

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A166
Title: Registration of Firearms; Licensing of Firearm Sellers, Buyers, and Users; Use of Taggants
Proposer: 07 - Social Justice & United States Policy
Topic: Gun Control, Weapons

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-B003 Advocate for the Regulation of Ghost and 3D Printed Guns
2022-B006 Advocate for State-Level Gun Violence Prevention
2018-C015 On the Topic of Firearms Without Serial Numbers (Rejected)
2015-B008 Support Handgun Purchaser Licensing
2015-C005 Implement Laws to Decrease Gun Violence
2000-B007 Request the Removal of Handguns and Assault Weapons
2000-D004 Express Concern About Availability of Handguns and Assault Weapons
1997-C035 Urge Restrictions on Sale, Ownership and Use of Firearms
1997-D033 Urge Legislation on the Safe Manufacture of Domestic Hand Guns
1994-D019 Request a Commission Study of Sale and Spread of Armaments
1991-B042 Express the Mind of the House Bishops Supporting Handgun Controls
1976-C052 Urge Congress to Adopt Effective Hand Gun Control Legislation

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

A166 - Registration of Firearms; Licensing of Firearm Sellers, Buyers, and Users; Use of Taggants

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: 07 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Directs an Interim Body: No

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: Yes

Directs Executive Council: Yes

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents:

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention reaffirm the gun violence resolutions of previous General Conventions and the Executive Council as summarized in Policy for Action; An Index of Episcopal Church Public Policy Resolutions; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention acknowledge that the right to life is one of the unalienable rights on which the Republic is based; that the right to bear arms is guaranteed by the Constitution; that our unalienable and Constitutional rights are not absolute; and that governments must balance gun ownership and control of violence with the duty to ensure security and public safety; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention strongly urge federal, state, and local, governments to pass objective, shall-issue licensing laws for sellers, buyers, and users of firearms that require a waiting period, finger printing, background check, mental health evaluation, minimum age of purchaser, training tailored to the firearm being purchased and include the proper use, maintenance, and safe storage of the firearm and that said license must be renewed periodically; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention strongly urge the federal government to develop a system of gun registration that links domestically manufactured and imported firearms by serial number to the manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, original owner, and all subsequent owners and that all of the individuals in this chain of ownership must be licensed as outlined in the previous resolve above; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention strongly urge the federal government to work with manufacturers to develop nuclear barcode or other taggants and to require the use of these taggants in gunpowder so that the manufacturer and chain of distribution of batches of gunpowder may be traced; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this Resolution be referred to the Executive Council, the Office of Government Relations, the President of the United States, members of the Federal Congress, and all dioceses for appropriate action.

Explanation

During the Covid pandemic, deaths from firearms reached record highs. In 2021, there were 48,830 deaths by firearms. Of this number, 43% died by murder and 54% by suicide. In the previous year, 59% of the murders were committed with handguns ([What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S. | Pew Research Center](#)). By comparison 47,434 service members were killed by hostile action in Vietnam between 1956 and 2006. Although there are no agreed upon figures as to Palestinian deaths in Gaza, most estimates of the number of dead as of May 2024 are in the 35,000+ range. Post Covid data suggest that fewer people have died by firearms in subsequent years but deaths by firearms remain unacceptably high.

But whether 1 or 48,000 deaths, too many persons die by firearms in the U.S. each year. For the victims' families, the tragedy and trauma are just as great whether their loved one died in Vietnam, Gaza, or on the streets of Washington, D.C. The General Convention of the Episcopal Church and the Executive Council have passed resolutions calling for government action prioritizing public safety and reducing gun violence through gun control measures. These resolutions have been summarized in Policy for Action; An Index of Episcopal Church Policy Resolutions published by the Office of Government Relations [Policy-for-Action-OGR-April-2024.pdf \(episcopalchurch.org\)](#).

The Second Amendment of the U. S. Constitution guarantees the right to bear arms. This right is not absolute, and it must be balanced with the Government's duty to ensure public safety. In fact, the Government does regulate the ownership of firearms and who may possess them – machine guns; felons; mentally ill – and may impose reasonable regulations to safeguard the public. These regulations should be based on objective criteria and should be shall-issue, not may-issue.

One way to prioritize public safety is to require sellers, buyers, and users of firearms to be licensed and the license process to include a waiting period, background checks, mental health evaluations, mandatory training, and renewal requirements. The right to bear arms does not absolve individuals of the responsibility to exercise that right responsibly or the

government to make every effort to ensure that individuals are properly qualified to exercise that right.

The registration of firearms by serial number, make, model, and identity of original and subsequent owners can be a tool for promoting responsible firearm ownership and accountability, for preventing illicit trafficking of firearms, for the unauthorized transfer of firearms, and for the recovery of stolen firearms.

The use of taggants in gunpowder and the establishment of a national taggant data base will facilitate the work of law enforcement and enhance accountability in cases where firearms are used as a murder weapon or in the commission of a crime.

Note: this resolution and/or its explanation contains external references, such as URLs of websites, that may not be in the required languages of General Convention. Because of copyright restrictions, the General Convention cannot provide translations. However, your web browser may be able to provide a machine translation into another language. If you need assistance with this, please contact gc.support@episcopalchurch.org.



Resolution Number: 2022-B003
Title: Advocate for the Regulation of Ghost and 3D Printed Guns
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the parts and kits used to build ghost guns—unserialized and untraceable firearms that can be built by anyone using unfinished frames or receivers—should be banned, and until that is possible, should be subject to full regulation as firearms and subject to all federal regulations that apply to firearms, including all oversight related to the provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act; and be it further

Resolved, That the manufacture of firearms or firearms parts using 3D printers poses a singularly dangerous threat and should be banned, and until that is possible, should be subject to full regulation as firearms and subject to all federal regulations that apply to firearms, including all oversight related to the provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of Government Relations, members of the Episcopal Public Policy Network and individual Episcopalians be encouraged to advocate for state and federal legislation that would ban and/or subject the parts and kits used to build homemade weapons to the same oversight and regulation that exists for firearms.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 848.



Resolution Number: 2022-B006
Title: Advocate for State-Level Gun Violence Prevention
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention urge dioceses of The Episcopal Church across the United States to advocate for safe gun legislation with their state governments; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations support domestic dioceses in state-level advocacy against gun violence and other forms of community violence; and be it further

Resolved, That to assist the Office of Government Relations in this state-level advocacy against violence, the Joint Standing Commission on Program, Budget, and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$160,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), pp. 853-854.



Resolution Number: 2018-C015
Title: On the Topic of Firearms Without Serial Numbers
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That this 79th General Convention make formal requests to national officials to enact and enforce stricter and more uniform sentencing guidelines, both federally as well as among all states, for individuals who are involved in the manufacturing, possession or use of so-called “Lunch Box”, “Ghost”, “Replica” Guns and other such firearms which are lacking serial numbers.



Resolution Number: 2015-B008
Title: Support Handgun Purchaser Licensing
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church support handgun purchaser licensing in order to prevent gun violence and save lives; and be it further Resolved, That the dioceses of The Episcopal Church be encouraged to advocate for handgun purchaser licensing in their local contexts.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 327-328.



Resolution Number: 2015-C005
Title: Implement Laws to Decrease Gun Violence
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention on the 50th anniversary of the murder of seminarian Jonathan Daniels, urge all legislators at federal, state and local levels to help decrease gun violence by implementing laws that;

1. Require permits to carry concealed weapons and criminal background checks for every gun purchase, including those made at gun shows; and
2. Except for the use of military and law enforcement agencies, ban the sale, transfer, importation and manufacture of military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines; and
3. Ban the importation and manufacture of Full-Auto Conversion kits that convert guns into automatic weapons; and
4. Tighten laws against gun trafficking, and increase penalties for those who engage in "straw purchases" of firearms for ineligible persons; and
5. Prohibit persons from purchasing guns without evidence of gun safety training; and
6. Recognize the impact of existing inheritance laws on the transfer of gun ownership; and
7. Promote funding for research into the prevention and causes of gun violence.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 328.



Resolution Number: 2000-B007
Title: Request the Removal of Handguns and Assault Weapons
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention request members of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to acknowledge that the violence in our communities is encouraged and enabled by the presence of guns; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention call upon all members of the church to work intentionally in their several committees, legislatures, and institutions toward the removal of handguns and assault weapons from our homes, other residential communities, and vehicles.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 325.



Resolution Number: 2000-D004
Title: Express Concern About Availability of Handguns and Assault Weapons
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention express deep concern about the repeated use of easily available hand guns and assault weapons by and against children and call upon Episcopalians to seek ways to develop community strategies and create sanctuaries for our children, so that all may come to identify and value themselves and others as the precious children of God that they are, and that they may come to know peace in their lives and to create peace for future generations.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 320f.



Resolution Number: 1997-C035
Title: Urge Restrictions on Sale, Ownership and Use of Firearms
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 72nd General Convention, through the Office of Government Relations, urge the Congress of the Unites States to increase restrictions on the sale, ownership and use of firearms, particularly "Saturday night specials" (described as short-barreled, four inches or shorter, easily concealed hand gun); and be it further
Resolved, That legislation to ban carrying concealed firearms be encouraged; and be it further
Resolved, That Congress be urged to adopt legislation requiring the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to develop regulations to delineate appropriate safety standards for use of firearms, and circumstances under which firearms may be used and to monitor and enforce compliance with said safety standards.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 782.



Resolution Number: 1997-D033
Title: Urge Legislation on the Safe Manufacture of Domestic Hand Guns
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church strongly urge the Congress of the United States promptly to pass national legislation that will apply the same quality and safety standards to domestically manufactured hand guns that are currently applied to imported hand guns; and be it further

Resolved, That this Resolution be forwarded to the Office of Government Relations of the Episcopal Church for distribution to the proper Congressional authorities.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 131.



Resolution Number: 1994-D019
Title: Request a Commission Study of Sale and Spread of Armaments
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Peace with Justice extend its study of the sale and spread of armaments by adding to its agenda for the coming triennium (without additional budget expense) a review of existing and pending state and national legislation which seeks to:

**Limit the manufacture and sale of weapons and ammunition domestically;
Strengthen firearms licensing provisions for both sellers and buyers; and
Restrict the exportation of weapons and weapon parts from the United States.
Tighten restrictions on importation of weapons and weapon parts to the United States.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 185.



Resolution Number: 1991-B042
Title: Express the Mind of the House Bishops Supporting Handgun Controls
Legislative Action Taken: Adopted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the House of Bishops, meeting in the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, reaffirm its support for sound handgun control legislation, a position first taken in 1976; and be it further

Resolved, That this House of Bishops endorse the so-called Brady Bill now before the Congress of the United States as a first step toward effective handgun control. It is sensible legislation which requires waiting periods and background checks on those persons who wish to purchase handguns; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be sent to the President of the United States, appropriate members of Congress and other appropriate government entities.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 380.



Resolution Number: 1976-C052
Title: Urge Congress to Adopt Effective Hand Gun Control Legislation
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 65th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Minneapolis, September 11-23, 1976, urge the Congress of the United States to adopt effective hand gun legislation as promptly as possible and that this resolution be communicated to the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime of the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senators Birch Bayh and James Eastland of the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate, and to the President of the National Rifle Association; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention urge all citizens to support federal, state, and local legislation aimed at controlling the sale and use of hand guns.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis 1976* (New York: General Convention, 1977), p. C-107.