

I was deeply saddened by the recent horrific shooting in Aurora, Colorado. I was also reminded that such horrific events are unfortunately all too common in our country. And while we mourn our loss as a national community, we must also be reminded that such events provide cause to stop and contemplate what can be done to stop them.

However, that's not what is happening in Congress as the nation recoils from the recent Colorado gun violence. The 71 [killed or wounded](#) are the latest in a pattern that happens repeatedly, predictably, with overall loss of life in the tens of thousands over the years and yet we refuse to do anything about it.

Worse than our inaction however, is the fact that we continue to allow political bullies to intimidate us from even researching the facts and studying the causes of, and potential solutions to, gun violence. There has never been a threat in this country that sportsmen will not be able to hunt or target shoot, yet the gun lobby has so successfully pushed this narrative that there is virtually no gun control at all in the United States.

This political intimidation, combined with a lack of willpower in Congress, has made it impossible to even close the gun show loophole where individuals can purchase unlimited amount of guns without a reasonable background check. The NRA is also at work to make sure that even people [suspected to be](#) terrorists and are on the "[no-fly](#)" list can purchase guns.

There are some who argue that all we need is for existing gun laws to be enforced. But these same individuals and groups then systematically set about to dismantle the laws we have and then defund even the most feeble enforcement efforts. Because we have not fought them hard enough, we now live in a country where the populace is increasingly armed with military-grade weapons that are designed only to kill people.

We must push back against the false messages and fear-mongering. Having a thoughtful and rational conversation about gun safety is not an assault on our rights; rather it is an important conversation about public health and safety. We know that a gun is used in over [60 percent](#) of all murders, and that a handgun is used in [over 40 percent](#)

. We know that hundreds of people die from gun accidents every year and that there are currently 90 guns in America

[per 100](#)

citizens. We know that automatic weapons are available over the counter and that they come with enormous magazines capable of facilitating killing sprees that serve no purpose in sports or target shooting.

It is time to recognize these realities and for politicians, gun owners, American business and the health community to come together to deal with an epidemic of gun violence the way we would treat any other threat to the safety of our families and communities.

We can start by passing sensible gun legislation, such as:

- H.R. 308, the Large Capacity Ammunition Feeding Device Act. This would ban large capacity magazines that can hold dozens of rounds of ammunition, prohibiting these armor-piercing bullets from being sold like tic-tacs.
  
- H.R.591, the Gun Show Loophole Closing Act of 2011, which would close the gun-show loophole where guns are sold often without any background check.
  
- H.R. 1781, the Fix Gun Checks Act of 2011, which would also eliminate the gun-show loophole by requiring a background check for every gun purchased, as well as the strength the existing background check system.
  
- H.R. 1506, the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act of 2011, which would prohibit the sale of firearms or explosives to individuals determined by the Attorney General to be engaged in terrorist activities. Currently the "no-fly" list data cannot be shared between ATF and Homeland Security.

There is no time to sit idly while we wait for the next tragedy to happen. Congress and the American people must start taking a long, hard look at ourselves and the country we want to live in, and move forward on researching and implementing solutions that will work to stop this terrible epidemic.