

Gun violence remarks and a moment of Silence

Good evening, and thank you.

Gun violence is a plague on our nation. It is a public health crisis. And much of it is preventable.

As we start this meeting, we are going to have a moment of silence for the victims of gun violence – including physicians and other health care workers who have been harmed – but first it's important for me, as your AMA president, to speak on this important topic.

Almost every day in this country, we bear witness to the shocking brutality of weapons of war being unleashed on society ... on elementary school students and movie theater goers ... on grocery store shoppers and people in houses of worship ... on physicians and health care workers in hospitals and clinics.

This cannot be our new normal. Gun violence is out of control. **Enough is enough.**

Doctors witness this trauma firsthand. We know what military-grade assault weapons do to the human body. We see it up close in our emergency departments, trauma centers, and morgues.

This House of Delegates first declared gun violence a public health crisis in 2016, and decades prior to that the AMA pushed Congress to pass common-sense reforms that can help keep guns from the hands of people seeking to inflict pain on others.

AMA's policies call for banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity

magazines ... for expanding background checks and waiting periods on firearm sales.

It calls for eliminating ghost-gun loopholes and federal requirements for firearm storage. It urges Congress to earmark funds for gun violence research and violence-prevention efforts.

More recently, the AMA has thrown its strong support behind the Protecting Our Kids Act, which passed the House. This bill may not accomplish everything on our wish list but is an important first step in protecting children and families from the devastation of gun violence.

We are hopeful that deliberations currently underway in the Senate can achieve bipartisan compromise.

Folks, there isn't a corner of this country that is immune to gun violence. It touches every community – from big cities to small towns ... from the coasts to the heartland.

Ignoring the problem will only lead to more bloodshed --to more senseless deaths and grieving families.

We know there are millions of responsible gun owners in America. I, myself, am a lifelong hunter and I appreciate the importance of protecting the rights granted to us by the Constitution.

But this isn't what we're talking about. We're talking about keeping weapons of war from those seeking to cause violence and mayhem.

As physicians, there is a lot we can do to further these efforts. We can counsel our patients on firearm safety, on appropriate ways to store a gun at home, on how to keep them out of the hands of children. And we can be active in the civic dialogue around gun violence prevention.

We should be leaders on this issue. And we are, through our work here at the AMA, but also in our home states and communities.

We must do something. And the time for Congress, and us, to act -- is now.

Thank you. I ask that you all join me in a moment of silence for the victims of gun violence and the families they leave behind.

(Moment of silence)

Thank you.

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