring licensing or permitting of firearms owners and purchasers, including the completion of a required safety course, and registration of all firearms.

“Gun violence restraining orders” for individuals arrested or convicted of domestic violence or stalking, and supports extreme risk protection orders, commonly known as “red-flag” laws.

The importance of due process so that individuals can petition for their rights to be restored.

“As one of the main causes of intentional and unintentional injuries and deaths, the American Medical Association recognizes that firearm-related violence is a serious public health crisis in the United States,” says the AMA Board of Trustees report whose recommendations were adopted.

Delegates also amended existing policies to include provisions to support:

- Enactment of child access-prevention laws that are consistent with AMA policy.
- A ban on the manufacture, importation and sale of 3D-printed firearms and the production and distribution of 3D firearm digital blueprints.

“The proliferation of 3D printers will increase access to guns in an unregulated manner,” Dr. McAneny said. “We need to address this issue now before these weapons play a role in the terrifying rate of gun violence in this country.”

The policies stem from comprehensive actions taken by the HOD at the 2018 AMA Annual Meeting that included supporting tougher background checks and prohibiting persons under domestic violence restraining orders from possessing or purchasing a firearm.