

GUN SAFETY & THE 86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Gun violence claims thousands of American lives every year. In fact, the U.S. rate of murder or manslaughter by firearm is the [highest in the developed world](#). This includes accidental firearm deaths, suicides, women killed by intimate partners and mass shootings.

In Texas, we are not immune to gun related tragedies. In recent years, we have seen the tragic mass shootings at Santa Fe High School that claimed 10 lives, and at a church in Sutherland Springs where 26 lives were lost. In both of these instances, the gunman should not have had access to firearms. Last weekend, 22 people in El Paso, shopping for groceries and back-to-school supplies, lost their lives in a hate-fueled act of white supremacy and domestic terrorism. Read more about my thoughts on this tragedy [here](#).

These preventable tragedies, among other countless examples, are the reasons that I support common-sense gun laws that reduce gun injuries and deaths.

SAFE FIREARM STORAGE

Research shows that guns used in school-based violence most often come from the shooter's home, or the homes of family or friends. That was the case in the Santa Fe shooting.

During the 86th Legislative Session, State Representative Donna Howard filed [HB 316](#) to create a firearm safety and storage campaign. Although the stand-alone measure was not considered by the House, budget appropriators included \$1 million in the two-year state budget earmarked for this purpose. As a result of this funding, the awareness campaign will promote safe storage of weapons in order to help prevent fatalities and injuries due to inappropriate access to firearms, particularly for children.

REDUCING RESTRICTIONS ON GUNS

Unfortunately, there were several measures considered and passed that could negatively impact gun safety. Below are a few examples of these measures, all of which I opposed:

- [HB 1177](#) (Rep. Phelan) — allows handgun owners to carry firearms without a license for up to a week after the declaration of a state of disaster. This could create additional public safety concerns during an already heightened state of distress and cause confusion for police and first responders working after a disaster.

- [SB 535](#) (Sen. Campbell) — allows licensed handgun owners to legally carry their weapons in places of worship, unless otherwise stated by the facility.
- [HB 1143](#) (Rep. Hefner) — allows concealed guns in vehicles parked in school parking areas.
- [HB 302](#) (Rep. Paul) — prevents landlords or property owners from prohibiting firearms on their property if the licensed gun owner is residing there.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I joint-authored a common-sense measure, [HB 1168](#), brought to the legislature by DFW International Airport, which would have ensured that firearms are prohibited in secured areas of an airport. Currently, there is no state law that prohibits an airline employee from possessing a weapon in an “airport operations area,” including on tarmacs.

Although the measure passed both chambers with broad bipartisan support, it was vetoed by Governor Greg Abbott.