

## **A Letter to Senator Charles Schumer to Introduce Legislation to Repeal the Dickey Amendment**

Date: 15 March 2018

From: David Lê, Laurianne Gutierrez

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
New York City Office  
780 Third Avenue, Suite 2301  
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Dear Senator Schumer,

We write to implore you to introduce legislation to repeal the Dickey Amendment in order to permit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to fund research that could help provide a solution to the problem of gun violence in the United States.

In February, a school shooting occurred in Parkland, Florida that resulted in the deaths of 17 students, faculty, and staff. This gun violence incident is recorded as the deadliest school shooting since Sandy Hook's 2012 massacre, which resulted in the death of 20 children and six adults. In addition, in 2017 two of the deadliest mass shootings in United States history occurred in Texas, with 27 killed and 21 injured, and in Las Vegas, Nevada, with 59 killed and 441 injured. It is evident that the number of incidents of gun violence, in particular mass killings, are rising in the United States. According to Congress, 'mass killing' entails "3 or more killings in a single incident" (P.L. 112-265). Last year, there was a total of over 300 mass shootings and 50,000 gun violence related incidents [1]. Over 300 mass shootings in a year is roughly one mass shooting each day.

In 1996, Congress included an amendment by Representative Jay Dickey in its spending bill, which later became the Dickey Amendment. This amendment, supported by the National Rifle Association, declared that "none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control [2]." It is notable to mention that in 2012, Jay Dickey himself co-authored a piece for the *Washington Post* with Mark Rosenberg, former director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, essentially denouncing his earlier stance against gun violence advocacy and research [4]. The piece illuminates the efficacy of enabling the federal government to invest money to understand the root causes of an issue and take subsequent measures to reduce their frequency. For example, regarding the case of motor vehicle fatalities, Dickey and Rosenberg cite, "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009." This was a result of thorough research that prompted the implementation of safety measures such as seat belts, frontal airbags, and a minimum drinking age.

The Dickey Amendment prevents the funding of any type of research that might advocate for gun control from being conducted. Without proper scientific research conducted on the gun violence issue in America, we cannot confidently conceive, let alone implement, solutions to the to this most pressing

problem. The Dickey Amendment must be repealed and our government must, at the very least, fund research that might lead to a solution. This is a first basic step.

It is distressing that children, whom we consider as the future of the United States, have to experience the fear of safety within their school systems. For a safe and peaceful America, citizens, especially children, should not lack a sense of safety and security when living their day to day lives. It is important to understand that there were other contributing factors that led to these gun violence incidents. However, the issue of gun violence comes from the root, which is lack of gun control. Therefore, it is imperative that you take action to introduce a bill in the Senate, similar to H.R.1478 - Gun Violence Research Act, which will allow the Centers for Disease Control to fund research on gun-related incidents [3]. Through the passing of a bill similar to H.R.1478 - Gun Violence Research Act, the CDC will be able to conduct research on the causes of gun violence to resolve the rising issue of gun-related incidents. Gun violence is a public health problem and only once we realize that as a country can improvement for our safety and the safety of the future be ensured.

Sincerely,

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#### Footnotes

- [1]- "Gun Violence Archive." *Gun Violence Archive*, [www.gunviolencearchive.org/](http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/).
- [2]- "PUBLIC LAW 104–208—SEPT. 30, 1996" Authenticated U.S. Government Information. 30 September 1996. Web. Accessed 07 March 2018. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ208/pdf/PLAW-104publ208.pdf>
- [3]- Murphy, and Stephanie. "Text - H.R.1478 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Gun Violence Research Act." *Congress.gov*, 10 Mar. 2017, [www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1478/text](http://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1478/text).
- [4]- Dickey, Jay, and Mark Rosenberg. "We Won't Know the Cause of Gun Violence until We Look for It." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 27 July 2012, [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-wont-know-the-cause-of-gun-violence-until-we-look-for-it/2012/07/27/gJQAPfenEX\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.d8908937223e](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-wont-know-the-cause-of-gun-violence-until-we-look-for-it/2012/07/27/gJQAPfenEX_story.html?utm_term=.d8908937223e).