



## Let Colleges Decide if They Want Guns on Campus

## Reflections



(The following was written by HCGV Board Member David Mason, and appeared in the Indianapolis Star's online site on February 13.)

In his letter to the editor of January 23, State Senator Johnny Nugent contends that "allowing guns will make our campuses safer." He is a sponsor of Senate Bill 12, which would "Prohibit a state college or university from regulating in any manner the ownership, possession, carrying, or transportation of firearms or ammunition." Sen. Nugent believes that "the only thing that can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."

It would seem, though, that the best people to ask about security and safety on campus are the campus safety and police departments. Sen. Nugent would find that they would overwhelmingly oppose this measure, as would almost all faculty and staff on campuses (as I am). Butler's Public Safety Director is Ben Hunter, formally an officer with the Indianapolis Police Department. When I asked Ben his views on this, he wrote "I am against the idea of carrying weapons on campus" and continued as follows:

"As a lifelong supporter of responsible gun ownership I can attest that educational institutions and employers should be allowed to regulate their buildings and properties. Having students, faculty and staff possibly carrying guns on campus could result in accidental discharges, a false response to a threat and untrained persons that create an operational danger for BUPD. Proponents of such legislation will often talk about how well trained persons can assist with these threats; the only issue is that their training does not come close to what police officers are required to undertake."

College campuses are already much safer than the community in general, with far lower levels of both homicides and suicides. Surely this is due, in part, to the prohibition of guns by most universities. Probably the biggest consequence of allowing guns on campus would be an increase in the incidence of suicide. Suicide is already the third leading cause of death for Hoosiers of college age, but suicides are much less common on college campuses than off. Since the most common means of death in suicides is a gun, increasing the number of guns on campus will only make suicides more likely.

Before pushing this law onto colleges and universities, our legislators should consult with those who are most familiar with the situation: the public safety departments, mental health professionals, and the deans of student life. I can't imagine that any of them would want to see more guns on campus.

## Peacemaking Groups Addressing Local Gun Violence

More and more, church-related peacemaking groups are doing more than just praying for peace in far-away lands. They are addressing the gun violence in their local towns and cities that is daily claiming some eighty lives in the U. S. and a thousand lives around the world.



**STOP GUN VIOLENCE**

**A COMMUNITY BASED  
INTER-FAITH INITIATIVE**

The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2008 supported a comprehensive study on issues related to gun violence. Discussion focused on creating worship resources, identifying and creating education resources - especially for children.

Members of STOP Gun Violence through Prayer, Education & Action held a Gun Violence and Gospel Values colloquium in Pennsylvania. Activities included a children's art show, an interfaith service, workshops on writing effective opinion pieces and letters to legislators. Materials used are available at [www.stopgunviolence.net](http://www.stopgunviolence.net). Anyone interested in holding a similar event is encouraged to contact [prayer.education.action@gmail.com](mailto:prayer.education.action@gmail.com) for assistance.

## by Board Member Loring Prosser

By Loring Prosser, Vice President for HCGV  
Board Member since 2006

When Beth and I moved to Elkhart County from upstate New York in 1971, we looked forward to associating with some progressive groups such as Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, Society of Friends (Quakers), Unitarian-Universalists, and others that held strong messages of non-violence at the core of their values. I have been heartened and gratified to know people from these and other faith traditions that have led by example. The price of non-violence is eternal vigilance.

When our daughters were born in the 1980s, the wounds of the Vietnam War were finally healing, and we had hopes that young people might grow up in a more peaceful cultural climate. Yet Indiana continues to suffer from high rates of suicide and homicide gun violence. The effort to make this a public health issue and a taxpayer issue is still in the early stages.

I believe that secular organizations such as Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence will have a very positive influence on growing a state culture rooted in civility, citizenship, decency, common sense, non-violence, and humanity. Not only does HCGV monitor laws or law-making that may affect common sense gun regulation, but it also provides a reasonable forum and positive influence for citizens on an important health issue.

HCGV now has an enthusiastic part-time Executive Director, Kathryn A. Jones, who is guiding us into the Internet age of communication. Our President, Dr. Stephen Dunlop, has provided outstanding leadership to our Board and membership. We will continue to build the kind of communities and state that we want to live in--safer, less violent, less snarky, more civil!

We are looking for more citizen members and a few more Board members. Feel encouraged to contact me at (317) 271-3361 if you would like to discuss the possibility of service on our Board. We need your vitality, energy, action, and reason. Our state deserves your talents. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

## Mayors Against Illegal Guns

The bi-partisan national group of more than 350 municipal chief executive, including ten from Indiana, was able to gain access to "trace data," the federal records of traffic in firearms used in crimes.

The data showed that ten states, including Indiana, were the source of 57 per cent of the guns used in crimes outside those states. It showed that those states tended to have the weakest laws governing the sale and tracking of guns. In addition, it showed that those weak laws correlate with higher rates of in-state murder and shootings of police officers.

The mayors' organization, headed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston, reported that many states have enacted strong gun laws to supplement inadequate federal ones, including mandatory background checks on gun show sales. States requiring the same background checks at gun shows as those required for store purchases show an export rate for guns used in crimes that's nearly half the national average.

An editorial in the December 23, 2008, issue of *The New York Times* states: "The study by the mayors' group isn't the first to document the link between weak gun laws and gun violence or the "iron pipeline" by which guns flow from states with weak gun laws into states with strong ones. Still, the numbers are startling. They explain why the gun lobby resisted their release, and they provide a powerful retort to those who claim tougher gun laws don't work."

# Gary's Gun Violence Lawsuit Goes Forward

Nearly ten years ago, a suit sought to hold gun makers liable for Gary's rampant crime rate. The Indiana Supreme Court has now declined to review a lower court ruling, ending the second round of appeals since the case was filed.

Gary's suit alleges that sixteen gun manufacturers, including Smith & Wesson and Beretta, and six Northern Indiana gun dealers sold handguns which they knew would get into the hands of criminals, who are barred from owning them.

The court's order let stand an October, 2007, Indiana Court of Appeals ruling that the federal Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act did not bar the suit from proceeding. Congress had approved the measure in 2005 to provide some immunity to the firearms industry from such suits.

The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence ([www.bradycenter.org](http://www.bradycenter.org)) has hailed the Indiana Supreme Court's ruling. Paul Helmke, president of the Brady Center and a former mayor of Fort Wayne, called the ruling "an important victory for the people of Gary and particularly those who have suffered from the gun industry's supply of guns to criminals and gun traffickers."



If you would like more information about HCGV or would like to have a HCGV representative speak to your organization free of charge, please contact us at:

**Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence**  
3535 Kessler Boulevard, North Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46222  
(317) 636-2388 • [info@hcgv.org](mailto:info@hcgv.org) • [www.hcgv.org](http://www.hcgv.org) • [www.myspace.com/hcgv](http://www.myspace.com/hcgv)

To become a valued member of Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence, please fill in and cut out the form below, include check and send to the address above.

- Receive weekly e-mail updates .
- Receive quarterly newsletter with information on the latest legislative updates, personal narratives and news articles responses.
- Volunteer opportunities to have our voices be heard.
- Notifications of membership meetings.

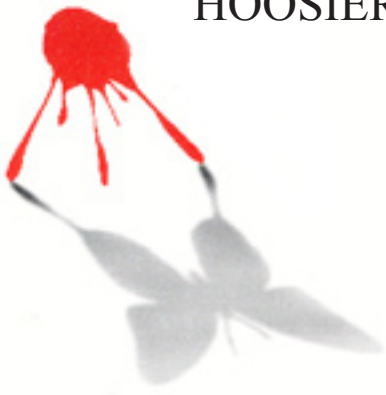
HCGV Membership    
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# HOOSIERS CONCERNED ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

(Winter, 2009)

David Mason & Marian K. Towne, Co-Editors

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## Indiana's Senate To Vote on Destructive Bill

Senator Johnny Nugent of Lawrenceburg has introduced Senate Bill 12, a bill to allow students on college campuses to have guns on campus. (See David Mason's Op-Ed on page 2). The bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is chaired by Senator Richard Bray of Martinsville.

Now is the time for members and friends of Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence to come to the defense of our students, families, homes, communities, state and nation! It is not a time to relax and wait for someone else to do your civic duty.

**Contact your state senator** by calling the Senate Telephone Center, (317) 232-9400 and leaving a message for your state senator, and/or writing your state senator at State House, 200 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.

If the bill makes it to the House of Representatives, leave a message for your state representative at (317) 232-9600.

Senator Nugent is a life member and member of the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association and a member of the Indiana State Rifle and Pistol Association.

Senate Bills 11 and 361 (about guns secured in the trunk of a car) are essentially the same. Both are before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Senate Bill 555 by Senator Bray is supportable. It requires that before purchasing a gun, the buyer would have to report whether he/she has had mental health treatment.

-Marian K. Towne, Secretary

## Coalition to Stop Gun Violence Quotes Obama

On the campaign trail, Barack Obama said, "The reality of gun ownership may be different for hunters in rural Ohio than. . . for those plagued by gang violence in Cleveland. But don't tell me we can't uphold the Second Amendment while keeping AK-47s out of the hands of criminals."

The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence ([www.csgv.org](http://www.csgv.org)), based in Washington, DC, is more optimistic about the future with Eric Holder as Attorney General. Holder joined the Coalition and others in submitting an *amicus curiae* brief for the *District of Columbia v. Heller* case, urging the Supreme Court to preserve DC's ban on handguns. He said that overturning the 1976 law would "[open] the door to more people having more access to guns and putting guns on the streets." The Coalition believes that Holder's nomination sends a clear signal that the Obama Administration is committed to preventing gun trafficking and the proliferation of illegal guns into our communities.

