

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



October 3, 2022

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.

Political violence in the U.S. is rising. There has been a historic surge in firearm sales and firearm violence across the United States since 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The political unrest following the last presidential election, beginning with the January 6<sup>th</sup> attack on the U.S. Capitol, calls for F.B.I. offices and agents to be attacked and a rise in white supremacist violence are all contributing factors to potential future and foreseeable violence that jeopardize human rights. This year's election with its super charged rhetoric and issues including reproductive rights, gun rights, refugee and migrant rights, the war in Ukraine and economic issues has the potential again of seeing armed election monitors and armed voters at polls across the country. The presence of firearms at polling places will act as a force multiplier for violence and could result in abuses of the right to life.

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 continues to strongly support a significant increase in local, state and federal funding for gun violence prevention programs to address rising rates of violence, 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 continue to face budget shortfalls because of plunging state and local revenues, and a lack of increased and sustained federal funding. Amnesty International USA believes that the 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 applaud states that have provided new and additional funding (through ARP dollars) and

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.

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

Amnesty International USA