

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/2009/childrens-defense-fund-statement-on-district-of-columbia-v-heller/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

WASHINGTON, DC Childrens Defense Fund (CDF) General Counsel Susan Gates today released the following statement concerning the Supreme Courts oral arguments in the District of Columbia v. Heller case, which challenges Washington, D.C.s decades-old handgun ban. Earlier this year, CDF and several other organizations submitted an amicus curiae brief with the Supreme Court urging the Justices to uphold the ban.

Laws such as the D.C. ban on handguns are critical to protecting children and teens from the danger and violence of firearms. In 2005 alone, the most recent year for which data is available, 3,006 children and teens were killed by firearms, marking the first increase of children and teens killed by gun violence since 1994. In 2004 alone, more preschoolers were killed by guns than were officers in the line of duty. Since 1979 more than 100,000 children and teens have had their lives cut short because of guns. Every day we dont take action costs more childrens lives.

While handguns have a devastating impact on people of all ages, they pose a unique danger to children and adolescents. The accessibility of handguns dramatically increases the chance of accidental injury and death among children and youth, and handguns are more likely than any other type of gun to be used in interpersonal violence and crime. Keeping handguns out of childrens homes and communities is the most reliable and effective method for preventing firearms-related injuries and death to children and teens. The Childrens Defense Fund filed an amicus curiae brief in this case because we believe that the rampant gun violence today is entirely different than what Americas founders intended. Like D.C.s handgun ban, states and municipalities must have the power to regulate firearms to keep our families and communities safe.

The recent shootings at Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech serve as tragic reminders of the epidemic of gun violence in America. The 8 children and teens killed by gun violence each day is the equivalent of one Northern Illinois University shooting every 15 hours and one Virginia Tech shooting every four days. These tragedies underscore the dire need for laws that make it harder for guns to fall into the wrong hands.

Gun violence is a major cost to public health and affects all of us. Among children and teens, for every gun death, there are many more nonfatal injuries that can cost taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in medical costs for each victim.

There are already more than 200 million privately owned firearms in the U.S.including 65 million handguns. CDF hopes that in making its decision, the Supreme Court will consider the appalling and massive impact gun violence has had on our nations families and communities.

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Fight for children, stay informed and know when to act.