

Statement on Gun Control

Since 1975, The Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington has consistently supported Federal and State gun control legislation and advocated for the most stringent regulations on the purchase, sale and possession of firearms. The last statement was adopted by the Board of Directors on December 8, 1999. Certain events and changes in the laws have made it appropriate to reconfirm the position of the Council and to highlight specific priorities. The 1994 Federal Law banning the purchase of assault weapons expired in 2004 and has not yet been reinstated by Congress. In 2008, the Supreme Court of the United States decided in Heller v. D.C. that, as applied to Federal gun control laws, the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess a firearm for private use within the home. In 2010, the Court held that the same principles apply with respect to state and local gun control laws through the 14th Amendment. It is significant that the Court made it clear that "(i)t is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever, in any manner whatsoever, for whatever purpose." The Court has expressly recognized the constitutionality of laws restricting the persons who may possess firearms, the places where they may be carried and how the commercial sale of firearms may be regulated.

Therefore, the Council continues to support the most stringent constitutionally permissible Federal and State gun control legislation that will regulate and reduce the manufacture, sale and possession of weapons. The 1994 Assault Weapons Ban should be reenacted and made permanent. In addition the Council supports any and all measures to control and reduce the manufacture, sale and possession of high-capacity ammunition clips, and to increase enforcement of gun sale regulations. Regulations on the sale of guns should include closing the gun-show "loophole," and thorough background checks and reasonable mandatory waiting periods applying to all sellers in all venues. The Council also supports legislation based on objective and nondiscriminatory criteria identifying categories of persons who are not allowed to purchase or possess weapons and places where weapons should be outlawed.

Gun related violence whether individual incidents or mass shootings threatens the well-being of all our citizens. Therefore, the Council urges supporting local, state and national gun control organizations as well as community-based efforts to reduce gun-related violence. The JCRC

positions on gun control are deeply rooted in the Jewish beliefs in the sanctity of life and the abhorrence of senseless violence.

Adopted on February 16, 2011

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington