Whereas, The United States struggles with an epidemic of firearm violence; in 2015, there were 34,997 deaths in the U.S. that were caused by firearms. Mass shootings account for a small percentage of firearm violence deaths yet result in unnecessary morbidity and mortality; and

Whereas, Firearms employing “high velocity” firepower were designed for the military to provide massive tissue destruction and obliteration of the enemy. The classic military model is the M-16 and the common civilian counterpart is the AR-15; and

Whereas, Such weapons have no appreciable value to U.S. civilians for use to defend themselves and have been repudiated by law enforcement for such use; and

Whereas, Major sports and hunting organizations have not supported the use of assault weapons for their members’ goals; and

Whereas, In 1994, Congress passed a ban on assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines and it lasted 10 years until it expired in 2004 and was not renewed. Compared with the 10-year period before the ban, the number of firearm massacres during the ban period fell by 37 percent, and the number of people dying from firearm massacres fell by 43 percent; and

Whereas, Assault weapons have increasingly been used in mass killing episodes since the federal ban lapsed in 2004. The use of assault weapons and high capacity magazines have increased by 183 percent in massacres and 239 percent in massacre deaths. Another study shows that assault-style weapons are showing up more often not only in mass shootings, but in ordinary crimes of violence and attacks on police officers. (Klarevas, LM Ramage Nation: Securing American from Mass Shootings. Amherst, New York; Pometheus Books, 2016. Koper, C.S., Johnson, W.D., Nichols, J.L. et al. J. Urban Health (2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0205-7.); and

Whereas, Major states, such as California, have shown a diminution of killing episodes since permanently banning semi-automatic assault weapons in 1989 and high-capacity ammunition magazines in 1999; and

Whereas, There is no intent to infringe on current ownership of legally purchased firearms of any kind in this resolution; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association urge Congress to pass legislation to ban the sale, transfer, manufacture, and importation of assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines to the American public. (New HOD Policy)
Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 04/30/18

RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Ban on Handguns and Automatic Repeating Weapons H-145.985

It is the policy of the AMA to: (1) Support interventions pertaining to firearm control, especially those that occur early in the life of the weapon (e.g., at the time of manufacture or importation, as opposed to those involving possession or use). Such interventions should include but not be limited to:
(a) mandatory inclusion of safety devices on all firearms, whether manufactured or imported into the United States, including built-in locks, loading indicators, safety locks on triggers, and increases in the minimum pressure required to pull triggers;
(b) bans on the possession and use of firearms and ammunition by unsupervised youths under the age of 18;
(c) the imposition of significant licensing fees for firearms dealers;
(d) the imposition of federal and state surtaxes on manufacturers, dealers and purchasers of handguns and semiautomatic repeating weapons along with the ammunition used in such firearms, with the attending revenue earmarked as additional revenue for health and law enforcement activities that are directly related to the prevention and control of violence in U.S. society; and
(e) mandatory destruction of any weapons obtained in local buy-back programs.
(2) Support legislation outlawing the Black Talon and other similarly constructed bullets.
(3) Support the right of local jurisdictions to enact firearm regulations that are stricter than those that exist in state statutes and encourage state and local medical societies to evaluate and support local efforts to enact useful controls.

Gun Violence as a Public Health Crisis D-145.995

Our AMA: (1) will immediately make a public statement that gun violence represents a public health crisis which requires a comprehensive public health response and solution; and
(2) will actively lobby Congress to lift the gun violence research ban.

Firearm Safety and Research, Reduction in Firearm Violence, and Enhancing Access to Mental Health Care H-145.975

1. Our AMA supports: a) federal and state research on firearm-related injuries and deaths; b) increased funding for and the use of state and national firearms injury databases, including the expansion of the National Violent Death Reporting System to all 50 states and U.S. territories, to inform state and federal health policy; c) encouraging physicians to access evidence-based data regarding firearm safety to educate and counsel patients about firearm safety; d) the rights of physicians to have free and open communication with their patients regarding firearm safety and the use of gun locks in their homes; e) encouraging local projects to facilitate the low-cost distribution of gun locks in homes; f) encouraging physicians to become involved in local firearm safety classes as a means of promoting injury prevention and the public health; and g) encouraging CME providers to consider, as appropriate, inclusion of presentations about the prevention of gun violence in national, state, and local continuing medical education programs.

2. Our AMA supports initiatives to enhance access to mental and cognitive health care, with greater focus on the diagnosis and management of mental illness and concurrent substance abuse disorders, and work with state and specialty medical societies and other interested stakeholders to identify and develop standardized approaches to mental health assessment for potential violent behavior.

Firearms as a Public Health Problem in the United States - Injuries and Death H-145.997

Our AMA recognizes that uncontrolled ownership and use of firearms, especially handguns, is a serious threat to the public's health inasmuch as the weapons are one of the main causes of intentional and unintentional injuries and deaths. Therefore, the AMA: (1) encourages and endorses the development and presentation of safety education programs that will engender more responsible use and storage of firearms;
(2) urges that government agencies, the CDC in particular, enlarge their efforts in the study of firearm-related injuries and in the development of ways and means of reducing such injuries and deaths;
(3) urges Congress to enact needed legislation to regulate more effectively the importation and interstate traffic of all handguns;
(4) urges the Congress to support recent legislative efforts to ban the manufacture and importation of nonmetallic, not readily detectable weapons, which also resemble toy guns; (5) encourages the improvement or modification of firearms so as to make them as safe as humanly possible;
(6) encourages nongovernmental organizations to develop and test new, less hazardous designs for firearms;
(7) urges that a significant portion of any funds recovered from firearms manufacturers and dealers through legal proceedings be used for gun safety education and gun-violence prevention; and
(8) strongly urges US legislators to fund further research into the epidemiology of risks related to gun violence on a national level.

Citation: (CSA Rep. A, I-87; Reaffirmed: BOT Rep. I-93-50; Appended: Res. 403, I-99; Reaffirmation A-07; Reaffirmation A-13; Appended: Res. 921, I-13)

See also: Physicians and the Public Health Issues of Gun Safety D-145.997; Prevention of Unintentional Shooting Deaths Among Children H-145.979