

# THE MESOCRATIC PARTY | POLICY WHITE PAPER

## Responsible and Protected

### Universal Background Checks, Due-Process Red-Flag Laws, and a Second Amendment That Works for Everyone

Protect the right. Protect the people.

Published by the Mesocratic National Committee February 2026

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### Executive Summary

In 2023, 46,728 Americans died from gun-related injuries — one every 11 minutes. In 2024, that number declined to approximately 44,400 — still higher than any year before 2020. Of these deaths, roughly 58-62% are suicides and 38% are homicides. Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens for the fifth consecutive year.

The United States has approximately 400 million firearms in civilian hands — more guns than people. Gun ownership is a constitutional right, affirmed repeatedly by the Supreme Court. The Mesocratic Party does not propose to change that.

But a right can be exercised responsibly, and a society can take evidence-based steps to reduce preventable death without infringing on that right. The data shows what works.

The Mesocratic Party proposes:

- **Universal background checks** for all gun sales, including private sales and gun shows. Currently, federal law requires background checks only for sales through licensed dealers. The private sale gap means an estimated 20-25% of gun acquisitions occur without a check. Closing this gap is supported by 80-97% of Americans, including the majority of gun owners.
- **Due-process red-flag laws.** Allow family members or law enforcement to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who present a clear danger to themselves or others. With full judicial review, time limits, a right to counsel, and a clear restoration process.
- **Safe-storage incentives.** Federal tax credits for gun safes and locking devices. Research shows that secure storage reduces youth gun deaths — both suicides and accidents.
- **Fully fund and modernize NICS.** The National Instant Criminal Background Check System needs updated records, faster processing, and comprehensive data from all 50 states.
- **Crack down on straw purchasing and gun trafficking.** Five percent of dealers supply 90% of firearms recovered in crimes.

What we do **not** propose: no assault weapons ban. No firearms registry. No confiscation. These measures either lack strong evidence of effectiveness, violate the political trust needed for any reform, or both.

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## 1. The Problem: The Data on Gun Violence

### 1.1 The Numbers

In 2023, gun-related deaths in the United States:

Category	Deaths	Share
Suicide	27,300	58%
Homicide	17,927	38%
Law enforcement	604	1.3%
Accidental	463	1.0%
Undetermined	434	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,728</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: CDC, 2023.

In 2024, total gun deaths declined to approximately 44,400 — a 5% decrease, the first time annual gun deaths dropped below 45,000 since 2019. Gun homicides fell approximately 14%, while gun suicides continued to climb.

Gun violence costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$557 billion per year in medical costs, criminal justice expenses, lost productivity, and quality-of-life impact.

### 1.2 The Suicide Crisis

This is the gun violence crisis most Americans do not talk about. In 2023, gun suicides reached the highest number ever recorded: 27,300. Guns were the method in over half of all suicides. Firearms are the most lethal suicide attempt method — lethal in approximately 90% of attempts, compared to less than 5% for the most common non-firearm methods.

Research is clear: access to a firearm dramatically increases suicide risk. This is not because gun owners are more suicidal. It is because suicide attempts are often impulsive, and guns convert impulsive attempts into completed suicides at a rate other methods do not. Studies show that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide.

Gun suicide rates are highest in rural states with high gun ownership. Males are seven times more likely than females to die of gun suicide. Gun suicide rates among Black youth have risen sharply, more than tripling since 2014.

### 1.3 Homicide and Community Violence

Gun homicides declined significantly from their 2021 pandemic-era peak, with a roughly 14% decrease in 2024 compared to 2023 and an estimated 21% decline from 2021. Homicide declines have been concentrated in urban areas.

Community gun violence — daily shootings in neighborhoods, not mass-casualty events — accounts for the vast majority of gun homicides. It is concentrated in specific

neighborhoods, among specific demographics, and driven by a combination of poverty, lack of opportunity, gang activity, and inadequate community resources.

Handguns are involved in the vast majority of gun homicides — approximately 53% of gun murders where the weapon type is identified, compared to 4% for rifles (including those sometimes called “assault weapons”).

#### 1.4 Mass Shootings

Mass shootings — typically defined as incidents where four or more people are shot — make up approximately 1% of all gun deaths. They are horrific and traumatizing events that dominate media coverage and public consciousness but are not statistically representative of gun violence in America.

In 2024, there were 499 mass shootings — a 24% decline from 2023’s near-record levels.

#### 1.5 Children and Teens

Firearms have been the leading cause of death for American children and teens ages 1-17 for five consecutive years, surpassing motor vehicle crashes. In 2023, 2,566 young people died from gun injuries. In 2024, this number declined approximately 14% to 2,227 — driven by a decline among 14-17 year olds.

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## 2. The Data: What Works and What Doesn’t

### 2.1 Universal Background Checks

States that require background checks for all gun sales consistently show lower rates of gun deaths than states without such requirements. The background check system currently blocks approximately 3% of attempted purchases — hundreds of thousands of individuals annually who are prohibited from buying firearms.

The gap: federal law only requires background checks for sales through licensed dealers. Private sales — at gun shows, through classified ads, or between individuals — can occur without any check in most states. An estimated 20-25% of gun acquisitions happen without a background check.

### 2.2 Red-Flag Laws

Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), commonly known as red-flag laws, allow temporary removal of firearms from individuals deemed by a judge to pose an imminent danger.

Connecticut’s red-flag law, one of the earliest, has been studied extensively. Research suggests that for every 10-20 gun removals under the law, approximately one suicide is prevented. Indiana’s similar law showed comparable effects on firearm suicide rates.

Red-flag laws have been used to intervene before potential mass shootings, though their primary measurable impact is on suicide prevention.

### 2.3 Safe Storage

Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws and safe-storage requirements are associated with reduced youth gun deaths — both suicides and accidents. Research shows that states with these laws see meaningful reductions in child firearm fatalities.

The expansion of safe-storage laws in recent years may be contributing to the decline in child gun deaths observed in 2024.

### 2.4 Assault Weapons Bans: An Honest Assessment

The evidence on assault weapons bans is mixed. The 1994-2004 federal assault weapons ban has been studied extensively, with conclusions ranging from modest effects on mass shooting casualties to no statistically significant impact on overall gun violence.

The core challenge: rifles of all types (including those classified as “assault weapons”) account for approximately 4% of gun homicides. Handguns account for the overwhelming majority. A policy targeting 4% of the problem while ignoring 96% is not a proportionate response.

The Mesocratic Party does not propose an assault weapons ban — not because mass shootings are acceptable, but because the evidence does not support it as an effective policy, and proposing it poisons the political environment for the reforms that are demonstrably effective.

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## 3. The Proposal

### 3.1 Universal Background Checks

Require a background check for every gun sale or transfer, including private sales and gun show transactions. No exceptions except transfers between immediate family members.

Implementation: all private sales must be conducted through a licensed dealer or via an online portal that connects to NICS. The seller verifies the buyer’s eligibility before completing the transfer.

### 3.2 Modernize and Fully Fund NICS

The National Instant Criminal Background Check System is only as good as the data it contains. Currently, many states fail to submit complete records — particularly mental health adjudications, domestic violence records, and outstanding warrants.

- Require all 50 states to submit complete records to NICS.
- Fund technology upgrades to ensure truly instant processing.

- Implement a “default deny” system: if a check cannot be completed within 10 business days, the sale is denied pending completion (currently, sales can proceed after 3 business days).

### 3.3 Due-Process Red-Flag Laws

Federal framework for Extreme Risk Protection Orders:

- **Who can petition:** Immediate family members, household members, and law enforcement.
- **Standard of proof:** Clear and convincing evidence that the individual poses an imminent danger to themselves or others.
- **Judicial review required:** A judge must approve every order. No firearms removed without a court order.
- **Time limits:** Initial orders expire after 14 days. Extensions require a full hearing with the respondent present.
- **Right to counsel:** The respondent has the right to legal representation at all hearings.
- **Restoration path:** When the order expires, firearms are returned unless the order is extended through the same judicial process.
- **Penalties for abuse:** Filing a frivolous or malicious petition is a criminal offense.

This is not gun confiscation. It is a temporary, court-supervised intervention for individuals in crisis — with more due process protections than a restraining order.

### 3.4 Safe-Storage Incentives

- Federal tax credit of up to \$500 for the purchase of gun safes, locking devices, and biometric storage systems.
- Incentive-based, not mandate-based. Gun owners choose to secure their firearms; the government makes it cheaper to do so.
- Estimated cost: \$200-400 million annually.

### 3.5 Crack Down on Straw Purchasing and Trafficking

Five percent of licensed dealers supply 90% of firearms recovered in crimes. Strengthen ATF enforcement authority to investigate and shut down dealers who repeatedly sell firearms that are subsequently used in crimes. Increase penalties for straw purchasing — buying a gun on behalf of a prohibited person — from a paperwork violation to a serious federal offense.

### 3.6 What We Do Not Propose

- **No assault weapons ban.** The evidence does not support its effectiveness relative to the political cost.
- **No firearms registry.** A registry is unnecessary for the proposed reforms and creates justified political opposition.

- **No magazine capacity limits.** Same evidence and political calculus as assault weapons bans.
- **No confiscation.** Ever.

The Mesocratic position is that effective gun policy must be achievable gun policy. Proposals that cannot pass — and that the evidence does not strongly support — consume political capital that should be spent on measures that can save lives.

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#### 4. The Math

Component	Estimated Annual Cost
NICS modernization and state compliance	\$500 million - \$1 billion
Safe-storage tax credits	\$200-400 million
ATF enforcement expansion	\$200-300 million
Red-flag law implementation	\$100-200 million
<b>Total annual cost</b>	<b>\$1-2 billion</b>

#### Estimated impact:

Gun violence currently costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$557 billion annually. Even a 5-10% reduction in gun deaths — well within the range suggested by state-level data from universal background check and red-flag law states — would save thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

The cost-benefit ratio is not close. The reforms cost approximately \$1-2 billion per year. Gun violence costs \$557 billion.

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#### 5. Addressing the Objections

##### “Background checks don’t stop criminals.”

They do — imperfectly. The system blocks hundreds of thousands of prohibited persons annually. It cannot stop every illegal acquisition. But the argument that imperfect prevention means we should have no prevention would eliminate every law enforcement tool in existence.

##### “Red-flag laws violate due process.”

Not as proposed. The Mesocratic red-flag proposal includes judicial review, clear and convincing evidence standard, time limits, right to counsel, and criminal penalties for abuse. This provides more due process protection than a standard restraining order.

##### “This is a slippery slope to bans and confiscation.”

The Mesocratic platform explicitly opposes bans, registries, and confiscation. It is in writing. It is a commitment. The best defense against a slippery slope is a party that draws a clear line — and holds it.

**“Guns don’t kill people. People kill people.”**

True. And people with access to firearms kill themselves and others at dramatically higher rates than people without access. The goal is not to eliminate firearms — it is to keep them out of the hands of people who should not have them and to reduce impulsive access during moments of crisis.

**6. How the Parties Compare on Guns**

	Republican	Mesocratic	Democrat
Universal background checks	Oppose	Support (all sales)	Support
Red-flag laws	Oppose	Support (with due process)	Support
Safe storage	Oppose mandates	Incentivize (tax credits)	Mandate
Assault weapons ban	Oppose	Do not propose	Support
Registry	Oppose	Do not propose	Some support
NICS modernization	Some support	Fully fund	Support
Straw purchasing	Some support	Major crackdown	Support
Second Amendment	Absolute interpretation	Protected + responsible	Subject to regulation

The Mesocratic position occupies the space where 80-90% of Americans actually are: protect the Second Amendment, close the background check gap, intervene for people in crisis, and stop pursuing policies that do not work.

**7. Conclusion**

Forty-four thousand Americans died from gunshot wounds in 2024. Twenty-seven thousand of them killed themselves. Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children. And the political debate has not produced meaningful federal legislation in over a decade.

One party treats any regulation as an existential threat to the Second Amendment. The other party proposes bans that lack strong evidence and cannot pass. The result is stalemate — and the body count continues.



The Mesocratic position is that the American people have already told us what they want. Eighty to ninety percent support universal background checks. Strong majorities support red-flag laws with due process protections. Majorities support safe-storage incentives. And majorities also oppose firearms bans and registries.

**The consensus position already exists. What is missing is a political party willing to adopt it without adding the parts that don't work and can't pass. That is what the Mesocratic Party offers: the reforms the evidence supports, the protections the Constitution guarantees, and the political courage to draw a clear line between the two.**

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