



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy
Floor Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Introduction of the *Gun Violence Research Act of 2017*
March 9, 2017

Mr. Speaker:

Each year, about 33,000 Americans die in gun-related incidents, and twice as many are wounded.

Over 60 percent of gun deaths are suicides. Individuals in emotional distress who attempt suicide with a gun rarely survive, so they don't get the chance to reconsider, to recover, and to live on.

Nearly 35 percent of gun deaths in this country are homicides, with one human being using a firearm to take the life of a fellow human being.

These homicides occur as part of the daily drumbeat of violence, particularly in our cities, but also our suburbs and small towns.

Homicides in certain cities have become so customary they are relegated to the back pages of the newspaper or not covered at all. Of course, the lack of public attention does not diminish the private pain felt by a victim's family and friends.

Homicides in America also take place in the context of mass shootings that make headlines because the carnage is so immense.

The most recent incident was the deadliest in American history. On June 12th, 2016, an individual using a semiautomatic rifle shot 49 people to death and wounded 53 at the Pulse nightclub in my hometown of Orlando.

My guest to the President's address to Congress last week was Dr. Marc Levy, a surgeon in Orlando. He and his team operated on victims of the Pulse shooting, some of whom had their bodies torn apart.

As Dr. Levy and other first responders that fateful evening can attest, a weapon designed for the battlefield transformed a celebration of life into a scene of devastation and death that resembled a war zone.

Although Orlando united in the wake of the Pulse attack—earning the label “Orlando Strong”—our city was profoundly and permanently affected by this tragedy. I don’t want another American community to experience what we have endured.

That is why today I am introducing legislation that would take a modest but meaningful step forward.

Specifically, my bill would ensure that the CDC can sponsor evidence-based research into the causes of gun-related incidents and potential ways to reduce gun deaths and injuries.

This research would inform policymakers as they consider whether to enact reasonable reforms that both save lives and protect the constitutional rights of law-abiding gun owners.

The decision rests with elected officials about whether to pass new laws designed to keep the most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous individuals, in a manner consistent with the Second Amendment.

But lawmakers of both parties should have the benefit of the best scientific research on the subject as they deliberate and debate.

My bill is necessary because, for 20 years, Congress has included a policy rider that, as a practical matter, has prevented the CDC and other HHS agencies from supporting research on gun-related incidents.

I can respect that elected officials, like the diverse Americans they represent, have a range of views about the wisdom of enacting reasonable reforms within the space allowed by the Second Amendment.

What I *cannot* respect is any lawmaker who would seek to suppress research into gun-related incidents merely because the lawmaker fears this research could serve as the basis for legislative action that the lawmaker does not favor.

Restricting research because you may disagree with its results is un-American to its core, a deviation from our proud national tradition of free and open inquiry.

As lawmakers, we must recognize that gun incidents are claiming the lives of too many of our citizens and tearing apart too many of our communities. In deciding

how best to confront this challenge, we should seek out and sponsor research on this subject, not shun it.

For this reason, my bill would repeal the current policy rider and express the Sense of Congress that no such policy riders should be enacted in the future.

I hope my colleagues will cosponsor this legislation, which underscores the importance of fact-based policymaking, and places people before politics.