



October 6, 2020

Dear Governor,

Amnesty International USA is calling on Governors nationwide to ban guns at and near polling places to ensure the safety of voters, poll workers and people in the vicinity. In your capacity as Governor, we urge you to ensure and enforce such a ban in your state without delay.

There has been a [historic surge in firearm sales across the United States](#) throughout 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic, mass unemployment, and a [rise in white supremacist violence](#) are all contributing factors to potential unrest. Researchers have tracked nearly 200 incidents of gun carrying at public demonstrations over the summer. Reported plans to [recruit tens of thousands of partisan election monitors](#) in battleground states, many of them likely to be armed, add further potential for violence and could result in abuses of the right to life, health and security. One senior administration official even [urged the public to “buy ammunition”](#) in the lead up to the election, after President Trump suggested sending armed law enforcement to the polls.

While most jurisdictions across the U.S. limit armed law enforcement officers from within 100 feet of the voting booths, the majority of states have no laws regarding armed private citizens in or around polling places. Therefore, we call on state and local officials to do everything within their jurisdiction to prohibit guns/firearms at all polling places and in the vicinity of voters standing in line to cast their ballots. Governors and Secretaries of State across the country can institute temporary measures to guarantee that polling places are free from intimidation of gun violence.

Amnesty International USA also strongly supports a [significant increase in local, state and Federal funding for gun violence prevention programs](#), not just on and around election day, but for the long-term. From coast to coast, these programs have proven to reduce violence, but many programs this year have faced significant budget shortfalls because of plunging state and local revenues, and a lack of increased and sustained Federal funding. Amnesty International USA believes that the United States Federal and state governments have a duty to take positive action to address gun violence, especially where models exist that could reduce it while making a long term and life changing impact on systematically disenfranchised communities. We encourage all states to, where possible in current budgets, increase funding for community violence prevention programs immediately, and prioritize increasing funding for these programs in future budget cycles.

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Amnesty International has been a long-time advocate for legal reforms on the acquisition, use and possession of firearms in the United States. We support a range of measures to curb gun violence, including comprehensive background checks, funding of gun violence prevention organizations, required training, a ban on high capacity magazines/assault weapons, and mandatory safe-storage laws. We call on all U.S. Governors to take proactive, immediate action to end gun violence in their communities.

For more information, please see our [statement](#) released today, and don't hesitate to reach out to me if I can answer any questions or provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernest Coverson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ernest Coverson, Manager
End Gun Violence Campaign