



Gun Violence Restraining Orders Save Lives

By City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

Mass shootings and everyday gun violence have become so commonplace in America that many of us have lost hope that anything can be done to stop the senseless loss of innocent lives.

But here in San Diego, the City Attorney's Office and Police Department are restoring hope and leading the state in using a relatively new law to stop gun violence before it occurs: the Gun Violence Restraining Order. A GVRO is an order issued by a judge that temporarily prohibits an individual who is at risk of harm to self or others from possessing, accessing, or purchasing firearms or ammunition. We can prevent a tragedy from occurring when the warning signs are present.

My office has obtained 80 GVROs since last December, and we've confiscated about 170 firearms, including more than a dozen assault weapons, and 80,000 rounds of ammunition from gun owners determined by a court to pose a serious danger to themselves or others.

Some made specific threats to kill. Others used their firearms recklessly, often because of addiction or mental health issues. Some threatened to kill themselves with their guns. There's no telling how many lives we saved.

The California law that empowers law enforcement to obtain GVROs was prompted by the 2014 mass shooting in Isla Vista, the community adjacent to my alma mater, the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Few California municipalities were obtaining GVROs when I took office. Due to our success over the past year, our office was funded by the state to train other law enforcement agencies and their attorneys on how to use GVROs to protect Californians.

We recently held a training in Ontario, a week after the mass shooting in Thousand Oaks, for 125 representatives of regional law enforcement agencies. We have also held trainings in San Diego and Riverside Counties, and more are planned in Orange County, the Central Valley, the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento, and Los Angeles.

As the mother of young children, I was forever changed by the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Now, as City Attorney, the GVRO statute gives me a tool to protect San Diego's children and everyone else who could be the victim of foreseeable gun violence.

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My office is dedicated to sharing our effective GVRO program throughout the state. If we've made this much progress in less than a year in San Diego, imagine the impact GVROs can have if this tool is used throughout California and beyond.

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City Attorney Mara W. Elliott
1200 Third Ave., Suite 1620
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: 619-236-6220
Email: cityattorney@sandiego.gov
www.Sandiego.gov/cityattorney