

Enough: Our Fight to Keep America Safe from Gun Violence

By Gabrielle Giffords, Mark Kelly



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Former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, astronaut Mark Kelly, share their impassioned argument for responsible gun ownership.

After the 2011 Tucson shooting that nearly took her life, basic questions consumed Gabby Giffords and her family: Would Gabby survive the bullet through her brain? Would she walk again? Speak? Her hard-won recovery, though far from complete, has now allowed her and Mark to ask larger questions that confront us as a nation: How can we address our nation's epidemic of gun violence? How can we protect gun rights for law abiding citizens, while keeping firearms out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill? What can we do about gun trafficking and other threats to our communities?

Enough goes behind the scenes of Gabby and Mark's creation of Americans for Responsible Solutions, an organization dedicated to promoting responsible gun ownership and encouraging lawmakers to find solutions to gun violence, despite their widespread fear of the gun lobby. As gun owners and strong supporters of the Second Amendment, Gabby and Mark offer a bold but sensible path forward, preserving the right to own guns for collection, recreation, and protection while taking common-sense actions to prevent the next Tucson, Aurora, or Newtown. Poll after poll shows that most Americans agree with Gabby and Mark's reasonable proposals.

As the book follows Gabby and Mark from the halls of Congress to communities across the country, it provides an intimate window into the recovery of one of our nation's most inspiring public figures and reveals how she and her husband have taken on the role of co-advocates for one of the defining issues of our time.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly know all too well how badly we need commonsense legislation to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. Enough is an unforgettable book—the moving journey of an American hero, and a powerful call to action." (President Bill Clinton)

"Through their perseverance in the face of grave tragedy and their commitment to public service, Gabby and Mark have inspired our nation and made Arizona proud." (Senator John McCain)

"To many who have seen firsthand the devastation weapons can wreak on society, Gabby and Mark serve as inspiring voices for responsibility. We need to listen." (General Stanley McChrystal)

"A behind-the-scenes look at how this extraordinary wife and husband have devoted their lives to ending gun violence." (*Booklist*)

"Both an account of Giffords' courageous rehabilitation and ongoing recovery and an urgent plea to make substantive changes in the way the nation addresses the problem of gun violence. . . . Readers unfamiliar with the evolution of the National Rifle Association, its political clout, the way it punishes (and rewards) gun makers and its global reach may find the gun-lobby primer instructive, if not alarming. . . . It's pretty clear that the former astronaut and congresswoman will use every ounce of tenacity they have, and they appear to have plenty, to exert a lasting influence on the national gun-violence debate." (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

"A rich read, even if it has an agenda. . . . [*Enough*] takes the reader inside perhaps the biggest legislative defeat of the Obama era . . . An inspirational tale of survival and recovery." (*The Huffington Post*)

"Gabby Giffords says, 'Strong women get things done,' and with her new book, she leads by example." (*Makers*)

"Alternating between a factual argument against gun violence and a scathing indictment of the NRA, former congresswoman Giffords and her husband, retired astronaut Kelly, take a long hard look at the fight to strike a balance between responsible gun ownership and Second Amendment rights. . . . Makes a straightforward yet impassioned argument." (*Publisher's Weekly*)

About the Author

Gabrielle Giffords is known across the country for her resilience in the face of violence, and for her consensus-building leadership in Congress. The youngest woman ever elected to the Arizona State Senate, Giffords served in the Arizona Legislature from 2000-2005 and in Congress from 2006-2012. Mark Kelly is a retired astronaut and US Navy Captain. He flew his first of four missions in 2001 aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour, the same space shuttle that he commanded on its final flight in May 2011.

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INTRODUCTION

We are a reasonable people, we Americans.

We share common goals: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those words have knit us together since 1776. They spelled out who we were then. They are just as uplifting and foundational today.

Our diversity has made us a bigger-hearted people. Regardless of our religion or skin color or political allegiances, we are all Americans, and we come together to root for our favorite sports teams and watch fireworks on July 4. We vote and we pay taxes, and we send our kids to school every morning with the expectation that they'll return to us that night safe, happy, and maybe a little smarter.

We have remained intact, weathering the inevitable disagreements of a strong democracy, for over two hundred years, through wars and peacetime, recessions and prosperity, struggles over civil rights and equality.

But Gabby and I fear the country has veered off course when it comes to one important issue: how we relate to guns. A basic freedom that both Gabby and I wholeheartedly embrace, the right to bear arms, has become radicalized.

When guns get in the hands of the wrong people, as has happened all too often in recent years, they can transform even the safest places—a movie theater, a place of worship, a school, a shopping center—into combat zones. More and more over the past decades, guns have not only been used to keep the peace, but to rob us of our peace.

Gabby and I came face-to-face with the most horrific aspects of America's gun-violence problem on the morning of January 8, 2011. As Gabby was meeting with constituents in a Tucson shopping center, a young man wielding a semiautomatic handgun shot her in the head at close range. In fewer than fifteen seconds, he murdered six people, including Arizona's chief federal judge and a nine-year-old girl, and wounded sixteen others.

For the next two years, the most basic life-or-death questions consumed our family: Would Gabby survive the bullet through her brain? Would she walk again? Smile that smile that won my heart? Speak? Hug her friends?

Miraculously—but with great difficulty and much painful work—Gabby has prevailed over the injury to her brain. We have shared joy and frustration, wins and losses along the way. Doctors, friends, family, and Americans everywhere helped us through the hardest moments, and they remain essential to my wife's continued well-being.

All along the way, Gabby's ongoing recovery has compelled us to ask larger questions that confront us as a nation, and time again we returned to the subject of guns.

What can we do to protect innocent Americans from the mass shootings that have become so commonplace in the years before and after Gabby was shot in Tucson? These tragedies are forever imprinted in our national consciousness: Virginia Tech, Aurora, Newtown, the Washington Navy Yard, Fort Hood—and these are only recent examples.

Mass shootings, however, mask the toll of everyday gun violence that is horrifying in its banal frequency.

More than thirty-one thousand Americans died by gunfire in 2010, over a third of these homicides. Add nonfatal wounds, and you have a national nightmare—one that makes our country stand out in the worst ways. The US rate of firearm homicide for children ages five to fourteen is thirteen times higher than in any other developed nation. Our gun-murder rate is about fifteen to twenty times the average of countries like France, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

Why does this keep happening? Why are we just sitting back and watching while more and more innocent Americans lose their lives to gun violence?

Gabby and I started to wonder if perhaps reasonable people—the overwhelming majority of us, after all—might be able to band together to make our country less dangerous. We began to ask ourselves: What can we do to keep guns out of the hands of people who cannot be trusted with firearms? How can we preserve the rights of law-abiding citizens to own guns for hunting and self-protection while keeping them away from criminals and the dangerously mentally ill?

How can we give law enforcement the tools it needs to stop guns from being traded illegally by unscrupulous dealers? To bring criminals to justice by tracing guns used in crimes, and to make it harder for known stalkers and domestic abusers to acquire guns?

After Tucson and the shootings that have followed, Gabby and I have returned to these questions again and again. She and I had dedicated our lives to public service, out of love and duty. Our work is not yet done.

Gabby entered politics in 2000 when she was elected to the Arizona House of Representatives. Then, at just thirty-two, she became the youngest woman elected to the Arizona Senate. The voters of Tucson and Arizona's Eighth Congressional District elected her to Congress in 2006. They reelected her in 2008 and 2010. As Congress convened on January 6, 2011, Gabby read the First Amendment of the Constitution on the House floor. Two days later, she was shot in the head.

I joined the United States Navy and started flight school in 1986 in Pensacola. I qualified as a sharpshooter while at the US Merchant Marine Academy and later as an expert marksman in the Navy. I flew thirty-nine combat missions over Iraq and Kuwait in the first Gulf War. I went on to become a test pilot and then an astronaut, piloted two space shuttle missions and commanded two more, and spent more than fifty days in space.

After the Tucson shooting, Gabby and I kept discussing different paths of public service we might pursue. No matter where the conversation started, we found that we inevitably returned to the same subject: gun violence.

Now, Gabby and I had never had any quarrel with the Second Amendment: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

My wife and I have always believed deeply in that principle, and we see no need to infringe on that right. We are proud to be among the 34 percent of American households that reported owning guns in 2012. I occasionally hunt. Gabby has owned a handgun for years. She shot with her right hand before the shooting disabled her right side; these days, she's learning to shoot with her left hand.

But as much as we love guns, we also believe in the rule of law. Because we care about public safety, we don't allow people to drive cars on the sidewalk, and we don't permit teenagers to buy alcohol, and we take measures to ensure that our kids aren't drinking arsenic in the school water fountain. Why, then, can't we agree on a few simple rules about gun ownership that honor the Second Amendment while protecting Americans from random gun violence?

In the last two decades, anyone who's dared ask that sensible question has been muzzled by intransigent and uncompromising political interest groups, most notably the National Rifle Association. The NRA's response to any question about tightening restrictions on gun ownership is a resounding "No!" Though only about 1.5 percent of Americans are members, the NRA has the money and political might to rank among the most powerful interest groups in the nation.

The NRA began as a venerable organization of gun owners but has since diverged from its founding principles—and also from its own membership. Does the average card-carrying NRA member know that the organization is actually a trade association that's more focused on corporate profits than the rights of gun owners? The NRA's stated mission is to "protect and defend the Constitution"—but they also make time for generating revenues of almost \$228 million a year. A regular annual NRA membership costs thirty-five dollars; the top brass at the NRA, like its CEO Wayne LaPierre, take home nearly a million a year.

Instead of protecting the interests of the law-abiding gun owners who dominate their membership rolls, NRA leaders increasingly sound as if they're advocating turning our country into an armed camp. After a deranged gunman murdered twenty-six people, including twenty young children, at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012, LaPierre's only suggestion was that we station armed security guards in every school—a measure that we don't necessarily oppose, but we certainly don't think it's enough to protect our kids. As LaPierre is fond of saying, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."

Really?

So where will it end? Will we arm teachers and soccer coaches, too? Parents who chaperone class trips to the zoo? Preachers, ministers, and rabbis? I just cannot imagine my second-grade teacher stashing a pistol in the pocket of the pink muumuu that she wore most days.

The NRA has, in essence, turned the tables on the Declaration of Independence. Forget about a government designed to protect "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Most of us trust our government: even if, sure, the average ninth grader can build a better website, we believe that the men and women we elect to represent us have our best interests at heart. But to hear the NRA tell it, once federal or state governments start to pass laws to reduce gun violence in any way, shape, or form, it's a "slippery slope" to "jackbooted" federal agents banging on a gun owner's door to demand he turn over his firearm.

As a Navy pilot who risked his life during bombing missions over Iraq and Kuwait, I find that preposterous and offensive. I was fighting to protect the ideals of a country and a government that I believed in. I blasted into space for my country, in a government-financed spaceship. The NRA's slippery slope is a fantasy, and a dangerous one. If the NRA gets its way, we'll be left with a country where everyone is armed but no one is safe.

"Nonsense," Gabby says of the NRA's crusade to prevent the government from passing laws about who should be able to get their hands on guns. She came within an inch of death while she was performing her basic duty in a representative democracy—meeting with constituents. As a gun owner, she would have been

safer if we'd established some basic rules to keep guns away from men and women with severe mental illnesses like the one who shot her and murdered six of her constituents and staff.

We need to do more to protect our citizens from these horrific acts of violence that have become all too common in our society.

Together with friends and supporters, we answered the call to stand up for reasonable, rational responses to gun violence. In early 2013, on the two-year anniversary of the Tucson shooting, we created Americans for Responsible Solutions, an organization devoted to protecting Americans and helping to change our laws. Our initial goals are simple:

- To create an environment where people with different viewpoints can finally get down to discussing these crucial issues. Let's replace the inflammatory rhetoric on both sides of this debate (and yes, that very much includes those coastal liberals who reflexively demonize the culture of guns without understanding it) with a real exchange of ideas.
- To change the politics of this debate, so that gun laws are no longer strictly a partisan issue—and so that elected officials are no longer cowed into voting against the will of their constituents.
- To work toward some moderate, commonsense policy shifts that the overwhelming majority of Americans supports: expanding background checks, coming to the aid of women who seek protection from abusive partners with firearms, combating illegal gun trafficking, and improving the background-check system with better records reporting.

Gabby and I share a hopeful vision for America. We believe in each other, in our communities, in our countrymen, in our nation. We are committed to building an organization that will stand for those values and also uphold the right to bear arms established in the Bill of Rights. We can do both.

We aren't naïve. We know that achieving our goals will require compromise, patience, and a tremendous amount of work. But that's fine: the two of us are in this for the long haul.

Americans are fed up with the gun violence ripping apart our communities. It's time we did something about it.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Timothy Larios:

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Marietta Allred:

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Summer McGaugh:

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