

# **Durbin Marks Sixth Annual National Gun Violence Survivors Week With Senate Floor Speech Sharing Constituent Stories On Gun Violence**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today delivered a speech on the Senate floor recognizing the sixth annual National Gun Violence Survivors Week. During his remarks, Durbin spoke about the horror of mass shootings and shared stories about the emotional and physical toll that gun violence has on communities in Illinois.

“This week, we recognize the unbelievable toll of gun violence in America, and we offer our support to the survivors... No state or city is safe from the epidemic of gun violence,” said Durbin.

Durbin referenced the impact of gun violence in Illinois, speaking about a mass shooting in Joliet, Illinois, earlier this week.

“Just yesterday in Joliet, Illinois, less than an hour outside of Chicago, seven lives were taken within minutes by a shooter with a gun. Joliet Police Chief Bill Evans said, ‘I’ve been a police officer for 29 years. This is the worst crime scene I’ve ever been associated with,’” Durbin said.

Durbin continued on to share the story of Katie Gillman, a survivor of the Highland Park shooting at a Fourth of July parade in 2022 that resulted in the death of seven people and the wounding of dozens of others.

“Katie Gillman is one of many of my constituents who was there in Highland Park. She was with her husband and two daughters to see the Fourth of July parade when the shooter opened fire in the crowd. She and her children ran for their lives. Katie still lives in fear that what happened that day could happen again and that she may not be able to protect her kids this time,” Durbin said.

“She recently wrote to me and said, ‘For close to a year, I have had a deep-seated fear that my children won’t make it through the school day due to gun violence. And each week in the news, there is proof of these fears,’” Durbin continued.

In reiterating his support for an assault weapons ban, Durbin referred to an [opinion piece](#) in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, written by the CEO of the Gun Violence Prevention PAC, Kathleen Sances, that was published today. In the piece, Sances notes that the state law passed to ban the sale of assault weapons in Illinois has steadily lowered the rate of mass shootings, showing a 10 percent drop in mass shootings in the state between 2022 and 2023.

Since 2020, the United States has seen more than 600 mass shootings annually, almost two a day. Gun violence is now the number one cause of death for American children and teenagers. To address the dramatic toll of gun violence, Durbin formed the [Chicago HEAL Initiative](#), a collaboration with local hospitals and community groups to identify and treat the root causes of gun violence through economic, health, and community projects in 18 of Chicago’s neighborhoods with the highest rates of violence, poverty, and health disparities.

“We cannot lose hope. Instead, we should focus on what we can do to address the gun violence crisis... In 2018, I brought together the CEOs of the ten largest hospitals serving Chicago to talk about how we can help. We formed a group known as the Chicago HEAL Initiative, which has emerged as a national example of how hospitals can collaborate and reach outside of their walls to prevent gun violence. Most importantly, they aren’t just stitching up physical injuries. They are addressing the emotional scars of these patients,”Durbin said.

Durbin concluded his remarks by urging his colleagues to continue working on bipartisan legislation to address the national scourge of gun violence.

“We must do more for survivors. That means providing resources like the HEAL Initiative to help those who have experienced trauma and preventing weapons of war from causing bloodshed in the first place. It’s time for us to build on the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* and come together to create real change. Congress must pass commonsense legislation to help keep America’s children and communities safe,” Durbin said.

Video of Durbin’s remarks in Committee is available [here](#).

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