



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 11, 2019

## Latest Gun Death Scorecard From Giffords Is Grossly Misleading

For years the Giffords Law Center (GLC) has released its annual scorecard on how well states' gun laws match its bias toward more infringement of the Second Amendment. It then "proves" that those infringements of law-abiding citizens' rights reduce "gun deaths" in those states. [Its latest release](#) illustrates the point.



Consider its ranking of Wyoming, a state that historically has allowed its citizens maximum freedom in exercising their Second Amendment rights:

In 2018, Wyoming legislators put their constituents at risk by enacting a dangerous Stand Your Ground law and passing legislation allowing people with concealed carry permits to bring guns into places of worship.

The state has very weak gun laws and a remarkably high gun suicide rate. Wyoming could save lives by, among other things, passing universal background checks and imposing waiting periods on gun purchases.

On the other hand it ranks California as its "best state" in its survey:

California continued to strengthen its already strong gun laws in 2018 by, among other things, raising the minimum age to purchase and manufacture guns and broadening its domestic violence laws.

To uphold its role as a leader in gun violence prevention, California should also substantially increase its investment in violence intervention programs, restrict bulk firearm purchases, and regulate the sale of homemade "ghost gun" components.

Giffords chastised Mississippi for being its "worst state":

Mississippi did not pass any new gun safety laws in 2018. The state has one of the highest gun death rates in the nation and correspondingly weak gun laws.

To raise its grade and save lives, Mississippi should, among other things, pass universal background checks, prevent domestic violence offenders from accessing firearms, and repeal its dangerous permitless carry law.

It congratulated Florida for being the "most improved" state in its survey:

Florida significantly raised its grade in 2018, from an F to a C-. After the mass shooting in Parkland in February, the state legislature passed a package of gun safety bills that included an extreme risk protection law, a higher minimum age for buying firearms, and stronger waiting periods.

To save more lives and further raise its grade, Florida should adopt universal background checks



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and regulate military-style weapons and magazines.

Its scorecard then purported to show that where the Second Amendment was honored, “gun deaths” soared while those with strict limitations infringing on it were much lower. Therefore, mission accomplished: More gun laws are needed to reduce “gun deaths.” It called it an “undeniable correlation”: “Annual state gun deaths per 100,000 people [are] grouped by grade. Gun deaths tend to increase as grades weaken.”

Therefore it follows that Giffords’ proposals should be adopted by any state that wants to reduce those so-called “gun deaths,” including adding universal background checks into every transfer of a firearm, even transactions between private individuals, and putting into place ERPOs (extreme risk protection orders) or “red flag” laws.

Two years after Gabby Giffords, a liberal Democrat (Freedom Index rating of 14 out of 100 based on her five years’ voting record in the House) from Arizona, was nearly killed by a gunman, she and her husband founded Americans for Responsible Solutions. It was merged into the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 2017 and changed its name simply to Giffords.

Its attack on gun rights is in three parts: a lobbying arm, a super PAC, and a research arm that publishes its Annual Gun Law Scorecard.

Several years ago Guy Smith smelled a rat. With a background in quantitative management and a nose for fraud and deceit, he took up the cause of debunking gun controllers’ misinformation such as that from Giffords. Smith has no vested interest on either side of the issue and apparently has no bias. He claims that he:

is not a member of any organization — not the NRA, not Everytown for Gun Safety, not the Second Amendment Foundation, not the Brady Campaign. Nada. Someone once bought [me] a membership in the California Rifle and Pistol Association, and [I] immediately demanded to be removed from the membership roster.

He is the editor of *Gun Facts* and claims that “we are neither pro-gun nor anti-gun. We are pro-math and anti-B.S.”

A year ago he took on the task of debunking Giffords’ latest scorecard and, after doing much digging, he concluded:

Just when you think people could not be more deceitful, they somehow manage.

And by “deceitful” I mean Giffords Law Center and their rather ridiculous state-by-state scorecard on gun control policy, wherein they attempt to convince an unwary public that guns lead to mayhem.

His major takeaways included:

“Strong” gun control is associated with higher rates of violent crime (homicides, assaults and rapes);

They handily omitted Washington D.C., which has very high violent crime rates;

They included suicides (which we know are not a gun issue);

They don’t cite sources for their data; and

Their grading scheme for the “strength” of gun control laws is 100% opaque.



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What he found was that Giffords included all forms of gun deaths in their states' tallies: legal interventions and justifiable homicides as well as suicides.

Giffords' attempt at complete transparency fails, as this writer discovered doing his own research. Said Giffords about how it rates the effectiveness of gun laws:

The attorneys at Giffords Law Center spend the year tracking and analyzing gun legislation in all 50 states, evaluating bills for their relative strength or weakness.

Taking note of newly enacted laws, we use an exhaustive quantitative rubric to score each state on its gun law strength, adding points for safety regulations like universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders and subtracting points for reckless policies like "Stand Your Ground" and permitless carry laws.

We then rank the states, convert point totals to letter grades, and compare our findings to the most recent gun death rates released by the CDC.

Year after year, our research yields the same conclusion — stronger gun safety laws lead to lower gun death rates.

Clear as mud! Then there's its claims that background checks would significantly save life and limb.

[The latest report from the CDC](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reveals the following data for 2016 (the most recent available): total deaths "by firearms": 38,658. "Intentional self-harm (suicide) by discharge of firearms": 22,938.

Nearly 60 percent of "gun deaths" are suicides. And as Smith note, "Almost all [suicides] are committed with legally acquired handguns (no assault weapons or extra capacity magazines required)." No life or limbs saved here with new laws.

And of course nothing was said about DGUs (defensive gun uses) in the United States. Giffords doesn't make allowances for how many more Americans would be killed and wounded by criminals if they weren't allowed access to guns.

Estimates of DGUs vary, from 50,000 to nearly five million every year. Most estimates likely understate how often a citizen is able to prevent a crime by the mere presence of a legally owned firearm. As John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime* and *The Bias Against Guns*, noted, "In many defensive cases a handgun is simply brandished and no one is harmed [and so] many defensive uses are never even reported to the police."

Next up is a related topic, how Giffords breaks down the 40 percent of homicides committed with a firearm, and the causes of the killings: They don't. Not a word. There's nothing about the increase in firearms-assisted suicides following the financial crisis. There's nothing about the [increase of gun violence in inner cities](#) as drug cartels shifted their concentration from marijuana to opioids such as fentanyl, or the tie between liberal welfare laws and the dramatic increase the country has seen in broken families and crime that resulted.

In the fantasy world inhabited by the Giffords Law Center, no guns would equal no crime. Smith concludes that readers should dismiss the term "gun deaths" from their vocabulary and that GLC, if it were truly interested in reducing gun violence in the country, would change to being a mental health advocacy group, instead of attacking the freedom of law-abiding citizens seeking to exercise their rights under the Second Amendment.



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