

Prepared Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on “Protecting Our Communities from Mass Shootings”
Wednesday, July 20, 2022

[VIDEO](#)

It was tragic to hear about the recent shooting in Highland Park, Illinois, on July 4. Senseless acts of violence have no place in our great country, particularly on a day where we should be celebrating our community and solidarity as a people. My heart breaks for victims and the families of those victims. As a father and a grandfather, I can't imagine what you are going through. Sadly, we witnessed another shooting in Indianapolis over the weekend. Thankfully, a lawfully-armed civilian with a firearm stopped the shooter before more harm could be done.

The gunman of the Highland Park shooting, who was 21 years old, held a valid Illinois firearm owners identification card at the time. He legally purchased five guns in four different transactions, passing federal background checks each time.

Yet, like several other mass shooters, this perpetrator showed numerous warning signs over the years. He had previous contacts with police. He attempted suicide. A family member reported he threatened “to kill everyone” and his collection of knives was seized. Yet he was not arrested, and no red flags were implemented when he purchased a firearm.

Illinois has some of the most restrictive gun-control laws in the country. But that didn't stop these murders. A young man was showing obvious signs that he is considering violence, but no one knew what these signs were. No one knew what his actions meant. No one interceded. No one stopped him.

It would be easy to say that the system just failed -- that the police should have done more. His family should have done more.

But there actually is something that would have made a difference. We have to educate the institutions in a person's life about these obvious signs of distress. These obvious signs that a person is heading toward mass violence. Schools in many states have implemented a threat assessment model. But more institutions: churches, workplaces, want training.

We need to take affirmative steps on legislation for threat assessment and prevention services. A study of hundreds of mass shooting incidents conducted by two professors showed eerie similarities, repeated over and over, that aren't always recognized.

I know every member of this committee has heard me talk about the [EAGLES Act](#), which I first introduced in 2018. This legislation will provide funding to support the Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center's efforts to conduct cutting edge research into the prevention of violence. It would also enable the National threat Assessment Center to train more of our nation's schools and institutions in conducting threat assessments and early interventions.

EAGLES is a vital missing piece that we have to implement if we want to reduce these mass shootings. We can't afford not to do it. We can't keep seeing that shooter after shooter followed this same predictable path, and nobody did anything. It could be because they didn't know what they were looking at, or they didn't know what to do. We have to fill that information gap with public education. Right now, NTAC can't afford to train everyone who wants this information. That has to change. I'm pleading for that to change. I am not alone in these thoughts, *EAGLES* is cosponsored by 10 of my fellow senators, representing both parties. I will also be submitting a statement from the United States Secret Service Association supporting the *EAGLES Act*.

I know many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't like guns. Some are not particularly impressed by the appeals of Americans who desperately worry that one-size fits all gun control will impede their right to self-defense. I have spoken with many who are worried about restrictions on their right to self-defense, I will be submitting for the record statements from the Asian Pacific Gun Owners Association and a family member of one of the victims from the shooting in Highland Park, both who are very concerned about restrictions being imposed on their right to self-defense.

For those who see no need for an armed citizenry, the solution to mass shootings could include a ban on so-called assault weapons. This has already been tried in the 90s and early 2000s. I didn't support it then, and I wouldn't support it now. These bans would be ineffective and not consistent with the right of self-defense. In 2004, a Department of Justice study concluded that after a ten-year assault weapons ban, there was no statistically significant evidence that banning assault weapons reduced gun murders.

We also know restrictive gun control will hurt vulnerable communities that need to defend themselves against the horrible spike in violent crime that began two years ago. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the primary trade association for the gun industry, guns sales during the first half of 2020 increased year-over-year by 51.9 percent for whites, 58.2 percent for African Americans, 49.4 percent for Hispanics and 42.9 percent for Asians. These numbers continue to grow, and restrictive gun control that only affects law abiding citizens will affect this new population of gun owners.

I hope my colleagues know that I am always going to want to talk about solutions that keep communities safe. But these have to be solutions based on evidence that respect the need for self-defense. There are bipartisan things we can do. I hope the *EAGLES Act* will be one of them. And I hope that will be very soon.

