

Virtual Leadership Day, May 25-26, 2021

## Support Essential Public Health and Research Initiatives

**Congress should adequately fund public health, medical and health services research initiatives, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), at the levels specified below. Congress should adopt a public health approach to reduce firearms-related injuries and deaths including: provide dedicated funding for firearms violence prevention research, strengthen the criminal background check system, close loopholes that allow domestic violence offenders to acquire firearms, and promote state adoption of extreme risk protection laws. Congress should enact legislation to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change on health, as described below in the “What is ACP Asking of Congress” section.**

### What’s it all about?

Congress provides annual funding for public health, medical and health services research initiatives. These include: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which works to create the expertise, information, and tools needed to protect the nation’s public health—through health promotion, prevention of disease, injury and disability, and preparedness for new health threats; the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is the nation’s medical research agency; funding for firearms violence prevention research by both the CDC and NIH about firearms-related violence and how to best develop intervention and prevention strategies to reduce injuries caused by firearms.

ACP remains alarmed by the tragic toll of death and injuries related to firearms in our neighborhoods, homes, workplaces, and public spaces. Deaths and injuries from firearms are not just a result of mass shootings, they are a daily occurrence; according to a [study](#) published in the [JAMA Internal Medicine journal](#), from 2009-2017, there has been an average of 120,232 firearms injuries each year, or 329 per day, for an average of 34,538 deaths per year and an average of 85,694 emergency department visits per year for nonfatal injuries. In 2019, 39,707 Americans lost their lives due to firearms, according to the [CDC](#). This issue represents an urgent public health crisis and now is the time to act, on a bipartisan basis, on measures to improve the safety of all Americans. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) needs to be strengthened by improving the accuracy and reporting of the system as well as expanding background checks to cover all firearm sales, including unlicensed firearms sellers currently not required to use background checks, such as those at “gun shows, sales through the internet, and between private individuals or classified ads.

In 2018, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* published [Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths in the United States](#), an update and expansion of a 2014 ACP position paper. The paper reaffirms many of ACP's 2014 recommendations, such as requiring universal background checks and banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines and proposes new policies on issues including extreme risk protection orders, banning domestic violence offenders from owning firearms, child access prevention laws, and others that are found to be effective in reducing firearms-related injuries and deaths. The paper presents reasonable and evidence-based proposals to stem firearms-related violence, consistent with the Second Amendment. View a [summary](#) of the paper. ACP supports the enactment of extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) to allow families and law enforcement to obtain a ruling from an impartial judge within 72 hours to temporarily remove firearms from individuals at imminent risk of using them to harm themselves or others, with due process. ERPOs empower families, household members, or law enforcement officers to ask a judge to temporarily remove a person’s access to firearms who is found to be at imminent risk of using them to harm themselves or others. ACP urges reintroduction and passage of these bills in the current 117th Congress.

ACP is also encouraged by the many ways that the Biden administration’s job and infrastructure proposal, [the American Jobs Plan](#), would help to protect public health and the health of those in our country through dedicated funding to combat the climate crisis. Climate change is a global crisis, and no country is immune from its impact. It has already

taken a toll on human health, and measures are desperately needed to help mitigate the negative impact of climate change on health. ACP has long called for the use of environmentally sustainable and energy efficient practices as part of our position paper on [Climate Change and Health](#).

### **What's the current status with Congress and the Administration and what improvements are needed?**

**Funding for Public Health:** While bills have been enacted into law to fund the federal agencies and programs noted above up until Oct. 1, 2021, Congress is now faced with the task of working in a bipartisan fashion to fund those same programs beyond that point into the new fiscal year, 2022, which begins on Oct. 1, 2021, or the government shuts down.

- In FY2021, the CDC received about \$7.2 billion, about the same as the FY2020 funding level. View [joint letter](#) in support of \$10 billion for the CDC in FY2022.
- In FY2021, the NIH received \$43 billion, about \$1.25 billion more than the FY2020 enacted level. View [joint letter](#) in support of \$46.1 billion for the NIH in FY2022.
- The House FY2021 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill included \$25 million for firearms violence prevention research--\$12.5 million for the CDC's research and \$12.5 for the NIH's research, the same as in FY2020. For FY2022, ACP supports \$50 million overall for firearms violence prevention research. View joint letters to the [House](#) and [Senate](#) in support of \$50 million for firearms violence prevention research in FY2022.

**Firearms Safety:** In 2021, ACP submitted [testimony](#) to the Senate Judiciary Committee in order to provide the physician perspective on the health impacts of the firearms-violence epidemic and recommendations about how to address it, including expanding background checks and encouraging states to expand extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs). Moreover, in the initial first months of this 117th Congress, the House has already passed *the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021* (H.R. 8) to address firearms-related injuries and deaths. With some exceptions, *the Bipartisan Background Checks Act* (H.R. 8) and the Senate version, *the Background Check Expansion Act* (S. 529), would expand background checks to cover all private and commercial firearm transfers and sales. In addition, because firearms sellers would now be required to perform background checks for all sales and transfers, firearms purchasers would no longer be able to cross state lines to buy firearms in a state with less rigorous background check laws. View ACP's [support letter for the Bipartisan Background Checks Act](#) (H.R. 8) and *the Background Check Expansion Act* (S.529).

*The Extreme Risk Protection Order Act of 2019* (H.R. 3076/S. 506), from the previous 116th Congress would allow states to use Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) funding to develop court processes to allow family members to petition a court for a firearm violence prevention order to temporarily halt dangerous individuals from purchasing weapons from federally licensed dealers. Under this legislation, states could also develop a court process that would allow family members to petition a court for an extreme risk protection order that would grant law enforcement the authority to temporarily take weapons away from individuals who present a threat to themselves or others. ACP urges reintroduction and passage of these bills in the current 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. ACP was also [pleased](#) that in April 2021 the Biden administration took actions to reduce injuries and deaths from firearms including developing model ERPO legislation and increase funding for community-based violence intervention programs.

**Climate Change:** A global effort is required to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the health impact of climate change. The United States must commit to taking both a leadership and collaborative role in developing, implementing, and ensuring the success of such an effort and in reducing its own contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies must be adopted. Governments should commit to providing substantial and sufficient climate change research funding to understand, adapt to, and mitigate the human health effects of climate change. ACP is [pleased](#) that the American Jobs Plan proposal includes \$35 billion for climate science, innovation, and research and development, including funding to address the climate crisis as the leader in clean energy, reducing emissions and building climate resilience, as well as expanding across-the-board funding for climate change research. Congress is expected to consider parts or versions of the American Jobs Plan in the coming weeks and months.

Legislation has been introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, in both chambers, that calls for a national strategic action plan and program to assist health professionals and systems in preparing for and responding to the public health effects of climate change. ACP supports this legislation, which is outlined below:

- *The Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act (H.R. 3271/S. 1702)* would also express the sense of Congress that climate change is a serious public health issue and that it disproportionately affects people of the United States who are economically disadvantaged, belong to communities of color, or have other social and health vulnerabilities; Authorize the CDC Climate and health program; Create a Science Advisory Board to provide scientific and technical advice and recommendations to the Secretary on the domestic and international impacts of climate change on public health, populations, and regions particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and strategies and mechanisms to prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change on public health. ACP [supported](#) a similar version of this bill in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### What is ACP asking of Congress?

- ✓ **Representatives and senators should support funding for the following public health agencies/initiatives in FY2022 Appropriations:** A) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), \$10 billion; B) the National Institutes of Health (NIH), \$46.1 billion; C) Injury Prevention and Control, Research on Prevention of Firearms-related Injuries and Deaths, \$50 million.
- ✓ **Senators should follow the actions of the House and pass H.R. 8, *the Bipartisan Background Checks Act* that would establish new background check requirements for firearm transfers between private parties.**
- ✓ **Representatives and senators should reintroduce and pass in both chambers *the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act (H.R. 3076, S. 506)* from the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, which establishes a grant program to help states and Indian tribes implement extreme risk protection order laws and expands categories of individuals who are prohibited from receiving, possessing, shipping, or transporting a firearm.**
- ✓ **Representatives and senators should cosponsor and pass the *Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act (H.R. 3271/S. 1702)* that would take important steps, as noted above, to mitigate the harmful impact of climate change on health.**

### Where can I go to learn more?

[advocacy@acponline.org](mailto:advocacy@acponline.org); Digital version of this issue brief can be found at: [Policy Priority Issues | ACP Services](#)