

BANNING DANGEROUS WEAPONS IN VIRGINIA

Dangerous weapons, which include military-style semi-automatic rifles, high-capacity magazines, suppressors, and bump stocks are designed to maximize lethality. Mass shooters often use these weapons and accessories for the sole purpose of increasing the number of individuals shot in a short period of time before police can respond. High-capacity magazines were used in the Virginia Beach mass shooting where 12 people were killed and 4 people were injured. The Virginia Tech shooter was also able to kill 32 people and injured 23 more with the use of high-capacity magazines. It is past time the Commonwealth ban these dangerous weapons and protect its citizens.

Dangerous weapons increase the lethality of mass shootings

- Research on mass shooting data, from 1981-2017, found that assault rifles accounted for 85.8% of the mass-shooting fatalities reported.¹
- An investigation of mass shootings, from 2009-2017, found that incidents where high capacity magazines were used resulted in more than twice as many fatalities and 14 times as many injuries on average when compared to incidents where these dangerous weapons were not used.²

The federal assault weapons ban was effective in Virginia

- A federal assault weapons ban, which lasted from 1994 to 2004, corresponded with a drop in the number of high-capacity magazine firearms recovered by Virginia State Police.³
- After the federal ban expired, the number of high-capacity magazines recovered by police rebounded to pre-ban rates.⁴
- In Richmond, the proportion of guns with large-capacity magazines rose from 10.4% of recovered guns in the final year of the ban (2003–2004) to 22% in 2008–2009. Similar trends were reported across the Commonwealth.⁵

A dangerous weapons ban can help reduce mass shooting fatalities

- A 2019 article published in the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery found that mass-shooting fatalities were 70% less likely to occur during the years of the federal assault weapons ban (1994-2004).⁶
- A 2014 study found both state and federal assault weapons bans reduce mass shooting fatalities.⁷

Active shooter incidents are increasing

- According to data reported by the FBI, active shooter incidents have steadily increased by an average of 31% each year from when the FBI first began reporting this data in 2000 to 2018.⁸
- From 2000 to 2018, the FBI recorded an increase from 1 active shooter incident annually to 27 active shooter incidents annually.⁹
- Sixty-nine mass shootings have occurred in the United States in the 12 years since the Virginia Tech massacre. Over this time span, 562 individuals have been murdered and an additional 1,005 have been injured in mass shootings.¹⁰ These numbers are from the most narrow definition of mass shooting - indiscriminate shooting in a public space with three fatalities excluding the shooter.
- When the definition of mass shooting is expanded to encompass any incident where at least four are shot, the totals are much higher. In 2018 alone, 372 individuals were killed in mass shootings and 1,347 were injured. From January to June of 2019 in Virginia, 18 individuals have been killed and 28 injured in mass shootings using this expanded definition.¹¹

Bottom Line:

Active shooter incidents are increasing and dangerous weapons - military-style semi-automatic rifles, high-capacity magazines, silencers and bump stocks - make these shootings more lethal. Virginia legislators should pass legislation to ban these dangerous weapons and protect the Commonwealth.

¹ DiMaggio, C., Avraham, J., Berry, C., Bukur, M., Feldman, J., Klein, M., ... & Frangos, S. (2019). Changes in US mass shooting deaths associated with the 1994–2004 federal assault weapons ban: Analysis of open-source data. *Journal of trauma and acute care surgery*, 86(1), 11-19.

² Mass Shootings in the United States 2009-2017. Everytown for Gun Safety. <https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MassShootings-Research-Report-121018A-2.pdf>

³ Falls, S.D. (2013) Data indicate drop in high-capacity magazines during federal gun ban. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/data-point-to-drop-in-high-capacity-magazines-during-federal-gun-ban/2013/01/10/d56d3bb6-4b91-11e2-a6a6-aabac85e8036_story.html?utm_term=.326888337ceb

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Koper, C. S., Johnson, W. D., Nichols, J. L., Ayers, A., & Mullins, N. (2018). Criminal use of assault weapons and high-capacity semiautomatic firearms: an updated examination of local and national sources. *Journal of urban health*, 95(3), 313-321.

⁶ DiMaggio, C., Avraham, J., Berry, C., Bukur, M., Feldman, J., Klein, M., ... & Frangos, S. (2019). Changes in US mass shooting deaths associated with the 1994–2004 federal assault weapons ban: Analysis of open-source data. *Journal of trauma and acute care surgery*, 86(1), 11-19.

⁷ Gius, M. (2015). The impact of state and federal assault weapons bans on public mass shootings. *Applied Economics Letters*, 22(4), 281-284.

⁸ Data compiled from FBI Active Shooter Incident Reports.

Available: <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Follman, M., Gavin A., & Pan, D. (2018) “U.S. Mass Shootings, 1982–2019: Data from Mother Jones’ Investigation. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/>

¹¹ Data is available though Gun Violence Archive. Mass shooting. <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>