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Gun Control in Georgia

When it comes to discussing gun control things can get a little intense. Gun control has been an issue that has been brought to the public's eyes in recent years. Georgia has been steadily rising as one of the top states for gun deaths in the country for more than a decade. In 2016, Georgia ranked 4th highest state with a total of 1751 deaths, resulting in more than Florida, Texas, and California. Studies show that you're twice as likely to be shot to death in Georgia than in New York.

Stronger gun control in Georgia is something that I strongly stand for. The Second Amendment of the US Constitution reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."(US Supreme Court) On June 9, 2016, the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 7 to 4 that, "the right of the general public to carry a concealed firearm in public is not, and never has been, protected by the Second Amendment." "States' concealed carry laws can allow handgun owners, under certain conditions, to carry a loaded handgun either concealed on a person, in a vehicle, or in public. Concealed carry means a person may carry a handgun in a manner so that others cannot see the handgun."(Sanders) Proponents of more gun control laws state that the Second Amendment was intended for militias; that gun violence would be reduced; that gun restrictions have always existed; and that a majority of Americans, including gun owners, support new gun

restrictions. Opponents say that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to own guns; that guns are needed for self-defense from threats ranging from local criminals to foreign invaders; and that gun ownership deters crime rather than causes more crime.

The FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System, also known as NICS, is supposed to keep firearms out of reach for dangerous individuals. Background checks require government databases that keep personal individual information on gun owners, including name, addresses, mental health history, criminal records, and more. "During a NICS check, descriptive data provided by an individual, such as name and date of birth, are used to search three national databases, managed by the FBI, containing criminal history and other relevant records to determine whether or not the person is disqualified by law from receiving or possessing firearms. The majority of the records found in these three databases come from states and territories, though federal and international criminal justice agencies also contribute some records." A majority of adults, including gun owners, support common-sense gun control such as background checks, bans on assault weapons and bans on high-capacity magazines. Don Macalady, a member of Hunters against Gun Violence, stated, "As a hunter and someone who has owned guns since I was a young boy, I believe that commonsense gun legislation makes us all safer. Background checks prevent criminals and other dangerous people from getting guns." According to February 20, 2018, Quinnipiac Poll, 97% of American voters and 97% of gun owners support universal background checks.

Gun control supporters argue that more gun control laws would reduce gun deaths. Countries with restrictive gun control laws are said to have lower gun homicide and suicide rates than the United States. In 2017, 658 people died from guns, and so far in 2018, there were only

532 deaths due to gun violence. (Gun Violence Archive) Under Georgia law, a buyer must be 21 to get a handgun carry permit with one exception; anyone who is at least 18 and has been honorably discharged from the military. A carry permit or a gun purchase requires a federal background check with three possible outcomes; approve, deny or delay. Those prohibited by federal law from buying guns include felons, anyone involuntarily committed for mental health treatment, anyone convicted of domestic violence, anyone subject to a temporary restraining order and anyone with a pending felony indictment. Georgia has a "stand your ground" law that says a shooting is lawful if individual fears for their own safety or the safety of others. Someone who may oppose gun control laws may think that gun control laws do not deter crime; gun ownership deters crime. A Nov. 26, 2013 study found that, between 1980 and 2009, "assault weapons bans did not significantly affect murder rates at the state level" and "states with restrictions on the carrying of concealed weapons had higher gun-related murders." While gun ownership doubled in the twentieth century, the murder rate decreased.

Gun control supporters say that limiting the number of guns in society also limits the number of gun deaths that occur. Enacting gun control laws such as mandatory safety features could reduce the number of accidental gun deaths. When criminals and potential criminals have a harder time getting guns, everyone is safer. When children have less access to firearms, accidental shootings decrease. People who support less gun control takes the opposite view. They argue that law abiding citizens with guns can prevent crimes. When adults own guns, they can defend themselves and others from criminal attacks.

As a strong gun control supporter, I feel as if it is very necessary to pass laws that would reduce gun violence, suicides, and gun deaths.

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