

**The Graduate Student Assembly
The University of Texas at Austin**

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Resolution: G.R. 18 (S) 8 – In Support of Research Regarding Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue

WHEREAS (1): In the United States, between January 1st and March 14th, 2018, there have been 10,883 incidents of gun violence, with 2,862 total people killed and more than 673 children and teens killed or injured¹; and,

WHEREAS (2): In 1993 a landmark study led by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that having a gun in the home increased the risk of homeowners being injured by accidental discharge²; and,

WHEREAS (3): The National Rifle Association (NRA) disputed the results of the study and lobbied for Congress stop using taxpayer money on research that advocated gun control³; and,

WHEREAS (4): In 1996, the Dickey Amendment was added to a successful spending bill, stating: “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.”⁴ Despite the limitation only on advocacy, this amendment ended all of the CDC’s research on gun violence as a public health issue⁵; and,

WHEREAS (5): The Executive Director of the Public Health Association states that because the lobbying of the NRA came with a cut in funding for the exact amount it had been

¹ Gun Violence Archive. “Total Number of Incidents.” Accessed March 14, 2018.

<http://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

² Kaplan, S. “Congress Quashed Research Into Gun Violence. Since Then, 600,000 People Have Been Shot.” The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/12/health/gun-violence-research-cdc.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ 104th Congress. H.R. 3610. Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, 1997. Congress.gov. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/104th-congress/house-bill/3610/text>

⁵ Greenfieldboyce, N. “Spending Bill Lets CDC Study Gun Violence; But Researchers Are Skeptical It Will Help.” NPR.org. 23 March 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/03/23/596413510/proposed-budget-allows-cdc-to-study-gun-violence-researchers-skeptical>

using to study gun-related research, the Amendment was seen as a risk of Congress further cutting the CDC’s budget, effectively stopping all gun violence-related research^{6,7}; and,

WHEREAS (6): There have been repeated attempts to overturn the Amendment, including former Congressman Dickey, who regretted his stance^{6,8}; and,

WHEREAS (7): In the wake of the Parkland, FL, high school shooting, which left 17 students and adults dead and 14 injured, Senator Martin Heinrich (D-New Mexico) has renewed the call for a repeal of the Dickey Amendment so as to create new policy with evidence-supported findings⁹; and,

WHEREAS (8): The nonpartisan RAND Corporation reviewed thousands of published U.S. gun violence studies and compared the results to 13 classes of gun policies, such as background checks and waiting periods to concealed carry and ‘stand-your-ground’ laws. Only 7 of the policies matched research outcomes, with multiple areas being inconclusive or having no research backing at all¹⁰; and,

WHEREAS (9): When gun violence research has provided the foundational facts for deriving policy, there are decreases in shootings and deaths. For example, the RAND analysis determined that child-access protection laws reduced the number of accidental deaths.⁹ However, when policy is made without research-guided principles, or continues in direct opposition to scientific conclusions, gun violence and deaths increase. In the RAND analysis, multiple studies found that stand-your-ground laws increased the number of homicides.⁹ Stand-your-ground as self-defense is legal in at least 22 U.S. states with no recent legislation to amend or repeal those laws¹¹; and,

WHEREAS (10): Federal funding for research on gun violence is severely limited. Research on gun violence received only “1.6% of the funding (\$22 million) that would be predicted (\$1.4 billion) based on the number of deaths caused by guns — 36,252 in 2015,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ollove, M. “Limits on Federal Gun Research Spur States to Step In.” PEW Trusts. 27 Feb 2018. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/02/27/limits-on-federal-gun-research-spur-states-to-step-in>

⁸ King, Robert. “Democrats see opening to get rid of ban on gun violence research.” The Washington Examiner. Feb 27, 2018. <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/democrats-see-opening-to-get-rid-of-ban-on-gun-violence-research/article/2650233>

⁹ Rios, Edwin. “This senator wants to revive federal research on gun violence, 22 years after congress banned it.” MotherJones. February 21, 2018. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/02/the-government-banned-gun-violence-research-22-years-ago-this-senator-wants-to-put-an-end-to-it/>

¹⁰ “Gun Policy Analysis.” The Rand Corporation. Accessed 24 March 2018. <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis.html>

¹¹ “Self-Defence and ‘Stand Your Ground.’” National Conference of State Legislatures. March 2017. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground.aspx>

according to the CDC.”¹² That same year, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act (H.R. 83) provided \$1.77 billion to the CDC for Ebola preparedness and response¹³ following the 2014 Ebola epidemic that resulted in approximately 12,000 deaths. Without funding to match the significance of the gun violence epidemic, research is severely lacking from which to base policy; and,

WHEREAS (11): The new spending bill approved on March 23rd, 2018, has a single line which states the CDC will be allowed to research the causes of gun violence. This is not a repeal of the Dickey Amendment, but referred to as a “revision.”¹⁴ However, there is no funding for that research to take place and researchers are skeptical that any new studies will result¹⁵; now,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED (1): The Graduate Student Assembly supports the creation of evidence-based policy and policy revision on all federal and state laws, particularly pertaining to gun violence; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (2): That the GSA of UT Austin supports the repeal of the Dickey Amendment and the allowance of the CDC to investigate all issues related to gun violence in the United States; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (3): The supports the investment of federal and state funds on research into gun violence and public health in proportion to the severity of the issue; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED (4): That copies of this resolution be delivered to the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the President, the Office of Executive Vice President and Provost, Texas Senators Ted Cruz and John Cornyn, Texas Representatives of Austin Michael T. McCaul, Bill Flores, Lamar Smith, Roger Williams, John Carter, and Lloyd Dogget, *The Austin American-Statesman*, *The Texas Tribune*, and *The Daily Texan*.

¹² Ibid, 7.

¹³ “FY 2015 - 2019 Ebola Response Funding.” CDC. 5 May 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/budget/ebola/index.html>

¹⁴ Killough, A., & Walsh, D. “What does the spending bill do for gun violence research?” CNN.com. 22 March 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/22/politics/spending-bill-gun-research/index.html>

¹⁵ Greenfieldboyce, N. “Spending Bill Lets CDC Study Gun Violence; But Researchers Are Skeptical It Will Help.” NPR.org. 23 March 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/03/23/596413510/proposed-budget-allows-cdc-to-study-gun-violence-researchers-skeptical>