



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH INC

# GOOD GOVERNMENT FORUM

*Making Democracy Work-Together*

## **Report on**

## **Good Government Deliberative Forums: Gun Safety in a Free Society**

**Session 1, October 6, 2013, at Rodef Shalom**

**Session 2, February 26, 2014, at The Kingsley Center**

**Session 3, October 27, 2014, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church**

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**Introduction: Changing the Conversation about Gun Safety**

Each year, over 30,000 citizens die from gunshots in the United States and another 50,000 suffer nonfatal injuries. Only a small percentage of these deaths result from the types of mass shootings that command the media's attention. Most deaths occur in local neighborhoods, and many are avoidable: six out of ten gun deaths are suicides.

The effects of gun deaths are significant and widespread; they cry out for serious discussion and thoughtful solutions. Gun deaths impact communities in many ways: quality of life, relations among neighbors, education and youth development, recreational opportunities, economic development, neighborhood sustainability, individual and community health, and more. Each person whose life has been shattered by a gunshot could add something to this list.

Citizens, local officials, and public health workers want to make communities safer, but civil engagement around this issue can be difficult. From those victimized by gun violence we hear calls for fewer guns and more restricted access. Gun owners argue that the guns aren't the problem, and they feel threatened by any talk of restricting access to guns. As citizens wrestle with these issues, lobbyists serving the interests of gun manufacturers exert a major influence on policymakers.

We at the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh (LWVGP) regard this situation as a threat to our democracy, which relies on informed citizens freely debating issues of public interest with the expectation that their views will help shape realistic and pragmatic plans for action.

Knowing that our city and county governments are focusing on the problem of gun violence, we launched a project to engage a diverse group of citizens in discussions about these issues. Seeking to change the conversation about gun deaths from "you can't" to "we can," we wished to discover what individuals are willing to do to help reduce gun deaths as well as what actions citizens would like to see taken by their government and by community organizations.

The LWVGP has held three Good Government Forums on "Gun Safety in a Free Society." The first was held October 6, 2013 in Oakland at Rodef Shalom; the second was held February 26, 2014 in Larimer at the Kingsley Center, in partnership with the Kingsley Association and the Urban Green Growth Collaborative, and the third was held in Hampton at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, in partnership with Neighborhood Organizations Responding Together for Hope (N.O.R.T.H.). Together these forums engaged a diverse group of 150 participants from many different neighborhoods within Allegheny County.

This preliminary report begins with a brief explanation of the protocols of deliberative democracy employed at the forums, a description of the resources developed for the forum, and a listing of the key findings. The report continues with a profile of each forum's participants followed by a review of the data gathered at the forums in surveys completed by the participants and notes taken during the forum.

## Good Government Forums and Deliberative Democracy

The Good Government Forums were modeled on protocols developed by Jim Fishkin at Stanford University's Center for Deliberative Democracy; they involved five elements:

1. Prior to the forum, participants completed a **pre-survey**.
2. They then received a **discussion guide** that introduced them to multiple perspectives on the issue.
3. At the forum, they engaged in **small-group discussions** facilitated by trained moderators.
4. After deliberating, each group developed questions for a **resource panel**. All participants then had the chance to listen to each group's questions and to the panelists' answers.
5. At the end of the forum, participants completed a **post-survey**.

These protocols are designed to discover what a diverse group of people thinks about an issue after they have had the opportunity to learn about the issue and engage those who may have alternative perspectives. With the object of “engaging difference as a resource”—organizers provide people with resources that help them understand multiple perspectives and support that helps them articulate and share the particular wisdom they have as a result of their specific backgrounds and experiences. The ultimate goal is informed opinions rather than consensus. Through deliberative forums participants develop an opinion informed by relevant facts, expert opinion, and an understanding of how issues affect others in their community.

## *Good Government Deliberative Forums*

During the forums, participants were asked to consider four general approaches to increasing gun safety and reducing gun violence. The LWGVP identified these four approaches after a process of research that included review of peer-reviewed research, news articles, and video recordings of previous forums on gun safety and gun violence. In addition, LWGVP members attended several community meetings and interviewed numerous stakeholders (see Acknowledgements at the end of this report).

### *The Discussion Guide*

The discussion guide introduced the four approaches to participants as “models to think with” and presented six questions, which comprised the agenda for the forum's small-group discussions (see following page).

### *The Resource Panel*

Prospective panelists were recommended by local stakeholders who held alternative perspectives on the issues surrounding gun-related deaths; the following were chosen for their knowledge and experience related to the four approaches outlined in the discussion guide.

- Terrence Brown, Founder/CEO, Safety & Security Consultants
- Ophelia Coleman, Chief of Police, Borough of Wilkinsburg
- Nancy Potter, Staff Attorney, Education Law Center
- Tim Stevens, Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project
- Kim Stolfer, Chairman, Firearm Owners Against Crime
- Dr. Jennifer Wolford, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

**From Discussion Guide:  
Four Approaches to Address Gun Safety and Gun Violence**

**A Public Health Approach**

Public health campaigns involve coordinated education and awareness campaigns and can involve regulations and legislation. Public Health campaigns have reduced unintentional poisoning, tobacco use, and motor vehicle deaths. A public health campaign for guns would focus on promoting gun safety and training, improving the safety of guns, and conducting research on firearm deaths and injuries.

**A Focus on Violent Criminals and Illegal Guns**

This approach focuses on the relatively small number of criminals responsible for the majority of gun-related homicides and assaults. Vigorous law enforcement is just one element of a comprehensive strategy for dealing with members of violent groups and gangs.

**A Focus on the “Root Causes” of Violence**

This approach focuses on addressing the social issues fueling violent crime: poverty, drug abuse, low educational achievement, breakdown of the family, and limited employment opportunities. Public officials, institutions, and businesses are encouraged to collaborate with residents in communities that experience gun violence to promote civic engagement, to create education and job opportunities, to implement strategies of prevention and intervention for youth, and to provide rehabilitation for those who have already turned to crime and violence.

**A Focus on Individual Rights and Responsibilities**

This approach emphasizes the constitutional right to bear arms. While recognizing that constitutional rights create individual responsibilities, advocates of this approach believe that citizens should vigorously oppose any attempt to place limits on a constitutional right.

**From Discussion Guide:  
Six Questions for Small-Group Discussions**

1. How would you describe a "safe community"? What do you see as the greatest impediments to a safe community?
2. What steps do you think you should be expected to take to protect yourself, your friends and your neighbors from gun-related injuries or deaths, including suicide?
3. What do you think should be required of gun owners to help ensure a safe community?
4. What approaches would you like to see your community adopt to prevent community and gang violence, to reduce domestic violence, and to prevent suicides? How can the entire community be engaged?
5. What actions should elected officials and/or law enforcement people take to reduce violence in Allegheny County?
6. In what ways could community organizations (churches, gun and sports clubs, business groups, social and civic groups, etc.) help to ensure the safety of our communities?

## Key Findings from LWVGP Good Government Forums: Gun Safety in a Free Society

At the end of the forum, participants completed surveys with questions related to the following areas:

- Gun safety and gun-related violence in Allegheny County
- Guns, gun ownership, and gun owners
- Approaches to increasing gun safety in Allegheny County and how they should be funded
- Suggestions for actions by individuals, community organizations, and public and law enforcement officials.

- Gun-related injuries and deaths are a significant concern in Allegheny County, with homicides being the most significant concern.
- Individual families have the primary duty to address gun-related injuries and deaths. Among other parties, lawmakers and legislators have a more significant role to play than law enforcement or nonprofit and community-based organizations.
- Individuals have a responsibility to handle guns safely and to promote gun safety in their community. However, a majority of participants disagree with the statement: “More gun owners make a community safer.”
- Individuals should guide the work of organizations in their community and organize neighborhood-level cooperative efforts, such as block watches, to promote gun safety and address gun violence.
- Community organizations and public officials, including law enforcement, should support and encourage citizen-led initiatives, with a particular focus on supporting neighborhood-level gun safety awareness, education, and training.
- Community organizations should also focus on developing after-school programs that increase opportunities for youths.
- More funding is needed for initiatives that address gun-related injuries and deaths. Funding should come from multiple sources: public, private, and nonprofit.
- Initiatives that pursue a public health approach, that seek to address the root causes of violence, and that focus on violent criminals and illegal guns are considered most likely to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths in Allegheny County.
- Initiatives that promote an individual’s right to own guns and/or rely on individual gun owners voluntarily to handle their guns safely are considered least likely to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths in Allegheny County.

## A Profile of Forum Participants

A profile of each forum’s participants comes from the demographic data participants provided in pre-surveys. At the first two forums, not all those who completed a post-survey had completed a pre-survey. At the Rodef Shalom forum (R.S.), fifty-three participants completed a post-survey; thirty-nine of these participants also completed a pre-survey. At the Kingsley forum (K), sixty-two participants completed a post-survey; forty-six of these participants also completed a pre-survey. At the St. Paul’s forum (S.P.) all participants whose results are contained in this report completed both surveys. Given these results, the profile contained in this section describes only 119 of the 149 participants whose opinions are discussed later in this report.

Participants ranged in age from sixteen to eighty-three, with most participants being between the ages of fifty and eighty. The largest single age grouping, at all forums was between the ages of sixty and sixty-nine. There was a nearly equal split between women and men at the Rodef Shalom forum. At the two other forums there was about twice as many women as men. Whites were an overwhelming majority at the Rodef Shalom and St. Paul’s forums, while 40% of the participants at the Kingsley forum identified as African American or Black. Despite efforts to recruit more diverse groups, most participants identified as social moderates or liberals who closely identified with the Democratic Party.

Most participants had never owned a gun, although most have known a gun owner and many have fired a gun. About a third of all participants (52) have known someone who was harmed by a gun, and thirteen participants have witnessed someone being harmed by a gun.

Age	<21	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	> 80	No Response
R.S.		6	1	2	1	<b>12</b>	6	3	7
K		4	6	5	5	<b>11</b>	8	3	3
S.P.	2	-	4	3	6	<b>16</b>	3	-	-

Race	AA/Black	White	Asian	Other	No Response
R.S.	3	<b>26</b>	0	1	9
K	18	<b>21</b>	2	1	4
S.P.	1	<b>25</b>	2	1	5

Gender	Female	Male
R.S.	19	<b>20</b>
K	<b>30</b>	16
S.P.	<b>20</b>	13

Experience with Guns		YES			NO			No Response		
		R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.
	<b>Forum</b>									
Owned a gun?		8	16	6	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	1	1	-
Known a gun owner?		<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	4	9	5	6	1	-
Ever fired a gun?		<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	16	15	19	<b>17</b>	6	1	-
Known anyone harmed by gun?		12	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	22	<b>17</b>	7	1	-
Witness anyone harmed by gun?		1	9	2	<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	7	1	-

Party Affiliation	Republican	Democratic	Libertarian	Green	Other	Rather Not Say
R.S.	5	<b>19</b>	0	0	5	10
K	2	<b>29</b>	3	2	3	6
S.P.	2	<b>20</b>	3	1	2	6

Political Ideology	Strong Conservative	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Strong Liberal	Rather Not Say
R.S.	2	3	10	<b>14</b>	7	3
K	3	4	10	<b>13</b>	10	6
S.P.	1	3	4	<b>12</b>	11	3



## Perception of Gun Ownership

Participants were asked their opinions about gun ownership in their community, including why they believed people in their community own guns. At all forums, protection was identified by the highest number of participants as the reason people in their community owned guns, although a majority of participants at all forums disagreed with the statement: “More gun owners in a community make it safer.”

### What do you believe is the primary reason people in your community own guns?

Forum	Sport		Hunting		Hobby		Constitutional Right		Protection		Other		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	6	5	8	6	3	2	3	6	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	2	4	5	5
K	1	4	4	6	1	1	4	5	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	6	8	1	-
S.P.		0		10		2		1		<b>17</b>		3		1

### Do you agree: “More gun owners in a community make it safer”?

Forum	Completely Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree/Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Completely Disagree		Unsure		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	5	8	4	2	3	6	7	9	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>			5	1
K	7	11	5	1	3	7	7	7	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	2	-	1	-
S.P.	4	4	2	3	4	3	2	5	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	1	1	-	-

## Perception of Gun Owners

In both surveys participants were asked whether they think gun owners in their community are knowledgeable about gun safety, how safely they think gun owners in their community handle their guns, and how safe they believe their children are playing in the home of gun owners in their community.

After deliberating, close to 30% of participants at the Rodef Shalom and Kingsley forums and 40% at the St. Paul’s forum agreed with the statement: “Gun owners in my community are knowledgeable about gun safety”. However, a third of participants at Rodef Shalom and a fifth of the participants at Kingsley were unsure. Similarly, although 40% of participants at Rodef Shalom and Kingsley believed gun owners in their community handled their guns at least somewhat safely, a third at both forums were unsure. Participants at the St. Paul’s forum responded to a different version of this question, which provided them only with the options of responding yes or no. Most St. Paul’s participants (60%) answered that gun owners in their community handled their guns safely. When considering whether their children were safe playing in the homes of gun owners in their community, forty-two percent (42%) of participants at Rodef Shalom and a quarter of the participants at Kingsley (25%) were unsure. Participants at the St. Paul’s forum responded to a different version of this question, which provided them only with the options of responding yes or no. Most St. Paul’s participants (60%) responded that their children were not safe playing in the homes of gun owners in their community.

Do you agree: “Gun owners in my community are knowledgeable about gun safety”?														
Forum	Completely Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree/Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Completely Disagree		Unsure		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	2	5	<b>11</b>	10	<b>11</b>	8	5	8	2	3	3	<b>18</b>	5	1
K	6	6	13	12	7	10	5	11	4	8	11	<b>14</b>	-	1
S.P.	4	1	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	4	7	6	8	4	1	5	5	-	-

**How safely do gun owners in your community handle their guns?**

Forum	Very Safely		Somewhat Safely		Neither safely/unsafely		Somewhat Unsafely		Very Unsafely		Unsure		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	6	7	8	14	2	7	2	4	1	3	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	5	
K	12	13	5	12	2	3	4	7	4	7	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	-	-
S.P.				<b>20</b>		1		11				1		1

**How safe are your children playing in the home of a gun owner in your community?**

Forum	Very Safe		Somewhat Safe		Neither safe/unsafe		Somewhat Unsafe		Very Unsafe		Unsure		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	6	7	6	4	5	7	2	7	3	5	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	5	
K	9	9	4	10	2	9	4	5	7	5	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	2	7
S.P.				12		1		<b>21</b>						

## Perception of Gun-Related Injuries and Deaths in Allegheny County

Both before and after deliberation, participants at all three forums agreed that gun-related injuries and deaths are a major concern for Allegheny County, with homicide by gun being identified as the most significant concern. A majority of participants identified either *Individual families* or *Lawmakers and legislators* as having the primary responsibility to reduce gun-related injuries or deaths in Allegheny County.

### Do you agree: “Gun related injuries and deaths are a major concern for Allegheny County”?

Forum	Completely Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree/Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Completely Disagree		Unsure		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	19	34	8	9	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	1	5	1
K	26	26	5	16	5	9	4	2	2	5	4	3	-	1
S.P.	19	16	8	10	3	3	2	0	1	4	1	1	-	-

### Which do you think is the most significant concern in Allegheny County?

Forum	Homicide by gun		Suicide by gun		Accidental Gun deaths		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	27	32	3	10	4	6	5	5
K	36	46	2	3	5	2	3	10
S.P.	24	17	7	9	3	3	0	3

### Who has the primary duty to reduce gun -related injuries and deaths in Allegheny County?

Forum	Lawmakers and Legislators		Law enforcement		Individual families		Community organizations		Nonprofit organizations		Multiple Answers		Other		No Response	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
R.S.	16	12	2	3	14	23	1	2	-	-	-	9	1	9	5	2
K	12	16	4	4	19	21	2	5	-	2	-	18	6	7	3	1
S.P.	17	9	3	1	8	9	0	3	0	0	0	6	6	3	0	2

## Perception of Factors Contributing to Gun-Related Homicides, Suicides, and Accidents in Allegheny County

Close to a fifth of the participants at Rodef Shalom and Kingsley, and close to a third at St. Paul's, identified either *Ease of access to guns* or *Criminal Behavior* as factors contributing most to homicides; however, similar numbers identified multiple factors. As regards suicide, a majority at Rodef Shalom and a third of participants at both Kingsley and St. Paul's identified *Ease of access to guns* as contributing most to suicides by gun. At all forums, about a quarter of the participants identified multiple factors. Most participants at Rodef Shalom and majorities at Kingsley and St. Paul's identified either *Ease of access to guns* or *Lack of gun safety training* as contributing the most to gun-related accidents.

### Homicides: Which contributes the most to gun-related homicides in Allegheny County?

Forum	Ease of access to guns		Criminal Behavior		Inter-personal conflict		Drug & Alcohol Abuse		Lack of gun law enforcement		Prevalence of gun ownership		Individuals lack gun safety training		Poverty		Violence in the media		Other		Multiple Response		No Response	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
R.S.	13	11	9	10	1	6	3	5	-	2	1	2	-	3	4	2	2	-	1			10	5	1
K	11	12	16	13	1	3	5	4	-	2	2	-	1	2	3	6	1	-	4	2	-	17	2	-
S.P.	16	8	6	4	3	3	5	1	1	3	-	-	0	2	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	9	-	-

### Suicides: Which contributes the most to gun-related suicides in Allegheny County?

Forum	Ease of access to guns		Criminal Behavior		Inter-personal conflict		Drug & Alcohol Abuse		Lack of gun law enforcement		Prevalence of gun ownership		Individuals lack gun safety training		Poverty		Violence in the media		Other		Multiple Responses		No Response	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
R.S.	18	28	-	-	6	4	4	5	1	-	1	3	-	1	2	2	-	-	2	-		5	5	1
K	12	20	1	3	7	7	4	5	1	-	-	1	1	4	1	-	1	14	8	-	15	2	-	
S.P.	15	13	2	1	3	4	5	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	0	1	-	-	7	4	0	7		

### Accidents: Which contributes the most to gun-related accidents in Allegheny County?

Forum	Ease of access to guns		Criminal Behavior		Inter-personal conflict		Drug & Alcohol Abuse		Lack of gun law enforcement		Prevalence of gun ownership		Individuals lack gun safety training		Poverty		Violence in the media		Other		Multiple Responses		No Response	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
R.S.	11	22	2	-	-	-	-	3	15	-	3	5	-	15	1	-	-	-	2	2	-	4	5	2
K	18	18	3	2	-	-	1	3	-	-	2	3	13	18	2	-	-	1	6	1	-	15	2	-
S.P.	15	9	2	0	0	1	1	1	-	-	3	2	9	12	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	7	-	-

## Four Approaches and Twelve Strategies

In the post-survey, participants were presented with twelve strategies to consider, each of which had been explained in the discussion guide as part of one of four approaches to increasing gun safety and reducing gun-related violence, injuries, and deaths. Participants were asked to indicate the likely success of each as a strategy for reducing gun-related homicides, suicides, and accidents in Allegheny County.

Twelve Strategies	Approach
Make it easier for private citizens to obtain guns.	Individual Rights and Responsibility
Rely on gun owners to use and store guns safely.	Individual Rights and Responsibility
Increase enforcement of current gun laws and punishments for those who violate current laws.	Individual Rights and Responsibility
Mandate gun safety courses for all gun owners.	Public Health
Mandate licensing for all gun owners.	Public Health
Pass a law in Pennsylvania that would hold gun owners criminally liable if children gain access to their guns.	Public Health
Require gun manufacturers to include design safety features on all guns.	Public Health
Implement gun safety awareness and education campaigns that involve media, schools, and healthcare workers.	Public Health
Coordinate efforts among law enforcement, social service providers, and community leaders to identify members of violent groups and help them access job, education, and health services.	Violent Criminals and Illegal Guns
Increase opportunities for well paying jobs and high quality schools in communities that experience violence.	Root Causes of Violence
Provide prevention and intervention programs for youths in communities that experience violence.	Root Causes of Violence
Provide rehabilitation, jobs, and education programs for people who have been in prison.	Root Causes of Violence

## Assessing Approaches and Strategies

In post-surveys, participants were asked to assess which of the twelve strategies would be likely to increase gun safety and reduce gun-related violence in Allegheny County.

Participants expressed no clear preference for any one approach. They did, however, indicate that strategies related to a focus on *Individual Rights and Responsibility* are unlikely to be successful. In particular, more than 70% of participants at all forums indicated that making it easier for private citizens to own guns was unlikely to increase gun safety or reduce gun-related injuries and deaths in Allegheny County. In addition, a majority of participants at all forums indicated that relying on gun owners to use and store guns safely was unlikely to be successful.

Strategies related to a focus on *Violent Criminals and Illegal Guns* were regarded as likely to be successful by 90% of participants at Rodef Shalom; between 61%-71% of participants at Kingsley, and at least 50% of participants at St. Paul's Strategies related to a focus on the *Root Causes of Gun Violence* were regarded as likely to be successful by 87%-89% of participants at Rodef Shalom, 76%-85% of participants at Kingsley, and a majority of participants at St. Paul's Strategies related to a *Public Health Approach* were regarded as likely to be successful by 68%-88% of participants at Rodef Shalom, 59%-79% of participants at Kingsley, and 50%-85% of participants at St. Paul's

Assessing Strategies: A Focus on Individual Rights and Responsibilities																				
		Very likely			Somewhat likely			Neither likely/unlikely			Somewhat unlikely			Very unlikely			No Response			
	Forum	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	
Strategies																				
Make it easier for private citizens to obtain guns		5	7	1	1	3	3	10	11	4	6	5	1	31	33	23	-	3	1	
Rely on gun owners to use and store guns safely		11	12	5	9	11	6	6	6	3	8	13	10	19	16	9	-	4	1	

### Assessing Strategies: A Focus on Violent Criminals and Illegal Guns

		Very likely			Somewhat likely			Neither likely/unlikely			Somewhat unlikely			Very unlikely			No Response		
	Forum	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
<b>Strategies</b>																			
Coordinate efforts among law enforcement, social service providers, and community leaders to identify members of violent groups and help them access job, education, and health services.		38	29	19	10	20	7	4	3	4	-	1	1	1	3	-	-	6	3
Increase enforcement of current gun laws and punishments for those who violate current laws.		34	32	16	12	14	11	5	7	3	1	1	2	1	3	-	-	5	2

### Assessing Strategies: A Focus on the Root Causes of Violence

		Very likely			Somewhat likely			Neither likely/unlikely			Somewhat unlikely			Very unlikely			No Response		
	Forum	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
<b>Strategies</b>																			
Increase opportunities for well paying jobs and high quality schools in communities that experience violence.		37	37	19	8	15	8	6	1	4	2	1	1	-	4	-	-	4	1
Provide prevention and intervention programs for youths in communities that experience violence.		39	36	16	8	16	15	3	2	1	2	2	-	1	1	1	-	5	1
Provide rehabilitation, jobs, and education programs for people who have been in prison.		33	32	18	10	15	11	6	7	-	-	2	1	3	2	2	-	4	1



**Assessing Strategies: A Focus on Public Health**

		Very likely			Somewhat likely			Neither likely/unlikely			Somewhat unlikely			Very unlikely			No Response		
Forum		R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
Strategies																			
Implement gun safety awareness and education campaigns that involve media, schools, and healthcare workers.		<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	16	19	7	3	6	3	8	7	-	4	4	-	-	4	2
Mandate gun safety courses for all gun owners.		<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>	14	8	9	7	6	4	3	3	4	5	9	3	2	4	1
Mandate licensing for all gun owners.		<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	12	15	10	5	9	2	7	5	1	4	7	4	-	4	1
Pass a law in Pennsylvania that would hold gun owners criminally liable if children gain access to their guns.		<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	6	9	13	6	6	1	4	4	2	5	10	2	-	4	1
Require gun manufacturers include design safety features on all guns.		<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	14	19	10	3	5	3	2	2	1	1	2	3	-	4	1

## Identifying Funding: Sources and Strategies to Support

In addition to assessing the likely success of differing strategies, participants were asked about funding: whether more funding should be devoted to improving gun safety, who should provide this funding, and which approaches they would like to see funded.

A majority of participants at all forums agreed that more funding was needed to improve gun safety in Allegheny County. Participants did not indicate a preference for whether funding should come from public, private, or non-profit sources, nor did they identify one particular approach that should receive more funding. However, at all forums most participants agreed that funding should go to support initiatives related to a focus on the *Root Causes of Violence, Public Health, and Violent Criminals and Illegal Guns*. In addition, majorities at all forums indicated that more funding should be given to law enforcement.

About a third of participants at each forum agreed that more funding should be provided to initiatives focused on protecting private citizens' rights to obtain and use guns, while more than a third at each forum disagreed with this view.

<b>Do you agree: "More funding is needed to improve gun safety in Allegheny County"</b>																						
		Completely Agree			Somewhat Agree			Neither Agree/Disagree			Somewhat Disagree			Completely Disagree			Unsure			No Response		
Forum		R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
		26	20	14	11	20	11	7	5	3	1	3	3	7	9	-	2	3	3	-	2	-

  

<b>Do you agree: "More funding to improve gun safety in Allegheny County should come from..."</b>																						
		Completely Agree			Somewhat Agree			Neither Agree/Disagree			Somewhat Disagree			Completely Disagree			Unsure			No Response		
Forum		R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	N	R.S.	K	S.P.
<b>Sources</b>																						
Public sources		18	18	10	15	21	12	5	10	2	3	2	6	4	9	1	1	4	3	2	2	-
Private sources		16	11	7	20	17	11	7	14	5	2	5	4	4	6	2	2	4	5	2	5	-
Nonprofit foundations		11	13	9	16	15	8	8	13	6	9	5	3	5	10	3	1	2	5	3	4	-

**Do you agree: “More funding to improve gun safety in Allegheny County should be provided to ...”**

Forum	Completely Agree			Somewhat Agree			Neither Agree/Disagree			Somewhat Disagree			Completely Disagree			Unsure			No Response			
	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	R.S	K	S.P.	
<b>Recipients</b>																						
Law enforcement.	<b>23</b>	14	<b>11</b>	15	<b>21</b>	10	5	10	6	3	2	3	4	9	2	1	4	2	2	2	-	
Programs working with members of violent groups/gangs.	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	11	20	7	5	4	7	3	1	1	3	5	2	-	4	3	1	1	-	
Initiatives that address the root causes of violence.	<b>41</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	4	15	8	4	3	4	-	2	-	1	3	1	-	2	1	1	2	-	
Sustained gun safety awareness and education campaigns.	<b>38</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	10	22	6	3	5	3	-	1	-	1	5	1	-	3	1	1	2	-	
Initiatives that protect private citizens’ rights to obtain and use guns.	11	<b>15</b>	5	5	12	2	10	4	7	6	10	4	<b>19</b>	12	<b>10</b>	1	5	3	1	4	1	

## **Suggested Actions: Individuals, Community Organizations, Public Officials, and Law Enforcement**

In post-surveys, participants were provided an opportunity to suggest what individuals, community organizations, public officials, and law enforcement could do to increase gun safety and reduce gun-related homicides, suicides, and accidents in Allegheny County. At the Rodef Shalom forum a small majority of participants, 51%, offered suggestions. At Kingsley and St. Paul's, close to 60% of participants offered ideas. For this report, the suggestions participants gave on the post-survey are further informed by information from notes that were taken at each table during the small-group discussions. These notes reveal similar concerns and ideas emerging during the small group discussions at all forums generally as well as at different tables at each individual forum. These similarities among the small group discussions are reflected in similarities among the types of suggestions participants offered in the post-surveys from the forums.

### *What Individuals Can Do: Promote Gun Safety, Organize Residents, Work with Existing Community Resources*

In the post-surveys and in the small group discussions, participants discussed the need for individuals to promote gun safety as a norm and to advocate for gun safety training in their communities. A number of participants indicated that they intended to be more vigilant about storing guns safely: at home, locked, and unloaded. Others went further to suggest that they could help organize gun safety training opportunities in their community. One participant even suggested personally taking on the responsibility for training others to handle guns safely.

Participants also suggested that individuals organize other residents. When discussing what makes a community safe and the impediments to a safe community, participants at most tables identified residents who know the community and their neighbors as a key feature of safe communities. By contrast, they identified a lack of communication among residents as a problem that contributes to making communities unsafe. Participants discussed the need for individuals to be more observant—to be willing to sit outside and keep an eye on the neighborhood, especially the kids. In this context, participants discussed organizing neighborhood-level block watches. However, they also suggested that individual block watches should operate within a network of other block watches that is working on a coordinated communitywide plan of action.

While some believed individuals should create new avenues for addressing gun-related problems, others suggested that individuals needed to identify and work with existing resources. For some this meant individuals taking responsibility for educating themselves about existing laws and the facts (“not the myths”) about guns. For others this meant contacting elected officials to discuss their concerns. For a number of participants, this meant becoming involved in programs community organizations are already doing to address issues related to the root causes of gun violence. In particular, several participants suggested in the post-survey and during discussions at the tables, that adults should become mentors to young people. Some stated this suggestion more personally, indicating that they themselves would seek out mentoring opportunities.

### *What Community Organizations Can Do: Provide Gun Safety Education, Create Youth Programs, Advocate for “Common Sense” laws*

In the small group discussions and in the post-survey, participants were prompted to think broadly about community organizations. In particular, prompted by a suggestion made by several people interviewed during the development of the Discussion Guide, the organizers of the forum encouraged participants to think of gun and sports clubs as community resources that could work with and alongside churches and business, social, and civic groups. In general, participants at both forums suggested that community organizations should be educating residents, creating programs that provided opportunities for youth, or organizing advocacy campaigns.

In both the post-surveys and the small group discussions, participants suggested that community organizations could take the lead in organizing forums for residents to become educated and take action. Some stressed the importance of ensuring that community forums provide opportunities for people with diverse views to engage one another. Specifically, several participants suggested that people from differing neighborhoods should be talking to and learning from one another; others suggested community forums should involve engagement among gun owners and those who do not own guns. Participants also suggested that community forums should be focused on taking action. In particular, several participants suggested that community organizations could help residents learn about strategies that had been successful in other communities.

While participants identified education as a focus for community organizations, participants differed in what they considered the appropriate focus for the type of education community organizations could provide. Some suggested that community organizations should teach people how to handle guns safely. In this regard, several participants suggested that schools could be enlisted as a resource for gun safety education or training. Other participants raised the concern that anti-gun sentiment could be an impediment to gun safety. In particular, participants noted that residents in urban areas do not have access to gun ranges or shooting clubs, which some believe are the types of businesses and organizations that could be enlisted as a resource to promote gun safety and provide gun training in their community. By contrast, other participants suggested that community organizations should educate people—especially youth—about the danger of guns and the destructive effects of gun violence. In addition to gun safety education, a number of participants suggested that community organizations should provide education about mental health issues.

Participants also suggested that community organizations could focus particularly on providing opportunities for youth. Suggestions ranged from creating safe environments for youth to spend their leisure time to providing job opportunities for youth. Significantly, one participant emphasized that community organizations should make sure that they provide opportunities for all youth, not just those identified as “at risk.” In addition to suggesting that community organizations be resources for youth, some participants suggested that youth could be engaged as a resource to help organizations. As one participant suggested, community organizations should “obtain and act on input from the kids in the community.”

Finally, a few participants suggested that community organizations needed to become more politically active and advocates for what these participants identified as “common sense gun laws,” such as legislative mandates for waiting periods during which individuals would be required to receive gun safety training.

### *What Public Officials and Law Enforcement Can Do: Regulate Gun Ownership, Enforce Existing Laws, Collaborate with Communities*

Suggestions for public officials and law enforcement included the passage of new gun control regulations, more stringent enforcement of existing laws, and increased community engagement.

Participants focused on legislative solutions in their small groups and in their post-survey suggestions to public officials. Those participants' suggesting new legislation voiced support for many of the common options: universal background checks, bans of automatic weapons and high capacity clips, requirements that guns be registered, requirements that all gun owners be licensed, and mandated waiting periods and training for anyone wishing to purchase a gun.

Some participants suggested public officials and law enforcement needed to more stringently enforce existing gun laws. In both the post-surveys and in the small group discussions, participants expressed the concern that existing gun laws were not being enforced. In particular, those who expressed this concern suggested that criminals who used guns were not being incarcerated at all or were not being given long-enough prison sentences. In relation to this concern, others suggested that public officials needed to do more to educate people about what laws existed and how they were being enforced

In post-survey suggestions reflective of the small group discussions, many participants suggested that public officials—and law enforcement especially—needed to create better relations with the communities in which they work. In particular, participants suggested that these relationships should be ones of support. That is, public officials and law enforcement should help residents organize to address their problems and then work to support the initiatives generated by residents and community organizations. In addition, participants suggested that public officials and law enforcement could help with addressing not just gun-related problems but also problems such as poverty and blight. In relation to these suggestions, some participants suggested that law enforcement officers would need to undergo training that would help them work closely with residents.

## Assessing the Forum: General

A majority of participants experienced the forum as engaging, enjoyable, and intellectually stimulating. More than 80% of participants at each forum indicated that they were at least somewhat likely to participate in another deliberative forum.

### Assessing Forum: To What extent did you find participation in today's event...

Forum	Very Much			Somewhat			Slightly			Not at all			No Response		
	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
Engaging?	35	41	25	15	12	7	1	2	1	-	-	-	3	7	1
Enjoyable?	25	37	18	20	15	12	4	2	2	1	-	-	4	8	2
Intellectually stimulating?	26	37	18	19	17	11	5	-	3	-	-	-	4	8	2
Frustrating?	11	5	4	13	11	17	16	8	8	10	31	3	4	7	2

### Assessing Forum: How likely would you be to participate in another deliberative forum like this one?

Forum	Very likely			Somewhat likely			Neither likely/unlikely			Somewhat unlikely			Very unlikely			No Response		
	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	N	R.S.	K	S.P.
	26	29	19	20	20	12	2	3	1	2	3	-	1	1	1	3	6	1

## Assessing the Forum: Specific Elements

### *Written Discussion Guide*

A majority of participants indicated that the discussion guide helped to broaden their understanding of the issue, presented perspectives with which they were not familiar, but did not change their views. In fact, most participants indicated that it reinforced their existing views.

<b>Assessing Forum Elements: Written Discussion Guide</b>																
		<b>Very Much</b>			<b>Somewhat</b>			<b>Slightly</b>			<b>Not at all</b>			<b>No Response</b>		
	<b>Forum</b>	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
	Broadened your understanding of the issue	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	20	14	<b>14</b>	4	9	3	4	7	3	2	14	-
	Presented perspectives with which you were not familiar	17	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>	13	10	7	12	6	4	4	4	2	15	-
	Changed your views	7	8	1	17	9	9	9	14	11	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	2	15	-
	Reinforced your existing views	16	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>23</b>	15	14	8	7	4	4	8	3	3	14	1



*Small Group Discussion*

Most participants found the small group discussions informative. Many participants indicated that the small group discussions helped to broaden their understanding of the issue, and a majority found that the discussions presented perspectives with which they were not familiar. Most indicated that the small group discussions changed their views slightly or not at all, indicating that, like the discussion guide, the small group discussions tended to reinforce their existing views.

**Assessing Forum Elements: Small-Group Discussions**

Forum	Very Much			Somewhat			Slightly			Not at all			No Response		
	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
Broadened your understanding of the issue	16	<b>21</b>	9	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	12	10	5	4	5	7	3	5	-
Presented perspectives with which you were not familiar	14	15	11	15	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>	10	5	7	9	5	4	5	-
Changed your views	7	9	2	10	12	7	14	12	12	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	4	4	-
Reinforced your existing views	13	<b>24</b>	11	<b>19</b>	21	<b>12</b>	14	8	5	4	4	6	4	5	-

*Resource Panel*

Most of the participants at Rodef Shalom found that the panel had helped broaden their understanding of the issue, but this was true only for a majority at the other two forums February forum. About two thirds of the participants at Rodef Shalom and St. Paul’s found that the panel presented perspectives with which they were not familiar, but this was true of only a majority at the Kingsley forum. Majorities at all the forums indicated that the panel did not change their views; rather, for many participants the panel served to reinforce their existing views.

<b>Assessing Forum Elements: Resource Panel</b>																
	Forum	Very Much			Somewhat			Slightly			Not at all			No Response		
		R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.	R.S.	K	S.P.
Broadened your understanding of the issue		17	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	15	<b>12</b>	12	12	9	2	6	6	3	11	1
Presented perspectives with which you were not familiar		15	16	6	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	10	10	7	7	8	6	4	11	1
Changed your views		5	10	2	12	8	8	11	9	9	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>	4	11	1
Reinforced your existing views		14	<b>23</b>	7	15	15	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	7	4	2	6	8	4	11	1

## **Addendum: Notes from Gun Owners Focus Group: July 20, 2014**

To supplement the information gathered through the deliberative forums, the LWVGP convened a focus group of responsible gun owners on July 20, 2014 at the Mount Lebanon Municipal Building. The focus group engaged nine gun owners. Several had participated in one or more of the deliberative forums, and these participants were asked to recruit others to attend the focus group. In addition to the gun owners, several members of the LWVGP Gun Safety Committee participated in the focus group. The focus group was facilitated by a League member, who engaged participants with questions similar to those comprising the agenda at the deliberative forums:

- What steps should you be expected to take to protect yourself, your friends, and your neighbors from gun-related injuries or deaths, including homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths?
- What do you think gun owners should be required to do to help ensure a safe community?
- What specific actions should people in your community take to prevent gun-related deaths (including suicides), violence (including domestic violence), and injuries? How can the entire community be engaged?
- What specific actions can community organizations (churches, gun and sports clubs, and business, social, and civic groups) take to help reduce gun-related violence and gun-related injuries and deaths?
- What specific actions should elected and law enforcement officials take to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths in Allegheny County?

After discussing these questions in turn, participants returned to each and suggested specific actions. Generally, the discussions and suggested actions focused on three areas: gun safety, firearm training, and a perceived failure in prosecuting gun-related crimes. As the information below suggests, overall, the gun owners who participated in the focus groups believe strongly that community safety in general and gun safety in particular are the responsibility of individuals and individual families. Participants suggested that community groups, faith based organizations, and private foundations can play an important role supporting the efforts of individuals and families. In contrast, participants indicate a general suspicion concerning the involvement of government at any level.

### *Focus Group: Gun Safety*

Generally, participants indicated that private citizens have the responsibility to ensure safety in their communities (e.g., through neighborhood watches). Moreover, they felt that individuals and the family have the main and primary responsibility for teaching about the safe handling and storage of guns. They emphasized that guns should not be treated as “forbidden fruit”; rather, children should learn gun safety early and often. In particular, they emphasized that children should learn that guns are not toys; they are tools designed to kill. Specifically, they suggested gun-related play should be discouraged and that children should be encouraged to treat toy guns (e.g., squirt guns, BB guns) as they would a real gun. Participants also emphasized the importance of teaching gun safety to everyone, including people who do not own guns or have guns in the home. In this regard, they suggested that foundations could underwrite gun safety training in high crime neighborhoods. In addition, participants suggested that gun safety should be promoted and reinforced by public service announcements and by community groups, faith communities, and gun sellers, including those who sell toy guns.

*Focus Group: Firearms Training*

Participants suggested that everyone who owns a gun should receive firearms training. In fact, they suggested that everyone, whether they own a gun or not, would benefit from learning how to safely handle and use a gun. However, participants insisted that firearms training should not be mandatory, nor should it be provided or regulated by the government at any level. Participants acknowledged that even data from the NRA indicate that less than 5% of gun owners voluntarily get training. Nevertheless, they suggested that, like gun safety generally, the importance of firearms training should be promoted and reinforced by public service announcements and by community groups, faith communities, and gun sellers, including those who sell toy guns. In addition, participants' discussed ways of making firearms training more accessible by reducing barriers, such as availability and cost. In particular, they suggested a tax credit could be provided to those who voluntarily get firearms training.

*Focus Group: Prosecuting Gun-Related Crimes*

When discussing actions that could be taken by elected officials and law enforcement, participants expressed, time and again, their certain belief that prosecutors “under-charge” crimes involving guns and that judges fail to impose what they believe are mandatory sentences for those convicted of crimes involving guns. To address their concerns, participants suggested the need to push for the merit selection of judges and for community meetings where community members could question judges and judicial candidates.

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