



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## TEXAS GRASSROOTS GUN RIGHTS COALITION RESPONDS TO GOVERNOR ABBOTT'S SCHOOL SAFETY ACTION PLAN

**Temple, TX, May 31, 2018**— Seeing a need for increased grassroots representation in the discussion on school safety and firearms-related legislation in Texas, several grassroots gun rights organizations have come together to form the Texas Grassroots Gun Rights Coalition representing over 250,000 law-abiding Texas gun owners. The coalition currently includes Lone Star Gun Rights, Open Carry Texas, Texas Firearms Freedom, and Texas Gun Rights. The leaders of these groups offer valuable contributions to the discussion, drawing on their backgrounds and expertise in the legal, teaching, self-defense, and counterintelligence and physical security professions.

Like all Texans, our hearts break for lives lost in senseless shootings and students who have to endure the trauma of seeing their friends shot. It's because we care so much about the gift and treasure of precious human life that we devote so much time to work guaranteeing our ability to defend it. To that end, our own proposals for school safety would include the following:

- 1.) Acknowledge that evil will always exist and will always find a way to achieve its end in this world unless it is stopped by those capable of opposing it. As evidenced by the failure of existing laws to prevent school shootings, it's clear that the government and first responders will never be able to prevent harm from coming to people. The closest that they can come, however, is in not hampering the ability of law-abiding citizens to protect and defend themselves from inevitable violence and harm.
- 2.) The American system of government is set up so that we err on the side of not punishing those who may be innocent - there is a high standard for denial of rights. Do not allow the focus to be on preventing anyone who might possibly be under suspect of causing harm from having access to firearms -- this is likely to abridge the rights and decrease the safety of peaceful, law-abiding citizens. Suggestions to strip citizens of

rights based on what they might do is dangerous to liberty and our founding principles of due process.

3.) Measures such as hunker-down drills, increased background checks, and laws forbidding weapons are not proven to make our children statistically safer. Let's instead put our efforts toward proactive solutions that are statistically proven to make our children safer.

4.) Before any solutions can even be entertained, we must ensure that we are asking the right questions:

- Can we stop all attacks?
- Where do most mass killings occur?
- When they occur, what works to stop them faster?
- Where do killers obtain weapons?
- What are the observed, statistical benefits in areas that have implemented currently proposed legislative changes? What is the tradeoff?
- When violence happens, who is best positioned to protect children? What are they willing to do, and are we hindering their ability to be effective?

5.) Don't let fear hinder us from finding a rational solution. No good laws are made from fear, panic, and other rushed and emotional responses. Psychotic killers are gradually normalizing the American public to acts of mass violence. Let's remove barriers to reclaiming our tools of self-defense and normalizing the sight of guns used as a line of defense against acts of violence.

6.) Lack of respect for the value of life in modern culture lowers the innate hurdle to take innocent life for youth raised in that culture. As a long-term goal, work to restore a culture of valuing life while enforcing punishments for those who destroy it.

We know that we are not alone in developing proposals to address the immensely important issue of keeping our children safe. Yesterday, Governor Abbott released a proposal for school safety. We have serious concerns with many points, particularly relating to due process, expectation of privacy, and individual liberty. In hopes of ensuring the best possible final result that protects liberty, here are some specific concerns that we hope will be addressed as we move forward.

First, from a process standpoint:

#1: From press reports it appears that everyday Texans were not represented in the Governor's roundtable discussions to gather ideas for these proposals. It is troublesome that Governor Abbott's recommendations were made without the benefit of grassroots

involvement that could have contributed a fresh set of ideas. We'd like to see more grassroots input acknowledged and considered for out-of-the-box practical solutions.

#2: Important groups also may not have been solicited for their input -- including (as best as we can tell) Students for Concealed Carry, Lone Star Gun Rights, Open Carry Texas, and Texas Gun Rights. These groups have established themselves as stakeholders in any firearms-related legislation and should be included. We are confident that they will be participating in continued dialog to help reach productive solutions. We need every tool in our toolbox to achieve the best possible result for our children.

From a proposed solutions standpoint, we offer the following solutions and responses to already posited recommendations. Yesterday's release:

#3: Focuses on the school marshal program to bring increased protection to schools. Despite the good intentions of this program, it was highly flawed from the start. Although these proposals address some of the flaws, a much more effective solution is to simply drop the prohibitions on armed citizens carrying in schools by repealing Section 46.03(a)(1) of the Texas Penal Code. This would include allowing teachers and staff to carry in school should they wish to do so. Many individuals have their own high standards of training they maintain and would be happy to take responsibility for their own safety instead of relying on a government program. The State of Texas can take action by passing a resolution calling upon the private firearms industry of this State to create non-required training programs tailored for stopping active shooters, and encourage competition across the marketplace;

#4: Pushes for unfunded mandates. Ultimately these types of measures are unlikely to be well-implemented, and/or adversely affect taxpayers.;

#5: Pushes state safety mandates on charter schools, which are supposed to be deregulated for a reason. This emphasizes that public-private partnerships are actually government-controlled despite the illusion of private entities having the freedom to run their organizations as they wish. It also shouldn't go unnoticed that school shootings are not happening in charter schools;

#6: Relies on federal funding. We'd prefer that Texans take responsibility for our own safety rather than be subject to inevitable strings and additional mandates forced upon us by the federal government;

#7: Recommends the iWatch program which sounds more like a real-world version of Orwell's 1984 "Big Brother Is Watching" concept. The example given in the plan includes someone purchasing ammunition as an item that would trigger a possible alert on a person. We do not want people tracking when we purchase ammo -- and we do not want that innocent free-market action denigrated as an indicator of someone who may have ill intent. The program is nothing more than a feel-good effort that will create more problems than it solves;

#8: Recommends deploying fusion centers to monitor social media. How will this not become like the TSA, but with scanners for our minds instead of our bodies? It's security theater with imaginary benefits and actual downsides. We have already seen the deleterious effects these programs have had on European societies where thought-crimes have become prevalent. According to the plan, innocent social media posts could be flagged for potential law enforcement action simply for talking about guns. That alone is wrong, but the risks of also stereotyping and wrongly targeting minority groups would cause great harm to those communities;

#9: Proposes "Red Flag" laws that allow a vengeful relative to threaten an individual's gun ownership based on nothing more than a personal opinion that they're unfit to own guns. That person could then be taken to court -- without any probable cause that they've broken a law and without being able to defend themselves prior to having their rights stripped from them. Our justice system is supposed to prosecute and punish people who have broken an actual law -- not those who are "likely" to commit a crime in the future. Wading into predictive judicial action is detrimental to a free society;

#10: Proposes changes in Safe Storage laws (Penal Code Section 46.13) which present a moral dilemma for parents who want their responsible almost-adult-child to have access to a firearm for home protection. It forces them to choose between following the law or doing all they can to ensure their child's safety. It treats every household under a common standard without respect to individual circumstances. People have been charged under this law only 62 times since 1996, leading us to believe that this change would cause harm without adding any meaningful benefit. The proposed language doesn't just tie it to the home; it also would apply to vehicles and makes access a felony, even if the access happened at a friend's or extended family member's house. Research has been clear that safe-storage laws increase violent and property crimes against law-abiding citizens with no observable offsetting benefit in terms of reduced accidents or suicides. A perfect example of this is the Jessica Carpenter case out of California. Carpenter was babysitting when a drugged-out Jonathon David Bruce broke in and murdered two of the children before police arrived. Jessica was a trained shooter, but California safe storage laws prevented her from accessing her firearm. This is just one example out of many and is not something we want to see in Texas;

#11: Adds mandatory reporting of lost or stolen guns, creating dangerous unintended consequences. Texans have consistently opposed creating any type of gun registry for legitimate reasons, chief of which is that it is not a government agency's business knowing what firearms we own or have owned. Any gun owner is already free to voluntarily report theft or loss of any item, including firearms, and this should be encouraged, but not mandated. Arbitrary reporting deadlines are a dangerous tactic allowing rabidly anti-gun prosecutors to bring charges against otherwise law-abiding gun owners with who are potential victims of criminal activity themselves. It should be noted that California Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a law very similar to this in 2013 stating he was "not convinced that criminalizing the failure to report a lost or stolen firearm would

improve the identification of gun traffickers or help law enforcement disarm people prohibited from possessing guns;”

#12: Fails to mention ending gun-free zones for law-abiding Texans -- the least expensive and most effective way to harden schools and provide responsible adults a fighting chance at protecting themselves and their students by mitigating harm from inevitable attempts at violence. Instead of looking only at law enforcement-based solutions, look at reducing barriers for everyday Texans who are teachers and volunteers in schools to be able to carry a firearm if they choose. This includes, but is not limited to, repealing most provisions of Penal Code Sections 46.03 and 46.035.

As Governor Abbott has clearly stated, his proposal is a starting point and not an end point. We have 6 months between now and the next legislative session to engage in dialog with interested parties and the incoming House and Senate members. We commit to doing so with the intent of ensuring that we find solutions that increase safety for Texas schools without reducing freedom and liberty.

**About Open Carry Texas:** *OCT is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to the safe and legal carry of firearms in the State of Texas in accordance with the United States and Texas Constitution and applicable laws. Our purpose is to 1) educate all Texans about their right to carry in a safe manner; 2) to condition Texans to feel safe around law-abiding citizens that choose to carry them; 3) encourage our elected officials to pass constitutional carry legislation for all firearms; and 4) foster a cooperative relationship with local law enforcement in the furtherance of these goals with an eye towards preventing negative encounters.*

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**About Lone Star Gun Rights:** *Lone Star Gun Rights is dedicated to the restoration of our 2nd Amendment Rights. It is our firm belief that our right to bear arms comes from beyond government, and that government has no authority to create laws or regulations concerning it. Our mission is to ensure the liberty and safety of all Texans and Americans alike by enacting Constitutional Carry and repealing the existing infringements at both the State and Federal levels.*

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**About Texas Gun Rights:** *Texas Gun Rights is organized as a 501 (c)(4) non-profit, non-partisan grassroots citizen organization made up of gun owners and lovers of liberty. With over 300,000 members and supporters, Texas Gun Rights is the largest “No Compromise” gun rights*

*organization in the State of Texas. Not only do we work tirelessly to defend against attacks on our Second Amendment Freedoms, but we work to advance true firearms freedom in the form of Constitutional Carry legislation. We invite all Texans who believe in freedom, liberty, and private property to join Texas Gun Rights.*

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**About Texas Firearms Freedom:** *We are dedicated to making activism accessible for the everyday Texan. Our mission is to pass Constitutional Carry in Texas and to reduce legislative barriers to Texans freely owning and carrying firearms. We train passionate grassroots activists to make their voice heard in the Texas Legislature in order to affect positive change, giving them a community so they are not alone.*

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