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Giffords Law Center: RELEASE: Wisconsin receives a C- for gun safety laws

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Washington DC — In 2021, a number of state legislatures took the threat of gun violence seriously and passed 75 new laws in 27 states and Washington DC. In the latest edition of the **Annual Gun Law Scorecard, Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence** graded and ranked each state on the strength of its gun laws, showing that states **with stronger gun laws have lower gun death rates and save more lives.**

Wisconsin received a C- for its gun safety laws. In 2020, the last year for which data is available, 717 people died from firearm injuries in Wisconsin, representing a 22% increase in the gun death rate in the state over the previous year. The increase in gun deaths was primarily driven by increases in gun homicides, which comprised 35% of all gun deaths in the state in 2020. From 2019 to 2020, the gun homicide rate rose 64%. Gun suicides also rose slightly in the state. From 2019 to 2020, the gun suicide rate increased by 5%.

In 2021, Wisconsin's governor took executive action to invest $25 million in community violence intervention programs. To improve its grade, Wisconsin should require background checks for all firearm sales, invest in community violence intervention programs, create extreme risk protection orders, and strengthen protections for victims of domestic violence and hate crimes.

- **Website**: Learn more about Wisconsin's ranking by visiting this year's Scorecard.

- **Fact Sheet:** The State of Gun Violence in Wisconsin.

> "2021 was yet another year of crisis for our country. Too many communities had to reckon with the trauma and pain of surging gun violence, armed hate, and racial discrimination—all in the midst of the ongoing pandemic," said **Robyn Thomas, executive director of Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence**. "What our Scorecard shows, year after year is that it is possible to take action to end this senseless violence. States with strong gun safety laws have fewer gun deaths—but illegal trafficking leaves residents of these states vulnerable. This progress must extend to every single state across the nation. We hope the Gun Law Scorecard will continue to serve as a resource for our elected officials who understand that getting a passing grade can be a matter of life and death."

In 2020, over 45,000 people were killed by guns—a number of gun deaths not seen in decades. This sharp spike in gun deaths comes after several years of increasing gun deaths. The Annual Gun Law Scorecard highlights opportunities states have to reverse these devastating numbers. **Strengthening background checks, implementing child access prevention laws, investing in community violence intervention programs, and passing extreme risk protection order laws are all policies that can reverse the growing gun death rate.**

States with the strongest gun laws have continued taking significant steps to protect their residents from gun violence, including:

- **California (A)**: Enacted a law to improve efforts to identify gun dealers who engage in gun trafficking, committed $76 million for local community violence intervention and prevention programming, and made it easier for people who survive domestic abuse to obtain firearm-prohibiting protective orders.

- **New Jersey (A)**: Committed $10 million in funding for local community violence intervention and prevention programming.

- **New York (A-)**: Passed a first-of-its-kind law that allows people to sue gun dealers and manufacturers when they fail to act responsibly and created a state firearm violence research institute.

- **Maryland (A-):** Enacted a law requiring background checks on long gun purchases and committed significant funding for local community violence intervention and prevention programing.

States with the lowest grades are most responsible for the troubling export of guns used for crimes in other states. These states also put their residents at risk by pushing dangerous policies like "Stand Your Ground," which allows people to shoot first and ask questions later, and permitless carry, which allows untrained, unvetted people to carry hidden, loaded guns in public. Some of the worst legislation passed in the last year includes:

- **Iowa (F)**: Repealed its law requiring background checks on private sales of firearms and allowed people to carry concealed guns in public without safety training or a background check.

- **Missouri (F)**: Made law enforcement officers and agencies, public officials, and private individuals personally liable in civil court and subject to a $50,000 fine for enforcing federal gun laws.

- **Montana (F)**: Passed a law allowing guns on the campuses of colleges and universities that was later declared unconstitutional.

Visit the *Annual Gun Law Scorecard at gunlawscorecard.org*

Related Resources

- **Fact Sheet:** The State of Gun Violence in Wisconsin

Experts Available for Comment

- **Robyn Thomas,** Executive Director, Giffords Law Center
- **Laura Cutilletta**, Managing Director, Giffords Law Center
- **Allison Anderman**, Managing Attorney, Giffords Law Center