

Joint Marblehead –Salem LWV Gun Safety Group

Origin: The Gun Safety Study Group developed from our previous Money in Politics Study group of the Marblehead League; the NRA was an example of how money affected legislation related to guns. This group was proposed and background articles were collected at the end of 2017 and activated after a series of horrendous mass shootings. We had settled on the public health approach to gun violence after review of all the information. A sister League in Salem has members interested in this topic and so we enlarged our group to include them.

Public Programs: In response to the Parkland and subsequent mass shootings, we felt compelled to hold a public meeting on this issue so in November, 2018, and we held a panel discussion with a BU researcher Dr. Bindu Kalesan, our State Rep Lori Ehrlich, and police chief, Chief Picariello. The program was entitled “Gun Violence and Public Health: Why are guns a public health issue?” It was co-sponsored with Marblehead Board of Health, who we had met with several times. Members of Moms Against Gun Violence were in attendance. In Nov 2019 the Gun Safety Group held a program in Salem, “Public Health Approach to Gun Violence. Featured speakers were: Dr. Chana Sacks, MGH Center for Gun Violence Prevention and the MGH Gun Violence Prevention Coalition, Dr. Hemal Sempat, MGH Center for Gun Violence Prevention and the MGH Gun Violence Prevention Coalition, Amy Falk, MSW, LICSW MGH Center for Gun Violence Prevention and the MGH Gun Violence Prevention Coalition, Police Chief Robert Picariello of Marblehead and Police Chief Mary E. Butler of Salem.

In other action, members of our group advocated with our legislators for the Crime Gun Data Bill, and following up with emails. We also had representation at a Peace awards ceremony in March, 2019.

We hold educational meetings for our own members, keeping up with the latest news and developments through monthly emails from LWV gun safety specialists Jen Muroff and Sue McCauley, news articles, and monthly calls with Florida League on gun violence. Our own topics of investigation are wide ranging and include:

- updates on the NRA
- visits to gun shows
- art exhibit on guns culture
- Russian involvement in NRA
- the business of guns,
- gun violence in Switzerland,
- guns and suicide with state statistics,
- mental health and stress,
- the rise of hate groups,
- proposed gun legislation,
- trauma and the childhood brain,
- effect of ALICE programs
- Affirm
- review of the major gun safety groups

When interest lags, another mass murder spurs us on. This group is open to all members.

The Massachusetts state League has a Legislative Specialist on gun control, and actively advocates for changes in Massachusetts laws related to gun safety. League activities are based on positions at National Level.

Statement of Position on Gun Control, as Adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 Conventions:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens.

- **The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.**
- **The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.**
- **The League supports a ban on “Saturday night specials,” enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.**