



Comprehensive National Violence Prevention & Domestic Terrorism Strategy

Our nation faces a crisis of violence, amplified by hateful rhetoric, radicalization, and domestic terrorism. Tragedies like the shootings in El Paso and Dayton make headlines, but the reality is that this is a systemic problem in America. More than 100 Americans are killed with guns every day. Gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color. And this is a problem unique to our country: the U.S. gun homicide rate is 25 times higher than in other high-income countries.

The number of hate crimes in our country has also risen sharply in recent years. In 2017—the last year for which FBI hate crime statistics are available—the FBI reported a shocking 17% rise in hate crime incidents nationally, to over 7,100. The number of hate crimes in Colorado alone nearly doubled over the span of one year, from 2017 to 2018. And these numbers almost certainly underreport reality.

The combination of the growing number of hate crime incidents over the last two years and the rise in white supremacist domestic terrorism make clear that the United States is facing a terrible storm of violence and increasingly extreme, too-often racially-motivated, attacks.

Enough is enough. We must address the epidemic of violence in our communities and stop these preventable deaths through a comprehensive national anti-violence strategy focused on the disproportionate role that guns play in violence in America, combined with a determined national effort to combat domestic terrorism and stamp out hate crimes.

As President Obama's U.S. Attorney for Colorado, I was on the scene at the Aurora Theater shooting and the Planned Parenthood shooting in Colorado Springs. [I took a lead role in the Administration's response.](#) And as I prosecuted drug trafficking and gang violence cases, I saw the profound effect that gun violence has on Coloradans' everyday lives.

I worked closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement to develop a [community-based approach](#) to anti-terrorism operations that made our state safer and involved, rather than antagonized, our Colorado neighbors. As Colorado's next U.S. Senator, I will place violence prevention and combating extremism among my top priorities. This is my plan.

Combating the Epidemic of American Violence, Including Gun Violence

In 2019 alone, there have been at least 32 mass shootings in the U.S. where at least three individuals were killed in a single episode of gun violence—and far more if we count all cases where four or more people are injured, but not killed. Beyond this shocking number of mass shootings, gun violence deaths overall have been at a record high in recent years.



We must address the threat that gun violence poses to our communities now. I support a strategy that combines common-sense gun regulation with school safety measures and increased funding and training for mental health measures.

Common-Sense Gun Regulation. Americans overwhelmingly support common-sense reforms to our gun laws. Simply put, we cannot address the gun violence epidemic in our country with the national laws currently on the books. In 2013, I testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of the Obama Administration’s package of gun violence measures, which ultimately were blocked by Senate Republicans.

Today, Congress must enact a package of common-sense national gun regulations, including:

- A national universal background check law that requires background checks to be performed by every person who sells or transfers a gun—a change to our current gun laws that 92% of Americans support.
- A national magazine limit law that prohibits the sale and possession of large capacity magazines capable of holding more than 15 rounds of ammunition.
- A statutory ban on so-called “bump stocks” that effectively turn semi-automatic weapons into fully-automatic weapons.
- A national law limiting the purchase and possession of military-grade weapons—such as the high muzzle velocity, high-rate-of-fire rifles like the AR-15 used in several recent mass shootings—including by limiting purchase and possession of such weapons to individuals that are at least 25-years-old.
- Elimination of federal laws limiting the use of federal funds to study gun violence and funding for research on this crucial subject.
- A national extreme risk protection order (“ERPO”) law—similar to the one we passed here in Colorado—that allows law enforcement and family members to act on warning signs of violence and temporarily prevent access to firearms, including in cases where those warning signs demonstrate that the individual may use guns to commit violent hate crimes or terrorism.

A National School Safety Prevention Strategy. We must also develop a national school safety strategy and provide federal funding to assist with state and local implementation. This program would address the unprecedented level of gun violence in our schools through initiatives such as:

- Promoting safety and well-being through safe, positive school environments that protect all individuals from bullying, discrimination, and harassment;
- Facilitating the sharing of safety-related information between educational, mental health, and law enforcement agencies when individuals have threatened violence; and
- Empowering students, educators and law enforcement to intervene when there are warning signs, including through school threat assessment programs.



Programs and Funding for Mental Health. We must fund and address mental health in communities and schools across the U.S. as a fundamental component of any comprehensive gun violence strategy, including through national mental health funding and grant programs to permit states to focus resources on mental health issues that lead to gun violence.

This must be more than just “labeling” gun violence as a mental health issue, but rather providing substantial funding for research and treatment resources for mental health issues leading to violence, including gun violence, domestic terrorism and hate crimes.

Fighting the Rise in Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crimes

No comprehensive strategy to combat violence and gun violence in America can overlook the critical importance of fighting domestic terrorism and hate crimes.

The Department of Homeland Security has already warned Congress that white supremacist extremist violence is an increasingly concerning threat to our nation. The FBI has reported a significant increase in domestic terrorism in recent months, including domestic terrorism perpetrated by white supremacists and violence that is motivated by racial or religious bias more broadly.

To address this threat, I support a multi-pronged approach that includes implementation of a national domestic terrorism and hate crime prevention strategy, as well as the restoration of funding and other national resources to fight terrorism and hate crimes within our communities.

Aggressively Respond to the Threat of Domestic Terrorism. As a nation, we must treat the fight against domestic terrorism, including the rising threat posed by white nationalist extremism, with the same strength and resolve we bring to the fight against all other forms of terrorism. Our government must unequivocally call the threat posed by white nationalist extremism what it is—domestic terrorism—and devote resources and attention to the issue to lead our country in overcoming this danger before it gets worse.

Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crime Prevention Strategy. Congress should require the development of a national domestic terrorism and hate crime prevention strategy, one that respects civil liberties, and provides a multi-faceted response to the issue.

Modeled on measures like President Obama’s “Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States,” this strategy would set out a community-based approach to combating domestic terrorism, hate crimes, and other violence, and empower local stakeholders to address this issue, with federal government support.



Restore Funding to Fight Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crimes. As U.S. Attorney for Colorado, I was a leader in the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) task force initiatives that the Obama Administration created to combat domestic terrorism and radicalization. But the Trump Administration has undermined the effectiveness of these CVE programs by removing dedicated staff, cutting funding, and rescinding CVE grants awarded to groups focused on combating far-right and white nationalist groups.

As a key part of an overall domestic terrorism and hate crime prevention strategy, we must restore the staff and funding for CVE, and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Community Partnerships that oversees the CVE initiative. Additionally, we must reinstate federal grants to organizations focused on combating far-right and white nationalist extremism, including funding to Life After Hate, one of the few organizations that rehabilitates neo-Nazis. The Trump Administration inexplicably cut funding to Life After Hate and other organizations that focus specifically on white nationalism. Congress must step in to restore it.

Conclusion

None of these measures, standing alone, will be sufficient to fully address the scourge of gun violence that plagues the U.S. today. But all are important components of a determined national policy to address this violence, including gun injury and death through the mass-shooting incidents that we have experienced too many times. In combination, implementation of a purposeful strategy to fight the rise in domestic terrorism and hate crimes and a comprehensive strategy to address gun violence more broadly will help our country reduce a rate of violence and hate crime that is shameful, unnecessary, and unworthy of a great nation.