2018, Wisconsin voters will go to the polls four times—four critical opportunities to be heard about the issues we feel are most important.

WAVE wants to help you start conversations about one such issue, an issue that affects all of our communities: Gun violence. Too many families across our state are suffering from loss due to firearm suicides, domestic violence, homicides, or negligence. But there are ways our elected officials can help prevent these tragedies.

This guide offers facts about the impacts of gun violence on children, families, our communities, and the economy. It also presents evidence-based policy solutions proven to save lives. We hope you will use it to become more informed about the issue and the ways in which gun policy reform can improve our safety.

Now is the time to use our voices. I urge you to pose questions to state and local candidates by showing up for town halls or candidate forums, writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, getting on the phone, or using Twitter, Facebook, or your other preferred social media platform. It is up to each of us to understand the facts, ask tough questions, engage in dialogue, and determine where our candidates stand. Be a gun sense voter in 2018.

See you at the polls!

Jeri Bonavia
Executive Director,
Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort Educational Fund
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The Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort Educational Fund is a 501(c)3 organization that does not endorse candidates for any elected office. Founded in 1993 by volunteers, we are a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to preventing gun violence, injuries, and deaths through education and advocacy. To join us, visit www.WaveEdFund.org.

Guns & Suicide

FACTS TO KNOW

● Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. Every day 58 Americans take their own lives with a gun. The suicide rate in Wisconsin is higher than the national average. Over 660 people in Wisconsin died from suicide in 2016.

● More men die from suicide, and suicide deaths occur at higher rates among persons aged 70 or above than among teens in Wisconsin. Suicide deaths involving firearms are much more likely to occur among older white men than among any other group in our state.

● More than half (52%) of all suicide deaths in Wisconsin involve firearms. Preventing access to guns saves lives. Just 10% of those who survive a suicide attempt go on to die from suicide later; however, attempts involving guns are lethal 80-90% of the time.

● Over three-fourths of all gun deaths in our state are deaths due to suicide.

WHAT CAN HELP

Several states now have laws creating a mechanism for families of people in crisis to ensure their loved one’s firearms can safely be relinquished to law enforcement until the crisis has passed. These laws create Lethal Violence Protective Orders and have been found to prevent suicide among those most at risk. In addition, states with waiting periods for handgun sales have suicide rates 28% lower than in states without waiting period laws.

ASK THE CANDIDATES THESE QUESTIONS

In Wisconsin, more than half of suicide deaths involve firearms, and three-fourths of firearm deaths are suicides. Do you agree we can do more to prevent these tragic deaths by ensuring those who may wish to harm themselves cannot easily and immediately access guns, by requiring a waiting period for gun purchases?

Would you support a law to create Lethal Violence Protective Orders, similar to domestic violence restraining orders, that allow a judge to determine if someone is at credible risk of harming himself or herself and ordering him or her to temporarily relinquish all firearms until the crisis has passed?
FACTS TO KNOW

● Since 1999, on average, a child has died from a firearm every 14 days in Wisconsin.

● African American children in Wisconsin are nearly five times more likely to die from a firearm than white children. If gun deaths of African American children in our state occurred at the same rate as in other states, 41 of those African American children who died since 1999 would still be alive.

● Five out of every six Wisconsin children who are killed by firearms are boys.

● From 1999-2014, 48% of children killed by guns in Wisconsin were shot by someone else, while 45% of children pulled the trigger themselves. Yet just 7% of child gun deaths in our state during this period were considered unintentional. Many incidents of children shooting other children are classified as homicides in Wisconsin, and many self-shootings are classified as suicides, despite lacking any evidence of intent. Unintentional shootings are estimated to occur roughly twice as often as the records indicate, meaning up to 4 children per year in Wisconsin may be dying due to negligent gun storage or handling.

● Three-fourths of American children under 10 living in homes with guns know the location of their parents’ firearms, and 36% say they had handled the weapons, many without their parents’ knowledge.

WHAT CAN HELP

Current Wisconsin law imposes a misdemeanor penalty on adults who allow children to access firearms negligently, but it does not require that firearms be stored securely. Child Access Prevention laws in other states, which require secure storage of firearms in the home, have been shown to decrease unintentional deaths among younger children by 23% and suicides among older children by 8%.

ASK THE CANDIDATES THIS QUESTION

Do you support a law that would prevent unintentional child shootings by requiring parents to securely store their firearms at home and holding them criminally accountable if their gun is used by a child to kill or injure that child or someone else?
FACTS TO KNOW

● Every five days in Wisconsin, a life is taken by an abuser. In 2016, 53% of these domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin involved firearms. In at least six of these domestic violence shooting deaths, the abusers were legally prohibited from possessing firearms.

● Since 2005, firearms have accounted for more domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin than all other methods of killing combined.

● Abused women who are threatened with or assaulted with guns in a prior incident are 20 times more likely to be killed than abused women who do not have this experience.

● Among abusers, owning a gun is highly correlated to threatening behavior toward an intimate partner, including holding, loading, or firing a gun during an argument, or threatening to shoot the partner or a loved one. In 2016, 69% of the weapons brandished or used in intimate partner violence incidents in Milwaukee were handguns.

● A partner is five times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a gun.

WHAT CAN HELP

States that require background checks for every gun sale have 46% fewer intimate partner gun homicides than states like Wisconsin that do not.

ASK THE CANDIDATES THESE QUESTIONS

Abusers in Wisconsin who are legally prohibited from owning firearms are able to exploit Wisconsin’s background check loophole to obtain and use a gun to kill their intimate partner. Do you support closing this background check loophole and requiring background checks for every gun sale?

Since 2013, Wisconsin’s bipartisan Safe Act has required abusers under restraining orders to surrender all firearms to the local Sheriff or designee. However, these abusers can obtain new firearms by exploiting Wisconsin’s background check loophole and purchasing without a background check from a private seller. Do you support closing this loophole and requiring background checks for every gun sale?
FACTS TO KNOW

- Gun violence has a disparate impact on our communities. In 2015, an African American person in Wisconsin was 26 times more likely to be fatally shot than a white person.

- In 2015, 81% of homicide victims in Milwaukee were African American, despite being only 39% of the city’s population.

- Of all African American murder victims in Wisconsin in 2013, 80% were killed with guns, including 76% with handguns.

- In 2013, Wisconsin’s homicide rate for African Americans was the seventh-highest in the U.S. and one and a half times higher than the national average. Our state has the highest disparity between black and white homicide rates.

- Gun violence in communities of color is often driven by two factors, easy access to guns and a small group of people at high risk of engaging in violence—sometimes no more than 0.25% to 1% of the city’s population.

- Wisconsin ranks sixth-highest in the U.S. for African American children killed by guns. Firearms are the leading cause of injury deaths for African American children in our state.

WHAT CAN HELP

Waiting period laws, which do not impose any additional restrictions on who may legally own a firearm, are associated with 17% fewer gun homicides in the states with these laws. Background checks on all gun sales reduce gun homicide rates, as well; in the 10 years following the passage of Connecticut’s law, firearm homicides declined 40%. Research has demonstrated that a small set of key groups—such as people who have a history of multiple misdemeanor convictions for crimes of violence—are at heightened risk of committing gun violence if they obtain firearms. Prohibiting gun possession for those most at-risk of future violence is likely to save lives.

ASK THE CANDIDATE THIS QUESTION

In our state, communities of color suffer much higher rates of gun violence, mostly due to a fraction of people at high risk of violence. Do you favor a law prohibiting gun ownership for people who have been previously convicted of multiple violent misdemeanor crimes?
FACTS TO KNOW
● The annual total cost of gun violence in America exceeds $229 billion in direct and indirect costs.

● Every 10 fewer incidents of gunfire in a census tract have been found to be associated with one new business opening, the creation of 20 more jobs in new businesses, and one less business closure.

● A 10% decrease in homicides has been found to cause a 0.83% increase in property values during the next year, while a 25% reduction yielded a 2.1% increase in property values.

● In lower income neighborhoods, about six in 10 residents say they would like to move permanently to another area if they had the opportunity, and two in 10 say they actually have plans to move in the next 12 months. Of these residents who would like to relocate, 51% say crime is a major reason they would like to do so.

WHAT CAN HELP
Background checks prevent gun homicides. After Missouri repealed its background check law, firearm homicides increased 25%. That’s 55 to 63 more homicides, and more costs, each year.

ASK THE CANDIDATE THIS QUESTION
Specific communities in our state experience much higher rates of gun crime. Because people and businesses are more likely to leave higher-crime neighborhoods, the community suffers doubly: Not only are these communities losing their loved ones to gun violence, but their local economies are being devastated. Do you support proven tactics that reduce gun homicides, such as background checks for all gun purchases?

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### Suicide


### Children


### Domestic Violence


### Communities

Driven by small group at high risk. Ibid.

Leading cause of death for WI children. Tamarine Cornelius, supra.


Economy


