

# CEASEFIRE MARYLAND

## BULLETIN

Summer 2005

CeaseFire Maryland, 3000 Chestnut Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211  
www.ceasefiremd.org info@ceasefiremd.org 410 889 1477

## Annapolis 2005 Summary

CeaseFire Maryland successfully defeated attempts by the Governor, the Maryland State Police and several legislators to repeal Maryland's landmark ballistics imaging law for new handguns. The Washington Post reported on April 2<sup>nd</sup> that a murder case in Prince George's County was prosecuted with the help of the Maryland ballistics database and resulted in a murder conviction. On April 9<sup>th</sup> the Washington Post printed my letter. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, it ran an editorial, '**Bullet Proof**', which strongly defended the Maryland ballistics database and criticized Governor Ehrlich for not giving the system the political and financial support it deserves.

**The Police Officer Protection Act of 2005**, which would require gun owners to report the loss or theft of their firearm to local law enforcement, failed to get out of either the House or Senate Judiciary Committees. Gun traffickers or straw purchasers often claim that a gun they bought that ends up in a crime was 'lost or stolen'. This law, had it passed, would have provided police with a tool to prevent the 'lost and stolen' defense. It received the backing of the Maryland Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley and the Baltimore City Police, Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan and the Montgomery County Police in addition to many other police departments across the state.

Maryland's existing gun laws are worth saving because they are working. How do we know? The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) has

released the latest 'time-to-crime' figure for Maryland. This represents the average number of years it takes for a new firearm to be used in a crime. Just a few years ago, that number was 3 to 5 years. Today, it is 10.5 years. It has become harder for criminals to obtain guns legally in Maryland because of our rigorous background check system, so they are increasingly resorting to the black market for guns or are having friends or relatives without criminal records make the purchase for them (what's known as a straw purchase).

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Annapolis 2005 Summary

Public Health Approach to Gun Violence

Announcements and Resources

CeaseFire Maryland Board and Advisory Board

**CeaseFire Maryland, Inc. President:** Lisa Miller Delity

**CeaseFire Maryland Education Fund President:** Fred Davis

**Board:** Casey Anderson, Matt Fenton, Barbara Fosberg, Samuel Frank, Alex Haller, MD, Lois Hess, Barbara Heyman, Marlene Leonard, Kellye McIntosh, Susan Peschin, Linda Plummer, Mike Pretl, Suzanne Waller, Jill Ward, Sonia Wills

**Advisory Board:** Chris Van Hollen, Steve Teret, Stuart Simms, Neil Meyerhoff, Vincent DeMarco, Dr. Peter Beilenson, Patricia Jessamy, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Glenn Ivey, David Mitchell, Chief Wayne Livesay, Douglas Gansler, Chief J. Thomas Manger

## US Firearm Deaths rising

The US gun death total, which declined steadily from 1993–2001, had remained under 30,000 from 1999–2001. However, in 2002, the deaths from guns had risen to 30,242, ending a seven-year decline.

## Treat Gun Violence as a Public Health Problem

Professor David Hemenway of the Harvard School of Public Health published 'Private Guns, Public Health' late in 2004 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004). He forcefully argues that we need to adopt a public health approach to gun violence in the US, akin to the actions that have been taken with automobiles, tobacco and alcohol.

Contrary to the mantra of the gun lobby's favorite academic, John Lott, that 'more guns equal less crime', Professor Hemenway proves just the opposite: More Guns equal More Deaths. The empirical data and research overwhelmingly support his conclusion.

It's not a case of the 'bad guys' versus the 'law-abiding citizen', as the gun lobby would have us believe. That's simplistic and wrong. Rather, people make mistakes, are careless, get depressed, lose their tempers, drink too much, etc. When guns are within easy reach and have no built-in safety features, the mix becomes deadly.

But the prevailing approach to gun death and injury has been to blame and punish the 'bad guys' in the case of intentional injury and to blame the victim in the case of unintentional injury (accidents and suicide). A better approach is to focus not on blame but on **prevention**. This is the public health approach and the premise of Professor

Hemenway's book. Instead of just honing in on the user of the product, guns, he argues we must think about the kinds of policies that can be directed towards the gun makers, the sellers and the environment in which guns are used, to cut down on the rate of firearm death and injury. For guidance on guns, Professor Hemenway examines a public health success story – motor vehicles.

Since the 1960s, the number of car deaths per mile driven has been slashed by more than 80 percent. This has been achieved through adopting a public health approach to motor vehicle accidents. It meant collecting good data, applying sound science to come up with safer car designs and safety features such as seat belts, safety glass and air bags, and regulating the automotive industry to ensure that it complied with safer car design. Roads improved through better signage, lighting and speed controls. Taken together, these measures resulted in a dramatic decline in car injuries and death. Drivers weren't any more skilled or careful. But it proved easier to change the behavior of a few industry executives at a single point in time than that of 200 million drivers every single day.

Hemenway says we can successfully apply these lessons to the gun area. First, car makers used to blame the driver – people kill people, not cars. They said public education and increased punishment of people who misused cars would solve the problem. Gun makers blame the gun user – people kill people, not guns, and education and enhanced penalties are the only solution the NRA proffers to our gun violence problem.

Second, doctors and public health experts argued for safety belts and child safety seats for cars.

*Public Health Approach from page 2*

They argue today for child safety locks, magazine safeties and smart gun technology for guns.

Third, good data in the motor vehicle area made good science possible. This was combined with an effective regulatory authority with oversight over the industry to achieve the impressive decrease in highway deaths and injuries. We need to begin collecting good data in the gun area and we need a regulatory authority to exercise oversight of the gun industry.

Finally, social norms must change. It's no longer acceptable to drive your car without wearing a seat belt, to smoke in crowded rooms or to throw litter on the street. It should not be acceptable for parents to leave loaded guns around small children or depressed teenagers. Pediatricians should ask if parents own guns and parents should inquire if there are guns present where their children play.

Until gun violence is treated like the public health problem that it is, we will continue to endure high rates of gun death and injury that set America apart from other industrialized nations.

*Injury/Deaths U.S.*

*Before Age 40, more people die of injuries than disease.*

*#1 Motor Vehicles*

*#2 Firearms*

## *Electronic Newsletter*

CeaseFire Maryland wants to alert you to the launch of the Freedom States Alliance electronic newsletter on June 15th. It will be a weekly newsletter similar in tone and content to the JTO Direct news (Join Together Online from the Boston School of Public Health), covering current news and issues in the gun violence prevention movement. The main difference will be that the news updates will be direct links to newspaper articles vs. a summary from JTO staff.

If you wish to receive this weekly digest of news and analysis, please send your email address to: [leah@ceasefiremd.org](mailto:leah@ceasefiremd.org), and we will be happy to add you to the distribution list.

## *Needed: Webmaster*

If you know of someone who is willing to update the CeaseFire Maryland website on a pro bono basis, please have them contact Leah Barrett at [leah@ceasefiremd.org](mailto:leah@ceasefiremd.org) or on 410 889 1477.

The webmaster would post press releases and change text to reflect the organization's priorities and activities. The amount of time required is minimal – an hour a week at most.

Our website may be viewed at: [www.ceasefiremd.org](http://www.ceasefiremd.org).

Thank you!

**CeaseFire Maryland**

3000 Chestnut Street,  
Suite 203  
Baltimore, MD 21211

**Phone:**

410 889 1477

**Fax:**

410 889 1480

**E-Mail:**

info@ceasefiremd.org

**Working to free Maryland  
from gun violence**

---

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

www.ceasefiremd.org

---

## *Wanted: New Computer for Database Update*

The CeaseFire Maryland office has a ten-year-old Apple computer running a very early version of FileMaker Pro (3.0). The computer holds all of our donor data and we urgently need to update both the hardware and software.

If you are able to donate a relatively new computer, PC preferred, and/or if you know of a computer expert who could undertake the conversion of our database to an updated version of Filemaker Pro on a new machine, please get in touch with me at [leah@ceasefiremd.org](mailto:leah@ceasefiremd.org) or phone me on 410 889 1480.

Again, thank you very much!

CeaseFire Maryland  
3000 Chestnut Ave, Ste 203  
Baltimore, MD 21211



**Customer Name**  
**Street Address**  
**City, ST ZIP Code**