



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0658, Version: 1

Recommendation to direct City Manager to work with the Long Beach Police Department to conduct summer gun buyback events accessible to all parts of the city within the next 90 days.

The Problem

Over the course of the past year, we have seen a surge in gun purchases both all across America and right here in Long Beach that many attribute to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Skyrocketing unemployment and nationwide school and business closures have all contributed to a general rise in feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. This appears to have caused a surge in gun purchases over the past year, which can be a contributor to increased gun violence in our community.

However, as the city's vaccination program has rolled out, the economy has reopened, and the unemployment rate has dropped over the past couple of months, the excess guns from the nearly year-long pandemic buying boom that took place between March 2020 and January 2021 remain in our community and may contribute to increased risk of gun violence. In each of those months, the number of guns purchased in the state of California was at least 30% higher than the number of guns purchased during that month in the previous year, with some months, like July 2020, reporting more than double the number of gun sales from the previous year.

The Opportunity

A recent meta-analysis in the journal *Current Trauma Reports* concluded that “gun buybacks are a cost-effective means to reduce the number of unwanted firearms in the general public and also provide a means for education regarding injury prevention. Buybacks in conjunction with other methods have been shown to be successful in reducing the number of firearms in circulation that could lead to injury and death.” The evidence behind gun buyback programs’ place in a broader strategy of reducing gun violence is robust.

Gun buyback programs have a successful track record right here in Long Beach, as a program in 2013 initiated by 9th District Councilmember Steven Neal took 168 firearms off the street, including 5 assault weapons.

Reductions in gun ownership keep people safer inside the home, particularly in households that do not properly secure their guns. The combination of school closures and increased firearm purchases during the pandemic also lead to a tragic increase in accidental gun

injuries and deaths nationwide.

Additionally, the risk of legal liability can often prevent gun owners from surrendering illegal guns. Having a “no questions asked” buyback program would give these illegal gun owners a safe way to dispose of their unwanted weapons, rather than selling or gifting them to another owner who has a use for an illegal firearm.

Gun buyback programs give residents a way to reduce guns in the community in a way that is safe, legal, and incentivized. To help address the increase in guns on our streets in the wake of the pandemic, the city should implement a new gun buyback program based on its successes in 2013 as part of a broader public safety strategy centered around addressing the root causes of violent crime.

Statement of Urgency:

Given recent surges in gun violence nationwide urgency on this item is requested.

Equity Statement:

Like many of the issues our city faces, gun violence falls hardest on Long Beach’s low-income communities and communities of color. As a city which just went through a COVID-19 epidemic in which black residents were twice as likely to die as white residents, we need to acknowledge that the gun violence epidemic has an even more disparate impact: black residents are ten times as likely to be victims of gun violence as white residents. We also must keep in mind the recent rise in hate crimes against members of the AAPI community and take the necessary steps to keep our AAPI residents safe. The Framework for Reconciliation calls on the city to “strengthen funding, capacity, resources, and visibility of local community-based violence prevention/intervention models.” A well-run gun buyback program would be one of those very models.

No Financial Management review was able to be conducted due to the urgency and time sensitivity of this item.

Approve recommendation.

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