

ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY

# Annual Report

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**ALLIANCE**  
FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY



# Letter To Our Supporters

2021 began with the January 6th attack on our nation's Capitol, which will forever be remembered as one of the darkest days in our country's history. It was evidence of the danger of armed protest and how guns can be used as recruiting and organizing tools for extremist groups. The deadly insurrection echoed across the country, including in our state where armed protesters breached the grounds of the Governor's mansion.

Less than a week later, Washington's legislative session began and lawmakers were tasked with addressing the pandemic, the rise in gun violence, the threat of armed intimidation, the historic calls for racial justice, and more. Fortunately, they met those challenges head on and passed a whopping 10 vital community safety bills, including a historic package of police accountability bills and a measure to reject armed intimidation by prohibiting the open carry of firearms at the state capitol and public demonstrations.

Saving lives requires effective leadership and champions at every level of government. This year, we held our first-ever candidate forums, giving Seattle voters the opportunity to hear candidates' plans to address gun violence. The Victory Fund's new "Alliance Approved" candidate designation further allowed us to identify and support candidates who proved to be gun responsibility champions, while informing voters about the differences among them. Having approved 82 candidates this cycle, we can proudly say that Washington's elected officials are consistently delivering on their commitments to ending gun violence.

All this progress happened amid record levels of gun violence across the country and in our state. An astounding 18.8 million guns were sold in 2021. Two-thirds of major cities saw increased homicides and the nation saw a record 693 mass shooting incidents this year alone. Washington state was not immune to these devastating trends, with gun violence of almost every type surpassing 2020's record levels. One exception to this trend was suicide, which declined by 4 percent in Washington, progress we attribute in part to the strong suicide prevention laws we have passed.

In Washington, as in the rest of the country, the toll of gun violence falls hardest on Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) communities. In King County, 81 percent of shooting victims in 2021 were people of color. We must act to address the disparate impact of gun violence. We are committed to centering racial justice in our work and took several steps this year to broaden and deepen those efforts. We began recruitment for the first-of-its-kind, statewide Black Chapter Team to create a space for Black Washingtonians to organize and inform our work. We made adjustments to our endorsement process and continued to refine an equity tool we apply to our policy agenda. And this year, we were proud to work alongside community partners to advocate for the passage of a landmark series of police accountability bills.

In times of hardship, it is easy to forget the true impact of our work. And indeed, this was a difficult year. But we've come so far despite unrelenting forces attempting to obstruct our progress, and together we will accomplish so much more.

- Renée Hopkins | CEO,  
Alliance for Gun Responsibility



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# Organization & Board



## **ALLIANCE FOR GUN RESPONSIBILITY**

501(c)(4) nonprofit organization: Conducts legislative advocacy and has helped pass three ballot measures and 30 gun safety bills in Olympia.



## **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 FEDERAL VICTORY FUND**

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

### **501(c)(3) BOARD MEMBERS**

Matt Bellew, President  
Ben Carr, Vice President  
Cheryl Berenson, Secretary  
Sally Clark, Treasurer

Stacy Andersen  
Niko Battle  
Kevin Brannon  
Emily Cantrell  
Sue Cary  
Adrian Diaz  
Meredith Goldstein  
Rory Graves

David Hackney  
Shalisa Hayes  
Drew Johnston  
Linda Parrish  
April Schentrup  
Zach Silk  
Daniel Weiner

### **501(c)(4) BOARD MEMBERS**

Leesa Manion, President  
Sally Clark, Treasurer

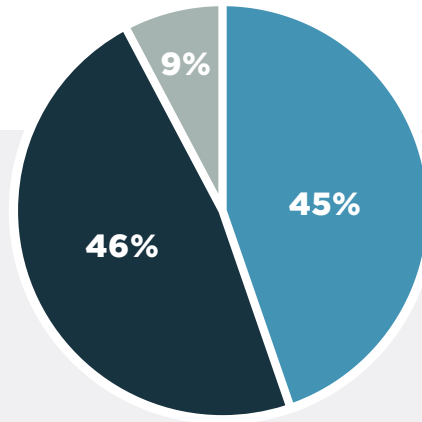
Steve Kessel  
Zach Silk  
Scott Wang  
Caleb Weaver

# Financials

45% Major Donors  
\$888,069

46% Individual  
\$900,192

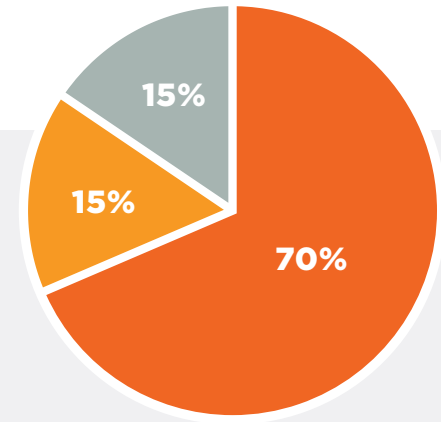
9% Grants  
\$181,150



70% Programs  
\$1,328,107

15% Fundraising  
\$293,736

15% Management  
\$288,839



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 2021 we had 6,576 donations with a median donation of \$25 and an average donation of \$300. Every donation, of every size, is critical to our work. **THANK YOU!**



# Covid In Context



As COVID cases continued to surge in 2021, gun violence followed suit. Tragically, 44,916 lives were lost to gun violence in the United States, well above the annual average. Communities across the nation experienced unprecedented spikes that highlighted the urgency of our gun violence prevention work. Unfortunately, close to home for the Alliance, King County, WA saw record-breaking gun violence yet again. In 2021, 1,405 shots were reportedly fired, and there were 372 nonfatal shooting victims and 88 firearm homicide victims. Of these victims, 81 percent were people of color and nearly 50 percent were Black.

Gun violence did not just impact King County—it impacted communities throughout Washington and left hundreds of families grieving lost loved ones in addition to pandemic-induced stresses. One exception to the dispiriting trend was suicide, which has been on the decline in Washington. From 2019 to 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, firearm suicides nationally increased 1.5 percent, but in Washington they decreased 4 percent, progress that we attribute in part to Washington’s strong suicide prevention laws.

The continued financial hardship, mental health struggles, and other pandemic-related obstacles of this year challenged us all to look deeper at the root causes of gun violence. While legislative advocacy is crucial for preventing gun violence, these measures are not the only solution. In addition to gun responsibility legislation, we must invest in community resources to improve the lives of those most susceptible to gun violence. We know that gun violence cannot be separated from institutional racism, income inequality, and other systemic injustices. Communities of color continue to bear the brunt of the gun violence epidemic. A holistic equity-centered approach to ending gun violence is necessary to bring the changes we wish to see.





# Implementation

The Alliance continues to pass groundbreaking gun violence prevention legislation in our state. Passing these laws only scratches the surface of our sustained efforts to ensure these laws are implemented effectively. The Alliance works with various stakeholders across 39 counties to effectively maintain the success of gun responsibility policies and programs. This year, we did not shy away from engaging stakeholders, advocating for gun safety, and holding necessary actors accountable.

## **INITIATIVE 1639**

Initiative 1639 was a comprehensive gun safety measure passed by Washington voters in 2018. This ballot initiative raised the purchasing age for semi-automatic assault rifles, encouraged safe storage, and more. This year, we began working on a bill for safe storage education in schools. The goal of this bill is to expand on the access prevention piece of I-1639 that addresses safe storage.

## **CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS**

Civil protection orders are vital tools that keep guns out of dangerous situations. Washington's protection order system is complex and the Alliance has been working for years to improve and strengthen firearm surrender orders within the system. Our implementation work with systems partners informed legislative changes we began working on in 2021 to modernize and standardize civil protection orders and to make permanent some pandemic-related changes such as remote filing.

In December, we hosted a protection order convening with participants from Whatcom, Snohomish, Yamika, Spokane, Pierce, Thurston, and Clark counties. Going forward, these convenings will take place quarterly as we continue to explore methods to improve access and efficiency of civil protection orders.

### **LIE AND TRY**

Lie and Try, also known as the Law Enforcement and Victim Notification law, helps keep our communities safe by requiring that law enforcement and victims be notified when felons, domestic abuse offenders, and other ineligible people illegally attempt to purchase guns. For State Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) received 5,137 reports of denied transactions and 188 subsequent approval reports. WASPC referred 1,982 reports directly to local law enforcement agencies.

### **ADVOCACY**

Our advocacy work continues at local and state levels. At the Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention, we are actively involved on an advisory council. On this council, we continue to push for additional funding for the full implementation of the grant program. This year, we were also a part of a coalition conducting legislative advocacy with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission for police accountability.

### **CONVENINGS**

In 2021, we held a strategic convening concerning the future of gun violence prevention policy, law, and litigation. In this convening, we brought qualified litigators, constitutional law experts, policy specialists, and public health researchers to discuss current federal court system dynamics and future tactics to mitigate risks as new and existing GVP laws are challenged in courts. This convening featured a keynote address and Q&A session by Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson.

# Legislative Wins

In 2020, the Alliance formalized our commitment to anti-racism and holding elected officials accountable. Following up on that commitment meant listening to and uplifting Black voices during the 2021 legislative session. The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor reinforced the need for action to increase police accountability and reimagine existing systems and policies. The 2021 session began on the heels of a deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, where the nation witnessed white supremacy in action and how ill-equipped law enforcement was to handle it. The power of protest and the immediate need to address racial injustice and political violence was clearer than ever. Despite challenges that arose due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a stunning 10 priority policies were passed!

**SB 5038** proactively addressed political violence in the era of division and misinformation. This historic legislation prohibits the open carry of weapons at the state capitol and public-permitted demonstrations. This bill is a great step forward in rejecting armed intimidation, protecting free speech, and keeping Washingtonians safe.

**HB 1320** modernizes and streamlines Washington's protection order system and process. It will improve efficiency and accessibility, helping to make sure that the most vulnerable Washingtonians can access lifesaving protection orders to keep themselves and their families safe.

BIPOC persons are disproportionately incarcerated. The disenfranchisement of Black and brown people has obstructed voting power in communities of color across the country. **HB 1078** automatically restores voting rights to formerly incarcerated people upon their release from full custody. This is a major victory for voting rights in our state.

We were elated to partner with the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability and dedicate much of our advocacy efforts to passing these historic police accountability laws:

**HB 1054** establishes guidelines that prohibit harmful and deadly police tactics, including chokeholds and no-knock warrants.

**HB 1089** requires an independent investigation into the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers.

**HB 1267** establishes a new agency within the governor's office to handle independent criminal investigations of deadly force incidents.

**HB 1310** establishes a statewide standard for police officers to de-escalate situations and permits the use of deadly force only when necessary to protect against life-threatening situations.

**SB 5051** expands the state's ability to permanently decertify an officer in the event of serious misconduct. This bill also requires that at least one-third of the Criminal Justice Training Commission seats are filled with community members.

**SB 5259** requires the collection of data relating to incidents of deadly force.

**SB 5066** requires officers to intervene if they witness a fellow officer using excessive force.



# Advocacy



## **ENGAGING LAWMAKERS IN OLYMPIA**

This year's unique challenges prevented Washingtonians from traveling to Olympia to advocate for gun safety. However, that did not stop our volunteers and advocates from making their voices heard. We held a physically-distanced press event in Seattle to honor lives lost to gun violence every year in our state. 842 flags representing the victims of gun violence in Washington were planted to show lawmakers the magnitude of the gun violence epidemic. Outside of legislative session, the Alliance team organized more than 30 interim meetings and recruited more than 200 volunteers to express the urgency of gun violence prevention to their representatives. Our outstanding volunteers made this year a great success and proved that together we can overcome obstacles to continue our important work.



## BLACK CHAPTER TEAM

The Alliance recognizes the importance of uplifting Black voices and listening to those most impacted by gun violence in marginalized communities. Unfortunately, various gun laws passed throughout the country disproportionately impact communities of color due to over policing and various systemic factors. As the GVP space has been historically white-led, we know it is imperative to go about this work with an equity lens and address practices that have upheld white supremacy. The January 6th insurrection showed the stark difference in treatment between people of color and white Americans in protest. This year, we began recruitment for our statewide Black Chapter Team. This chapter team is the first of its kind and seeks to give Black people a seat at the table where decisions about gun violence prevention are made. The Alliance conducted outreach to more than 65 Black-led organizations. Knowing that many of the Alliance chapter teams are predominantly white, we are committed to expanding the Black Chapter Team and standing in solidarity with communities experiencing gun violence that are too often left out of the conversation.



When I started working at the Alliance, one of my main goals was to diversify our volunteer base, because I believe that an organization as powerful as the Alliance, especially given its mission, should prioritize the diversity of ideas and should include all communities in its advocacy and policy work.”

- Nelago Nuunyango | Field Organizer,  
Alliance for Gun Responsibility



# VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

## GOTV:

Volunteers Recruited: 31  
Voters Contacted: 3,638  
Calls Made: 14,792  
Total GOTV Actions: 17,261

## Interim Meetings/2021 Session:

Session Volunteers Recruited: 474  
Total Volunteer Actions: 1,673  
Total Advocate Calls: 12,511  
Total Advocate Leg Sign-Ins: 1,262  
Total Advocate Contacts: 1,971  
Total Advocate Emails: 26,230  
GVP Events: 85  
Total Views for Commonsense Conversations: 2,130

The resilience of our supporters made the 2021 election season a great success. Despite organizing remaining virtual, 44 Alliance for Gun Responsibility Candidates won their seats. Between staff, interns, fellows, and Alliance volunteers, a total of 14,792 GOTV calls were made. Alliance volunteers also spent several hours sending a total of 2,469 postcards during the general election. In total, there were over 17,000 GOTV actions taken this year! By simultaneously continuing our GOTV efforts and recruiting for interim meetings, we kept voters engaged while urging elected officials to support commonsense gun safety measures. Alliance volunteers were stellar at adapting to the virtual environment to keep communities safe and healthy amid the pandemic. With multiple close races and a strengthening opposition, our work remains vital to the mission of ending gun violence in our state.

# Victory Fund



What a great year for the Victory Fund! In 2021, we continued leveraging our PAC work to elevate BIPOC communities and candidates directly impacted by gun violence. This electoral cycle, we interviewed more than 90 candidates and more than half of our endorsed candidates identify as BIPOC or LGBTQIA+. However, our efforts continue to extend beyond representation. We also made changes to our endorsement process to amplify the voices of our partners doing critical work to advance community safety and racial equity in our state.

## Overview:

- Endorsed or approved 82 candidates this cycle
- Only 28 endorsed candidates were incumbents
- 45 candidates identify as BIPOC or LGBTQIA+
- 44 candidates won their elections, including 26 challengers

This year, we made changes to the endorsement process to ensure that we are endorsing gun responsibility champions that reflect our values. We expanded the number of staff that participate in endorsement interviews to include a broader diversity of perspectives. We also emphasized the importance of community-based violence prevention organizations and we invited representatives of our community-based violence intervention partner groups to participate in our endorsement process.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR ELECTORAL WORK**

This year we expanded our electoral work in a few exciting ways. First, we teamed up with our partner Grandmothers Against Gun Violence (GAGV) to host two candidate forums, one for Seattle mayoral candidates and another for candidates for Seattle's D9 city council position. The forums gave voters the opportunity to hear more detailed positions on gun responsibility and distinguish among several supportive candidates.

#### **Other highlights include:**

- We hosted two messaging and policy trainings for the first time, which drew more than 100 local candidates and staff
- More than 250 people attended our Mayoral and D9 forums
- All leading candidates attended in both forums, co-hosted by GAGV and moderated by Emerald Editor and Seattle Times writer Marcus Green
- We introduced a new "Alliance Approved" candidate designation in Seattle Mayor's race, which encouraged candidates to prioritize gun violence prevention and served as a tool to help voters distinguish among gun responsibility supporters
- Evaluated and made appropriate changes to PAC process using anti-racist lens
- Invited community partners to join in interview process to speak to their own work

The main objectives for our Independent Expenditure field work were adding voter contact support and increasing turnout for GVP champion candidates in tight races. Within these objectives, we prioritized supporting underrepresented voices.

# Legal

The Alliance remains undefeated in defending Initiative 1639 against legal challenges. Approved overwhelmingly by voters in 2018, I-1639 raised the minimum age to purchase semi-automatic assault rifles from 18 to 21, prohibited direct sales of assault rifles to out-of-state residents, incentivized safe storage requirements for all firearms, and enacted other commonsense gun safety measures.

Soon after the initiative passed, the NRA, Second Amendment Foundation, and other gun proponents filed a lawsuit in federal court (*Mitchell v. Atkins*) challenging the minimum age requirement and out-of-state sales provisions. Working with our outside legal counsel at Pacifica Law Group and the Washington State Attorney General's Office (State), we vigorously defended these critical provisions. Ultimately, the district court adopted our reasoning and awarded us summary judgment on all of Plaintiffs' claims. Plaintiffs then appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The parties submitted a briefing in early 2021. The Alliance expects the Ninth Circuit to take action on the appeal in 2022.

In addition to the federal lawsuit, a separate group of plaintiffs filed a lawsuit challenging I-1639 in state court (*Slone v. State of Washington*). That lawsuit argues that the initiative is invalid because of formatting issues 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.

Plaintiffs filed a motion for summary judgment on the petition formatting claim. The Alliance and State opposed the motion, explaining that I-1639 was validly enacted by the voters and that the Washington Supreme Court had already rejected this very argument—twice. The Alliance also argued that the petitions did comply with applicable constitutional and statutory requirements. After full briefing, the trial court ruled in our favor, granting summary judgment on the petition-related claims.

Plaintiffs then appealed directly to the Washington Supreme Court, which denied their request and transferred the case to the Washington Court of Appeals (Division II). Oral argument in the appeal will take place in March 2022, with an opinion expected from the court by that summer. Once this appeal is resolved, the remaining right to bear arms claims will proceed in the trial court. The Alliance remains confident that I-1639 will continue to be upheld by the courts.

In addition to litigation involving I-1639, federal courts have issued several other important Second Amendment decisions in the past year. The Ninth Circuit rejected an NRA-backed challenge to Hawaii’s licensing requirement limiting “open-carry” of firearms in public, holding that there is no unfettered right to open carry (*Young v. Hawaii*). The Ninth Circuit also upheld California’s law prohibiting (with limited exceptions) large-capacity magazines—defined as magazines holding more than ten rounds (*Duncan v. Bonta*). The court specifically noted that large-capacity magazines are used more frequently in mass shootings.

The U.S. Supreme Court also heard oral argument in a case challenging New York’s law requiring anyone who wants a license to carry a concealed handgun in public to show “proper cause” (*N.Y. State Rifle & Pistol Ass’n v. Bruen*). The Alliance is closely monitoring this appeal. A decision is expected by summer 2022.

# Summits

The Alliance for Gun Responsibility Foundation hosted two summits on the intersection of white supremacy, extremism, and gun violence this year.

In April, the Foundation held a virtual summit on white supremacy and guns. It explored both past and present connections between the two issues. Professor Mary McCord, Executive Director of the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection, gave a keynote address detailing the growth in armed white supremacist groups, and debunked false claims of private militia activity protections in the Second Amendment. Following the keynote address, Executive Director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence Josh Horwitz moderated a panel discussion. To conclude, Rebecca Johnson of the Alliance explained the Alliance's new equity tool, which consists of questions designed to expose potential unintended policy consequences that may harm BIPOC communities. Participants then divided into breakout rooms to work on an exercise using the tool.

In July, the Foundation partnered with the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety to hold a virtual summit examining far right extremism and militia groups in the Pacific Northwest. Featured speakers Rachel Goldwasser, Research Analyst at the Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, and Eric Ward, Executive Director of Western States Center, covered how extremist groups and Second Amendment Sanctuary groups used the pandemic to spread misleading narratives to further their agenda. They also discussed the alarming uptick in collusion between extremist groups, white nationalists, law enforcement, public leaders, and elected officials. Finally, Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes discussed existing mechanisms Seattle and similar jurisdictions are utilizing to keep communities safe from armed extremism.



# Intern & 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 three fellows and five interns in 2021!**



The Alliance saw my interest in racial justice and allowed me to enter spaces where I could focus on this passion. Co-hosting presentations at the SOWA Bridge Conference & the Moving in Solidarity Youth Summit on the intersection between gun violence and BIPOC youth were two defining moments of this internship. I can say with confidence that the skills I gained with the Alliance will benefit me for the rest of my professional career.”

- Brad Blackburn | Executive Assistant &  
Board Liaison, Alliance for Gun Responsibility



# **GUN VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE**

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