

ALLIANCE
FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY

2020

ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY
ANNUAL REPORT





2020:

WHAT A DECADE!

All of us who experienced the year 2020 will remember it for the rest of our lives. All the generations to follow will surely learn it was a remarkable moment in history, especially for the United States. A global pandemic claimed nearly 2.3 million lives by the year's end, historic numbers rose up to demand racial justice, and our democratic institutions were tested in a divisive—if not particularly close—election. In all of these stories, gun violence played a supporting role.

For the Alliance, 2020 got off to an auspicious start. The Washington legislature passed a law to create a first-in-the-nation Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention! This office will gather data, support victims of gun violence, and administer a grant program to community violence intervention groups. We also passed bills to prohibit guns in child care and early learning facilities, centralize Washington state's background check system, close a background check loophole, and give courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement the ability to better enforce firearm surrender orders. Additionally, the state budget included \$14.3 million for investment in gun violence prevention programs.

This funding will support implementation of existing gun laws, research into gun violence, grants for community-based organizations, and more.

Just as the legislative session came to a close, the severity of COVID-19 hit home. As schools and businesses began to shut their doors, gun stores began offering drive-thru sales. The United States already had more guns than people, and the surge of panic buying in response to the pandemic added an estimated 17 million more. The coronavirus increased the risks of just about every type of gun violence, including domestic violence, suicide, community violence, and unintentional shootings. Despite stay-at-home orders, the country saw a record number of mass shootings in 2020.



Our nation also witnessed tragic incidents of state-sanctioned violence. Millions took to the streets to demand justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others. Their outcry sparked an historic reckoning with structural racism in our country and forced a reluctant society to confront the truth that so many of our systems are designed to wield violence against Black and brown people—violence that is far too often fueled by a gun.

The gun lobby has consistently used white supremacist messaging to stoke fear about people of color in an attempt to drive gun sales. It has also pushed policies like stand your ground and open carry laws that encourage racially-charged violence. Thankfully, the NRA's stranglehold on our political system is rapidly dwindling. Two separate lawsuits—filed in NY and DC—exposed the fraudulent and corrupt nature of its business practices.

Meanwhile, our PAC, the Victory Fund, endorsed 99 candidates, 86 percent of whom won their seat. Gun responsibility champion Governor Jay Inslee handily defeated gun lobby darling Chief Loren Culp, who made a name for himself by opposing I-1639. Attorney General Bob Ferguson's impressive track record won him another term and gun responsibility majorities will return to the state house and senate.

Of course, the bigger story is that President Biden and Vice President Harris made Donald Trump a one-term president. Biden and Harris share a bold vision for how to address the gun violence epidemic and we are excited to see these champions in the White House! Their agenda will have a fighting chance thanks to a new gun responsibility majority in the Senate. Mitch McConnell's reign of blocking progressive policies will thankfully come to an end. The Alliance is working with our partners across the country to call for federal action through Congress and by Executive Order to finally address the epidemic of gun violence.

For all the optimism we share for the Biden administration and the new Congress, the Alliance has always believed that it is up to states to lead the way on gun violence prevention.

In Washington state, our Foundation hosted a virtual summit on firearm surrender and protection orders. Designed specifically for practitioners, the program went in-depth on firearm surrender orders, domestic violence protection orders, and Extreme Risk Protection Orders. It also featured a panel on centering equity in the protection order outreach and implementation process.



We have learned this year that one public health crisis does not stop for another and we are ready to push for continued progress on gun violence prevention in the face of the challenges ahead.. In its first-ever virtual session, the legislature will be tasked with containing the pandemic and addressing the economic crisis. But we cannot afford to press pause on our lifesaving work. We will be advocating harder than ever for restricting high-capacity magazines, rejecting armed intimidation, holding police accountable, and more.

We will continue to adapt to keep our staff and community safe in this COVID reality and will back up the commitments we have made to anti-racism with action. We have so much work still to do. But if this past year taught us anything, it's that we are stronger than we ever knew.

**Renée Hopkins (she/her),
CEO of the Alliance for Gun Responsibility**





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ORGANIZATION SUMMARY



ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY

ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY

501(c)(4) nonprofit organization: Conducts legislative advocacy and has helped pass three ballot measures and 20 gun safety bills in Olympia.



ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY

FOUNDATION

ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY FOUNDATION

501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization: Responsible for original research, program work, implementation of laws, summit education series, and grassroots advocacy.



ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY VICTORY FUND

ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY VICTORY FUND & ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY FEDERAL VICTORY FUND

Washington state and federal Political Action Committees: Endorse municipal, state, and federal candidates.



ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY FEDERAL VICTORY FUND

501(c)(3) BOARD MEMBERS

-

Meredith Goldstein, President
Matt Bellew, Vice President
Cheryl Berenson, Secretary
Sally Clark, Treasurer

Stacy Andersen
Kevin Brannon
Emily Cantrell
Ben Carr
Sue Cary
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Shalisa Hayes
Drew Johnston
Linda Parrish
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Zach Silk
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ALLIANCE
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FOUNDATION

501(c)(4) BOARD MEMBERS

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Steve Kessel
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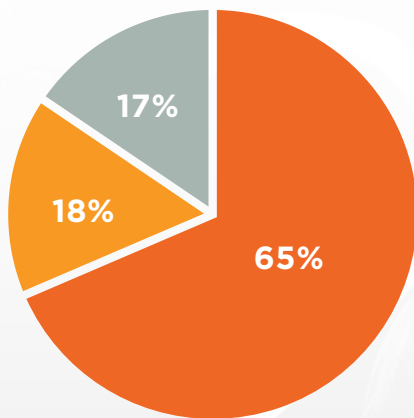
FINANCIALS

At the Alliance, we know that our success is your success. Our partners, volunteers, faith and community leaders, public health advocates, survivors, donors, and elected officials are the driving force behind making our communities safer.

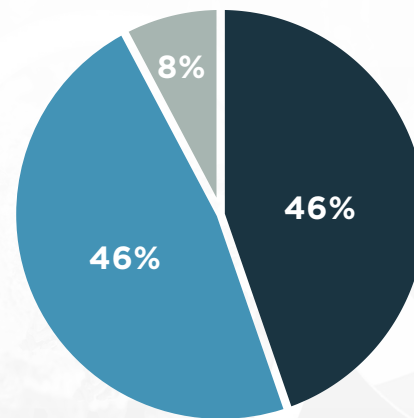
Thank you to the dozens of partner organizations who work with us daily. Thank you to the hundreds of dedicated and passionate advocates who give their time and share their stories. Thank you to the thousands of volunteers who show up day after day. And thank you to our thousands of donors who make our work possible. Together, we will continue to pass lifesaving laws and support programming to reduce gun violence in our communities!

The Alliance is built on a foundation of supporters from across the state and country who financially support our work every year. We are proud that in 2020 we had more than 7,700 donations with a median donation of \$15. Every donation, of every size, is critical to our work.

THANK YOU!



65% Programs \$1,529,870
18% Fundraising \$434,811
17% Management \$400,928



46% Major Donors \$1,035,447
46% Individual \$1,046,862
8% Grants \$193,333



PANDEMIC ON TOP OF AN EPIDEMIC

2020 proved that one public health crisis does not stop for another. The economic and social hardships brought on by the COVID-19 crisis exposed and exacerbated existing risks of gun violence. High-profile police shootings of Black Americans underscored the need to address inequity and bias in our criminal justice system. And at the same time, gun sales hit historic highs month after month.

The impact of these cascading crises is clear: gun violence continued at record-breaking levels despite the pandemic changing almost everything else about life as we knew it.

Virtually every type of gun violence increased during COVID. Domestic violence homicides spiked, fueled by fatal shootings. Community gun violence contributed to the highest homicide rates in 25 years in Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma.

Experts have braced for a rise in firearm suicide as the social and economic pressures of the pandemic persist. Despite stay-at-home-orders and restrictions on large gatherings, 2020 saw a record number of mass shootings—more than 600 in total.

Pandemic restrictions—coupled with political turmoil and calls for racial justice—also sparked a dangerous rise in armed protest. Though armed protest and vigilante activity is not new, rallies against COVID-related public health restrictions inspired a flood of armed protest that continued to escalate throughout the year. State capitols, peaceful demonstrations, business districts, and even residential neighborhoods all became sites of armed intimidation. From Kenosha, Wisconsin to Olympia, Washington, the danger of armed protest was made clear.

This gun violence did not just affect far-flung cities and states, it impacted our own communities here in Washington. And, as was true before the pandemic, communities of color bore the brunt of the gun violence epidemic. The task ahead is daunting, as we all work to chart a path out of the pandemic. It is clear that gun safety must be part of that path. We cannot recover from the coronavirus crisis if we are crushed by the gun violence epidemic.



An aerial photograph of a protest. The words 'BLACK LIVES MATTER' are painted in large, bold, orange letters across a city street. The letters are filled with various symbols, including the Black Power fist, a chain link, and a flag. People are visible walking around the letters. The background shows trees and city buildings.

COMMITTING TO ANTI-RACISM

The murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor in the spring and summer of 2020 sparked historic calls for change. Their deaths, which came on top of the deaths of so many other Black people in acts of state-sanctioned violence, inspired millions of Americans to demand better, not only from our law enforcement and justice systems, but also from our elected leaders and businesses, from our communities and ourselves.

Like many others, this movement inspired us to reflect on our role in and relationship to harmful systems and our responsibility to center anti-racism in all our work.

Our goal at the Alliance is to end the crisis of gun violence in our communities. In order to achieve that goal, we must acknowledge that the history of gun violence and gun laws in the United States is intertwined with white supremacy and structural and institutional racism. In fighting to dismantle those, we are also fighting against gun violence.

It is our responsibility to work alongside others to root out the racism and injustice that is knit into the fabric of our country. We cannot end the gun violence epidemic without doing so. Likewise, we cannot create a truly equitable and just future without ending gun violence.

This year, we committed to examining our own biases and practices in order to become true accomplices in the fight to dismantle white supremacy. We released a [statement of intent](#) to make anti-racism central to our work and we compiled and shared with our supporters a list of resources to help guide anyone looking to deepen their understanding of structural racism and white supremacy.

We acknowledge that our anti-racist work must be ongoing in order to be meaningful. We have made additional, concrete commitments, which [you can see here](#). We know we will not always get it right, but we are dedicated to owning our missteps and learning everyday.

Just as we hold our elected leaders accountable for the promises they make to prevent gun violence, we ask that our supporters and partners hold us accountable. Please email us at info@wagunresponsibility.org to provide feedback, criticism, and ideas on our racial justice work.



IMPLEMENTATION

The Alliance has passed more than two dozen laws since its inception. Each of these laws requires prosecutors, law enforcement, courts, and other stakeholders, both at the state level and across 39 counties, to participate to varying degrees. The Alliance is committed to working with relevant stakeholders to ensure that Washington state firearm laws are implemented effectively.

CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS AND FIREARM SURRENDER

We have demonstrated in King (+400%), Spokane (+50%), and Snohomish counties that dedication implementation/systems change work results in more firearms being removed from dangerous situations. In counties with fully implemented Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) and other Protection Orders, we expect to see a 14 percent reduction in suicide from ERPO and a 25 percent reduction in domestic violence (DV) homicide. King County continues to show a steady increase in the number of firearms removed each year.

To achieve successful implementation statewide, the Alliance worked in partnership with Johns Hopkins, the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, the Regional Domestic Violence and Firearms Surrender Unit, and the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence to develop a training module for law enforcement on firearm surrender in 2019. This training continues to be utilized by dozens of departments and thousands of police officers across the state.

In November of 2020, we held our first virtual summit focusing on the implementation of protection orders (DV and ERPO). More than 100 practitioners from around the state and country attended the event to hear about the lifesaving, risk-based, and data-driven model utilized in King County and Spokane County.

LIE AND TRY

For State Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020), the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) received 3,651 reports of denied transactions and 105 subsequent approval reports. WASPC referred 1,318 reports directly to local law enforcement agencies. WASPC also initiated a protocol for an emphasis on domestic violence-related denials due to the increased lethality present in DV situations. You can learn more about the implementation of this vital public safety tool in the [WASPC Firearm Denial Annual Report](#).

I-1639

In 2020, the Alliance successfully worked with stakeholders to ensure the funding established as part of I-1639 would be allocated to the necessary entities to ensure effective implementation of all aspects of the comprehensive measure.

BACKGROUND CHECK CENTRALIZATION

In 2019, the Alliance, along with a broad stakeholder group, passed a law to centralize background checks in Washington state. This law is vital to ensuring the efficacy and efficiency of our state background check system. The centralization process is a multi-year endeavor, and there has been significant progress in the last 18 months. [You can learn more here.](#)



OFFICE OF FIREARM SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In 2020, the Alliance and a broad coalition of partners passed legislation that established the first-of-its-kind Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention. Implementation efforts in 2020 included attending convenings with national experts and local leaders to learn about best practices in community-based violence prevention efforts. It also included advocacy to ensure that funding for the Office would remain intact amidst concern over the economic impact of COVID-19 on the state budget.



LEGISLATIVE WINS

We went into the 2020 session with one of our most ambitious agendas to date and lawmakers delivered some major victories in the short session. In total, we saw five major gun responsibility bills pass and a historic investment in gun violence prevention programs!

One of the biggest accomplishments of the 2020 session came with the passage of **SB 6288**, which creates a first-in-the-nation Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention. The office will be tasked with gathering data, supporting victims of gun violence, and administering a grant program to community violence intervention groups. This office is a crucial first step toward addressing the gun violence that impacts our communities—especially Black and brown communities—every day.

Legislators extended existing protections in place for K-12 schools with **SB 5434**, which prohibits guns in child care and early learning facilities. This bill will keep our youngest children safe from gun violence where they go to learn and play.

Two bills addressed Washington's background check system. **HB 2555** closes a background check loophole to ensure checks are performed on firearm components. **HB 2467** will centralize Washington state's background check system. Streamlining the system will ease the burden on law enforcement and help keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Firearm surrender orders are some of the most important tools law enforcement have to eliminate the threat of firearms in dangerous situations. **HB 2622** incorporates best practices and closes loopholes to give courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement the ability to better enforce firearm surrender orders.

Finally, the state budget included a whopping \$14.3 million for investment in gun violence prevention programs. This funding will support implementation of existing gun laws, research into gun violence, grants for community-based organizations, and more.

These successes will make a meaningful difference in the fight against gun violence by improving our existing systems and addressing the daily gun violence that had long been overlooked. None of it would have been possible without the hard work of our legislative champions and the commitment of our supporters.



ADVOCACY

The COVID-19 crisis created particular challenges for the Alliance's advocacy work. Pandemic restrictions made our go-to volunteer recruitment, engagement, and activation activities impossible. Without the ability to bring volunteers to Olympia, table at events, or knock on doors for candidates, the team was forced to get creative.

VOLUNTEERS IN OLYMPIA

On-the-ground advocacy in Olympia has proven to be the most effective way to demonstrate the strength and power of our supporter network. Fortunately, much of the 2020 legislative session occurred before the coronavirus upended daily life. Through January and February, orange-clad supporters were on the capitol campus every week. And turnout for our hearing days was bigger than ever before, with scores of volunteers travelling to the state capitol from every corner of Washington.

Despite the year's unique challenges, the advocacy team saw gains in every targeted engagement and advocacy metric. Special highlights include increased volunteer engagement on individual policies leading to more productive conversations during lobby day meetings, more opportunities to engage in session activity digitally, and support from the volunteer networks of new partner/coalition members. Additionally, the Alliance's email advocacy program for the 2020 session was the largest and most engaging to date.

- 1,250+** - Volunteer Hours At The Capitol
- 35** - GVP Events, Including Hearing Days, Lobby Days, And Town Halls
- 148** - Constituent/Representative In-Person Visits
- 5,000+** - Constituent/Representative Phone Calls Directed By Alliance Team
- 745,671** - Emails Delivered To Legislators

GET OUT THE VOTE

2020 brought an election season unlike any other. But our supporters adapted to the realities of virtual campaigning valiantly. Alliance volunteers made over 20,000 voter contacts this election season! They participated in more than 50 phone banks, dedicated more than 200 hours of their time, and sent more than 5,800 texts. We also hosted a dozen fundraisers and raised over \$15,000 in support of gun responsibility candidates. In an election where some races came down to just a few dozen votes, that work really matters.

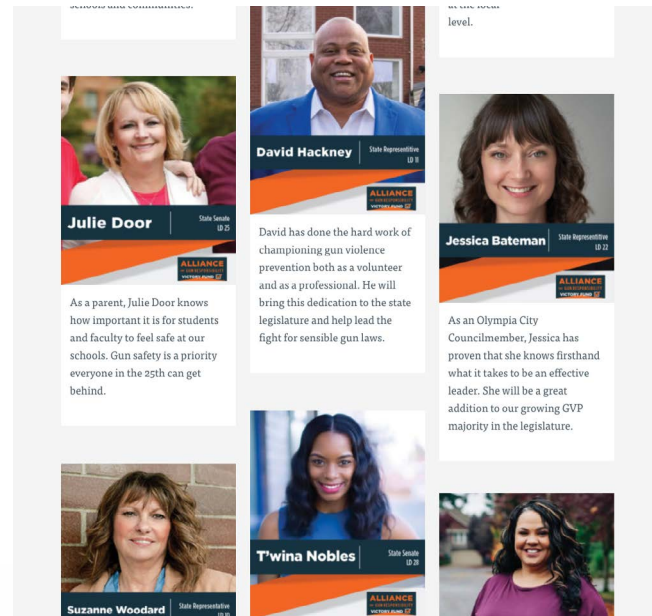
A composite image of three women smiling. The woman on the left has dark, wavy hair and is wearing a maroon blazer. The woman in the center has long, wavy red hair and is wearing a red top. The woman on the right has dark, curly hair and is wearing a blue blazer over a white top and a pearl necklace.

VICTORY FUND

When the Alliance for Gun Responsibility Victory Fund started in 2014, the working assumption was gun safety was a toxic issue—a political “third rail”—and that if candidates went against the gun lobby, there would be swift political consequences. Needless to say, candidates were not exactly knocking down our door for endorsements. That year, we endorsed just a handful of candidates. Six years, three successful ballot initiatives, and two gun responsibility majorities in Olympia later, we’ve proven that gun responsibility is a winning issue.

This year, we endorsed 99 candidates up and down the ballot and 85 went on to win their seats! This record is a ringing endorsement of our vision of a more equitable future free from gun violence.

The Victory Fund issued its first-ever presidential endorsement in 2020, backing Biden. We were proud that President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris ran on the most ambitious gun violence prevention platform in history and won. Voters also returned gun safety champions from across the state to Congress by re-electing Representatives DelBene (CD-1), Larsen (CD-2), Kilmer (CD-6), Jayapal (CD-7), Schrier (CD-8), and Smith (CD-9). And they elected a new gun violence prevention champion to Congress, Representative Strickland (CD-10)



Statewide, longtime champion Governor Jay Inslee handily defeated gun lobby darling Loren Culp. Attorney General Bob Ferguson, another longtime gun responsibility leader, also kept his seat. We are thrilled that two gun safety champions kept seats that can play important and under-appreciated roles in the fight against gun violence: Mike Kreidler was re-elected as Insurance Commissioner and Chris Reykdal was re-elected as Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Voters also returned and increased gun responsibility majorities to both chambers of the legislature! While the size of the majorities did not grow, the strength of our gun safety coalition did.

Several new candidates made gun responsibility central to their campaigns and won: David Hackney (LD 11), Jessica Bateman (LD 22), Tara Simmons (LD 23), T'wina Nobles (LD 28), Dan Bronoske (LD 28), Jamila Taylor (LD 30), Liz Berry (LD 36), Kristin Harris-Talley (LD 37), Emily Wicks (LD 38), Alicia Rule (LD 42), and April Berg (LD 44). These members are part of a growing trend of more diverse, stronger gun violence prevention champions being elected to the legislature.

Far from being a third rail, gun violence prevention took center stage for candidates seeking election this year. More than ever, candidates for every office campaigned on making our communities safer from preventable gun violence.



LEGAL

Initiative 1639, passed by voters in 2018, remains undefeated in court despite facing numerous legal challenges from the gun industry. The law includes several important gun safety measures including raising the age to purchase semi-automatic assault rifles, establishing a safe storage incentive, and more.

The Alliance scored several significant victories with I-1639 litigation this year. First, the Alliance continued to defend the Initiative from the NRA and Second Amendment Foundation's (SAF's) legal attack in federal court. The NRA and SAF seek to strike down two of I-1639's provisions related to semi-automatic assault rifles: the prohibition on sales to 18-20 year olds and the prohibition on direct sales to out-of-state residents. Together, the Alliance and Washington Attorney General's Office put forth overwhelming evidence supporting the need for such regulations.

This included evidence of the devastating toll of mass shootings in our country, the overrepresentation of 18-20 year olds in committing violent crime in general, and the neuroscience behind 18-20 year olds' still developing brains. The NRA and SAF did not even bother rebutting this evidence. The parties filed cross-motions for summary judgment. The federal court ruled for the Alliance and State on all counts, held that I-1639 does not violate the



Second Amendment or Commerce Clause, and dismissed the lawsuit in its entirety. The NRA and SAF filed an appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Appellate briefing will be completed in 2021 and the case heard in a year or so.

But gun advocates did not give up so easily. On the very same day the federal court heard summary judgment arguments, a different set of plaintiffs filed a new lawsuit seeking to invalidate I-1639 in state court. This lawsuit argues that the initiative is invalid based on the lack of formatting lines in the pre-election petitions that qualified the measure for the ballot, and that the training and waiting period requirements violate the Washington constitution's right to bear arms. The Alliance immediately moved to intervene. The court ruled, over plaintiffs' objections, that the Alliance had a right to participate in the lawsuit.

Plaintiffs filed a motion for summary judgment on the initiative petition claim. As some may recall, this exact claim was made in 2018 before the measure appeared on the ballot. The Supreme Court twice rejected those challenges and allowed the people to vote on I-1639. Plaintiffs resurrected the same claim to try to strike down the law two years after the people's vote. After a full briefing, the trial court ruled in the Alliance and State's favor. The court dismissed the claims based on the pre-election petitions in their entirety, handing I-1639 yet another victory. Plaintiffs have appealed to the Washington Supreme Court. After that issue is resolved on appeal, the right to bear arms claims will be decided by the trial court.

We remain confident that I-1639 will withstand the gun lobby's legal attacks and continue to be the law of the land.



PROTECTION ORDERS AND FIREARMS VIRTUAL SUMMIT

It was clear from the earliest days of the coronavirus crisis that the pandemic and the resulting economic and social challenges would increase the risk of gun violence. In particular, the threat of firearm suicide and domestic violence has grown as individuals and families face economic hardship, routines are disrupted, survivors are cut off from normal support networks, and gun sales surge.

With these immense challenges in mind, the Alliance hosted our first-ever virtual summit on protection orders and firearms. Our summits, which bring together national and local subject matter experts to discuss the intersection of gun violence and a number of research and advocacy issues, are a key piece of our education work.

This was the fourth summit the Alliance held on protection orders and firearms, but the first with a national audience. It was designed specifically for practitioners and went in-depth on firearm surrender orders, domestic violence protection orders, and Extreme Risk Protection Orders.

The audience heard from experts who work on the ground implementing these orders in Seattle and King County, Washington. Members of the King County Regional Domestic Violence Firearms Enforcement Unit outlined their implementation model and detailed specific practices related to Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Extreme Risk Protection Orders. Another panel focused on centering equity in the outreach and implementation of protection orders.

Finally, participants broke out into small groups by jurisdiction and worked together to discuss barriers to enforcing firearm surrender orders and protection orders and to identify high-impact changes that could be completed in the short term. While other plans for in-person summits were put on hold, the virtual summit allowed for a bigger, more diverse audience.



A photograph of three young adults standing outdoors in front of a building. On the left is a young woman with long dark hair wearing a grey beanie and a dark jacket over an orange shirt. In the center is a young man with dark curly hair, glasses, and a beard, wearing a grey hoodie under a black jacket. On the right is a young man with black hair and glasses, wearing a blue hoodie over an orange shirt. A red circular sticker with the text "GUN RESPONSIBILITY NOW!" is visible on the man in the center's jacket. The background shows a building with large windows and some greenery.

INTERN AND FELLOW PROGRAM

Our intern and fellow program introduces students and young community members to grassroots advocacy, nonprofits, and campaigns. We recruit interns and fellows from schools across Washington state and partner organizations like Community Passageways. Fellows and interns learn skills essential to working in political organizing and advocacy, such as phone banking, data management, communications, grassroots mobilization, event planning, video production, and more.

Once their program comes to an end, the Alliance is dedicated to working with interns and fellows to find new career opportunities. Former interns and fellows have gone on to have a wide variety of positions, from session aides to business entrepreneurs.

The Alliance was lucky to work with two interns in 2020. In a year where the need to fight for common sense gun safety measures has been greater than ever, the Alliance is grateful to have the opportunity to bring talented young people into the movement.



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In the face of the pandemic and political unrest experienced in 2020, seeing the amount of people that came together to promote gun violence prevention despite the challenges of this year has been incredibly empowering. The lifesaving efforts from the Alliance for Gun Responsibility and our supporters make me especially hopeful for a future free of gun violence.

-Samantha Eden, Legislative Organizing Fellow

2020



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