



## Office of the District Attorney

Gordon P. McLaughlin, District Attorney  
8th Judicial District  
*Serving Larimer and Jackson Counties*

**VISION:** To protect and serve Larimer and Jackson counties, while creating a stronger community where the application of criminal justice is more equitable and no longer at odds with social justice.

Gun violence is a terrible plague on our communities. Colorado has the 28th-highest rate of gun violence in the US, with 951 people whose deaths are caused by firearms each year. Suicides account for 71% of those deaths, a category where Colorado ranks as the 13th highest state. The results in Larimer County are heartbreaking.

On April 10th, 2022, a six-year-old boy was playing in his north Fort Collins apartment. Like many homes in Colorado, there was a firearm present in the residence. In this case, it was laying out in the open, loaded, with no lock, and no safety. The boy picked the gun up out of curiosity and accidentally shot himself in the head. He was pronounced dead at the hospital. That family will never recover from his loss.

But gun violence is also preventable. Colorado already has a law on the books called Safe Gun Storage which requires firearms, in places where a minor or other non-authorized user might have access, to be locked up. Our office prosecuted and convicted the adult responsible for a violation of that law and the resulting death. Had they complied with current firearm safety laws, that young boy would still be alive.

In addition to safe storage in homes (HB21-1106), Colorado recently passed safe storage in vehicles (HB24-1348). Guns that are stolen from vehicles are a major source of guns later used in violent crimes. Reasonable steps to reduce thefts will help to reduce gun violence.

Colorado has also been a leader in implementing Extreme Risk Protection Orders (commonly known as red flag laws). The law recently expanded to allow a wide range of professionals and district attorneys, in addition to family and police, to petition a court to remove firearms from someone who has demonstrated a danger to themselves or others. Our office was one of the first District Attorney's Offices in the state to utilize the expanded law to go to court and legally prevent firearm possession by a dangerous individual. This year we began education efforts so that more members of our community can understand the laws and resources to help keep their families safe.

Juvenile gun violence has been an expanding concern nationwide. Access to firearms among juveniles has grown through the prevalence of crime guns on the streets and the ease with which guns can be shared through social media. We have partnered on legislation aimed at requiring social media companies to crack down on the exchange of drugs and guns on their platforms and more readily cooperate with criminal investigations to hold perpetrators of those crimes accountable and we have increased collaboration with law enforcement to target high-risk areas.

In domestic violence relationships, access to a firearm makes it five times more likely that a woman will die at the hands of a domestic abuser. Next month, our office is launching our first-ever Domestic Violence unit, focused on prosecuting high-risk offenders. While domestic violence offenders are already legally barred from possessing firearms, the reality is there has been little ability to verify this. Our new team will review cases and follow up to better ensure compliance and protect victims. Common sense gun laws, enforcement, and education will keep our communities safer.

To continue this important discussion on gun violence and firearm safety; share our work and available resources; and hear from you about your priorities, I will be hosting the fourth in a series of Coffee Conversations. This month's conversation will take place at The Fox Den in Fort Collins, on June 27th at 9:00 AM. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Gordon McLaughlin  
District Attorney



**Office of the District Attorney**  
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