

Resolution on reasonable gun safety requirements

WHEREAS mass shootings in the U.S. are on the rise, from 273 in 2014 to 647 last year (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>).

WHEREAS firearms were used in four out of five homicides in the U.S. in 2020, the most recent year for which such figures are available (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>).

WHEREAS there are now more than 120 guns per 100 inhabitants of the U.S., up from 88 per 100 in 2011, and Yemen, torn by civil war, is second with 53 per 100, or less than half that amount (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>).

WHEREAS, according to the Pew Research Center, “The 45,222 total gun deaths in 2020 were by far the most on record, representing a 14% increase from the year before, a 25% increase from five years earlier and a 43% increase from a decade prior. Gun murders, in particular, have climbed sharply in recent years. ... The 2020 total represented a 34% increase from the year before, a 49% increase over five years and a 75% increase over 10 years.” (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>)

WHEREAS according to the Gallup Poll, almost three in five Americans favor stricter regulation of firearms (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41488081>)

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WHATCOM DEMOCRATS urges our state legislators and governor to adopt legislation:

- Requiring a permit to purchase guns, safety course, safe gun storage, and enhanced background check.
- Allowing victims of gun violence and the Attorney General’s office to sue gun manufacturers and sellers in civil court under Washington’s consumer protection law.

Adopted by unanimous vote at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting

Resolution in support of universal civic duty voting

WHEREAS the Declaration of Independence states, “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,” but that consent is not truly achieved with low voter participation.

WHEREAS universal civic duty voting would give us a system where the people who represent us would have to speak to and represent *all of us*.

WHEREAS Americans are already accustomed to participating in state-required activities: jury duty, selective service, the census, and paying taxes. None of these compel, or stifle, any individual’s right to speech, and neither would the requirement of civic duty voting.

WHEREAS civic duty voting declares that everyone counts and that everyone has a responsibility to have their vote counted, without obstruction or suppression.

WHEREAS over two dozen countries mandate that adults register to vote and participate in elections, a system known as compulsory voting, mandatory voting, or universal civic duty voting.

WHEREAS the U.S. is in the regional minority, as most democracies in the Americas have instituted some form of civic duty voting. These include other large democracies, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, as well as Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay ("[Lift Every Voice](#)", Brookings and Harvard Kennedy School, 19).

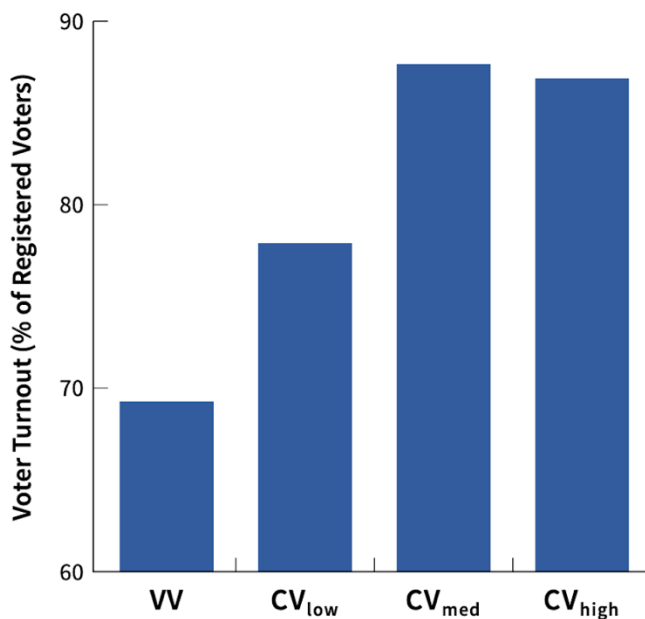
WHEREAS enforcement of penalties for abstention also varies across countries. Belgium, for example, has not fined or sued nonvoters in nearly two decades. In countries including Costa Rica, Greece, Honduras, Mexico, and Paraguay, voting is required, but there are no penalties for not doing so ("[Lift Every Voice](#)," 21).

WHEREAS voluntary voting in Australia before 1924 produced between 47% and 78% turnout of eligible voters. Following the introduction of compulsory federal voting in 1924 this figure increased to between 91% and 96% (https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/federal_elections/voter-turnout.htm#fn).

WHEREAS in Australia the initial federal penalty is AUD\$20 (about US\$14). However, an AEC Report found that in 2007, only about 13 percent of nonvoters paid the AUD\$20 fine for abstaining from casting a ballot ("[Lift Every Voice](#)," 20).

WHEREAS even civic duty voting without penalties has delivered substantial higher voter turnout ("[Lift Every Voice](#)," 23):

FIGURE 1: Civic Duty Voting and Turnout across Countries



Note: Data and classification of civic duty voting rule severity taken from Version 8 of the Varieties of Democracy Project. The classifications are as follows: VV (Voluntary voting); CV_{low} (Civic duty voting without sanctions or with sanctions but no enforcement); CV_{med} (Civic duty voting with enforced sanctions but that impose minimal costs upon abstainers); CV_{high} (Civic duty voting with enforced sanctions that impose considerable costs upon abstainers). Included elections are from 1945–2017 in countries considered “Free” by Freedom House.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WHATCOM DEMOCRATS urges our state legislators and governor to adopt legislation implementing universal civic duty voting, with an opt-out requiring submission of an application for a waiver from voter registration requirements.

Adopted by a vote of 34 to 4 at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting

Resolution on reproductive health care from Whatcom County Democratic Women

WHEREAS throughout history, religious and ideological opposition to abortion has not prevented abortions, but, instead, made them unsafe, leading to pain, suffering, loss of fertility, and even death.

WHEREAS [according to the Guttmacher Institute](#), before *Roe v. Wade*, illegal abortions were estimated to range from 200,000 to 1.2 million per year and constituted at least 17 percent of all maternal deaths attributed to pregnancy and childbirth in 1965 alone.

WHEREAS laws restricting access to abortion and the equal right to reproductive healthcare disproportionately impact poor, rural, working-class women, and women of color who may not have resources for the cost of doctor fees, travel, childcare, and lost wages when seeking quality reproductive healthcare.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE WHATCOM COUNTY DEMOCRATS URGE:

- Federal elected officials to pass legislation codifying the full civil right to reproductive healthcare, including abortion.
- Passage of a Washington State Constitutional amendment guaranteeing full access to reproductive health care including abortion.
- Increasing oversight over hospital mergers to prevent the imposition of religious beliefs into the provision of government-funded health care, and to ensure reproductive healthcare access to all who need it.
- Legislation and/or directives be adopted prohibiting state, county, and local law enforcement in Washington State from committing any resources to the pursuit of any investigations related to persons who are seeking or providing abortion care or reproductive health care.

Adopted by unanimous vote at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting

Resolution in favor of repealing prohibition of jaywalking

WHEREAS Virginia and California have decriminalized the act of crossing the street outside a designated crosswalk.

WHEREAS jaywalking laws are disproportionately enforced on people of color; as Devon Carbado points out in *Unreasonable: Black Lives, Police Power, and the Fourth Amendment* (New Press, 2022, 158), “if the law criminalizes jaywalking, and most pedestrians regularly jaywalk, the question is not whether the police will have probable cause to arrest—they will. Instead, the question becomes whether the police will use that probable cause selectively to arrest members of particular groups (for example, Black teenagers).”

WHEREAS the laws themselves have failed to make our streets safer; pedestrian deaths have climbed over 50 percent over the course of the last decade; pedestrian deaths in the U.S. have reached their highest level in 40 years. In 2021, there were nearly 7,500 pedestrian deaths, equivalent to roughly 20 deaths each day (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/pedestrian-deaths-in-u-s-reach-highest-level-in-40-years>).

WHEREAS jaywalking laws subtly reinforce the false narrative that walkers themselves, rather than the proliferation of lethal road and vehicle designs that encourage dangerous driving, are to blame for pedestrian deaths.

WHEREAS police aren't always strong proponents of jaywalking laws because they recognize that repeal would free up resources for law enforcement to fight other forms of crime. “When this bill was introduced during our special session, law enforcement did not testify in opposition to it,” said Patrick Hope, the Virginia delegate who introduced the pretextual policing bill in Virginia that launched the trend. “I haven't heard from a peep from the police department. They want to be focusing on more serious crimes. But when you make something a law, the enforcers have to enforce it.” (<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2021/05/05/how-and-why-to-repeal-jaywalking-laws/>)

WHEREAS House Bill 1428 proposes the following language: “A pedestrian may cross a roadway at any point unless a reasonably careful person would realize there is an immediate danger of a collision with a moving vehicle, a person operating a bicycle, or personal delivery device. This subsection does not relieve a pedestrian from the duty of exercising due care for their safety or relieve a driver of a vehicle, a person operating a bicycle, or personal delivery device from the duty of exercising due care for the safety of any pedestrian within the roadway”, and “This section supersedes and preempts all local rules, regulations, codes, statutes, and ordinances to the contrary and in conflict with this act.”

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WHATCOM DEMOCRATS urges our state legislators to repeal laws prohibiting jaywalking.

Adopted by a vote of 30 to 4 at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting

Resolution to restrict low-level traffic stops

WHEREAS low-level traffic stops, such as for minor issues like broken taillights or expired tabs, too often escalate into violence — especially against Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous people.

WHEREAS banning such stops would free up officers to pursue more serious violations such as driving under the influence.

WHEREAS, [a 2019 analysis by InvestigateWest](#) found that Washington state troopers searched drivers who were Native American, Black, Hispanic, or Pacific Islander at higher rates than white drivers — yet white drivers who were searched were more likely to have contraband.

WHEREAS Several police killings in Washington, including that of [Josia Faletogo](#) in Seattle in 2018 and [Giovonn Joseph-McDade](#) by Kent police in 2017, also began as traffic stops.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WHATCOM DEMOCRATS urges our state legislators to:

- Prohibit officers from stopping drivers solely for minor equipment malfunctions, as well as for most misdemeanor warrants, while allowing them to pull over drivers who have warrants for driving under the influence or for domestic violence, as well as for car-related issues that affect safety, such as having a broken windshield that limits a driver's ability to see.
- Require written consent to search a vehicle or passengers, in keeping with the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

Adopted by a vote of 31 to 6 at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting

Resolution to authorize medical use of psilocybin and MDMA for mental health treatment

WHEREAS Australia has just authorized the medical use of psilocybin for treating depression and MDMA for treating Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

WHEREAS Oregon voters decriminalized psilocybin in 2020 and legalized it for therapeutic use.

WHEREAS Colorado voters decriminalized the personal use, possession, growth, and transport of psychedelic plants and fungi, including active ingredients psilocybin and mescaline, in 2022.

WHEREAS randomized controlled studies “suggest that psilocybin-assisted treatment produces substantial and rapid antidepressant effects in patients with major depressive disorder,” and a recent report of follow-up over the course of a whole year following treatment found “that the substantial antidepressant effects of psilocybin-assisted therapy may be durable at least through 12 months following acute intervention in some patients,” with a remission rate of 58%, and “There were no serious adverse events judged to be related to psilocybin in the long-term follow-up period, and no participants reported psilocybin use outside of the context of the study” (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/02698811211073759>).

WHEREAS a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multi-site phase 3 clinical trial recently reported that “MDMA-assisted therapy is highly efficacious in individuals with severe PTSD, and treatment is safe and well-tolerated, even in those with comorbidities. We conclude

that MDMA-assisted therapy represents a potential breakthrough treatment that merits expedited clinical evaluation” (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33972795/>).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WHATCOM DEMOCRATS urges the state legislature and governor to authorize medical use of psilocybin and MDMA for mental health treatment.

Adopted by unanimous vote at the February 25, 2023, Monthly Membership Meeting