

# WNDC

## Political Dispatch

Newsletter | May 2018



## From the Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

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### WNDC Position on Gun Violence Prevention To Make our Nation Safer in All Places

"Whenever you bump into someone, there is the fear that they're the next shooter and every bell is a gunshot."  
*Daniela Palacios, age 16, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School*

The WNDC recognizes that the United States suffers from a gun violence crisis. We believe it is an unacceptable and avoidable tragedy to lose an average of over 35,000 lives each year attributable to gun violence. Equally appalling is the fact that our country has more child gun deaths than any other high-income nation, and more than 187,000 students in this country have lived through school shootings since Columbine. Our children should be able to attend school without fear that each day could be their last, and all US residents should be able to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, free of gun violence.

Therefore, we will continue to advocate for:

- Universal background checks. The loopholes in the current system mean too many guns fall into the wrong hands, so the checks need to be expanded to include firearms sold at gun shows and over the internet;
- Renewal of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban, which expired in 2004. These weapons are designed for maximum lethality and not intended for civilian use;
- Ban on large capacity ammunition magazines, which can fire at large numbers of people without taking the time to reload;
- Ban on bump stocks, which allow semi-automatic weapons to function similarly to an automatic weapon, with multiple rounds fired with the single pull of a trigger;
- Implementation of policies to remove domestic violence abusers' access to firearms, including "Extreme Risk Protective Orders" (ERPO);
- Promotion of regional solutions through multi-state coalitions such as "States for Gun Safety," which was recently formed among Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey; and
- Repeal of Dickey Amendment, which prevents research on gun violence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);

And we will oppose:

- National Concealed Gun Carry Reciprocity Act, which would allow those states with the most stringent requirements to be subverted by those with the most lenient regulations; and
- Any agenda to force guns in our schools. Decisions regarding school safety should be made by citizens, not by corporations and lobbying groups pursuing their own financial interests. The students at Parkland, Florida, have made clear that arming teachers will only make their schools less safe. Educators support their views that arming teachers is a bad idea;
- Hearing Protection Act, legislation which legalizes silencers; and
- Second Amendment Enforcement Act, legislation which erodes DC's gun laws.

*Position approved by the Board of Governors, Woman's National Democratic Club, April 18, 2018*

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# Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides, Who Pays

## **Good riddance, Representative Paul Ryan, We Will Not Miss You!**

Paul Ryan came to Washington, DC, as Representative from Wisconsin in 1999 with some wealth from his father's construction company (whose road construction business thrived via federal funding) and two investment partnerships. His home town is Janesville, a blue collar town, the prototype that Ryan claimed to be representing.

Representative Ryan, who was initially lauded by *The Washington Post* as a wunderkind fiscal policy wonk, quickly became known as "Wall Street Ryan" for his success erasing financial safeguards established during President Obama's tenure.

Ryan claimed to be oh so very concerned about federal deficits. However, that concern was only on the side of shredding "entitlements," Medicaid and CHIP, and nullifying the Affordable Care Act (which had built-in federal subsidies). There was never any intention for corresponding sliding scale tax reform to assist in expanding health insurance coverage for more of our fellow citizens. Medicare and Social Security are also on Ryan's "hit list" but they are not technically entitlements.

Federally funded health care is seen as a massive transfer of wealth from successful Americans to the working poor and disabled who are presumed to be lazy and ignorant by Paul Ryan and his cohorts in Congress and the White House.

The triad of Representative Paul Ryan, Senator Mitch McConnell, and #45 has succeeded in establishing governance by racism, classism, and religious tribalism.

*Salon* (3/23/2017) authored an extensive explanation "Why are Republicans so cruel to the poor?," which helps to explain the myths and stereotypes that demonize our low income, homeless, and disabled citizens as "unworthy."

One such myth is that of the "Prosperity Doctrine," now well-known via several millionaire televangelists. The Prosperity Doctrine says that worldly riches are "God's Gift for a life well lived" and that the poor and disabled are being punished for supposed moral infractions.

So there is no need to "treat others as you wish to be treated." And there is no need to behave as if "all men/persons are created equal." There is no need to nurture compassion or to work cooperatively.

Since the American Health Care system, originally derived from 19th century aristocracy, has always been apartheid like, persuading some Americans that huge sums were being wasted on health care for unworthy countrymen seemed like an easy accomplishment. Ending spending on health care would also plump up the money available for the "tax cuts" that were the main agenda item, anyway.

But "ending Obamacare" did not work because too many middle class Americans saw their own medical care at risk. Thousands of protests around the country sabotaged full-scale repeal of the Affordable Care Act. And many state governments realized how much federally funded Medicaid added to state budgets.

But continuous attempts to destroy Medicaid and CHIP and the Affordable Care Act are occurring at state levels, such as in Virginia (via the "work requirement" for Medicaid recipients).

So we must keep our focus on the humanity of insuring that science-based health care is available to all Americans.

We Dems believe that every life is of equal value. No exceptions. So we must work to restore Democrats to national government and state and local governments. Our very lives depend on it.

--Karen Pataky, Chair, Task Force on Health Policy

# Hope for the Future: The Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans - 2018 Winners

## *Celebrating the Contribution of Immigrants to American Life and Prosperity*

The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans program supports the graduate education of 30 New Americans—immigrants and children of immigrants—"who are poised to make significant contributions to US society, culture or their academic field." Below are brief descriptions of four women who have won scholarships in 2018.

### **1. Seul (Kathy) Ku**

#### **Immigrant from South Korea**

After graduating from Harvard and having a successful pilot production of filters under her belt, Kathy moved to Uganda fulltime for three years, helping to build a sustainable company that has since provided more than 100,000 people with access to clean drinking water. As of 2018, SPOUTS employs more than forty people in Uganda and continues to grow as an organization.

At Stanford University, Kathy manages a free health clinic and conducts cost-effectiveness research to maximize care. She hopes to use her diverse experiences to help deliver health care more effectively in the future.

### **2. Suchita Nety**

#### **Parents immigrated from India**

Suchita is interested in forms of storytelling and healing that complement her future role in medicine. While at Caltech, she pursued her love for literature and obtained an English minor, won writing prizes, tutored in the campus writing center, and volunteered for a literacy nonprofit. She attained professional status in Bharatanatyam, a style of Indian classical dance, and is an avid hip hop choreographer.

After completing MD/PhD training at Harvard and MIT, Suchita hopes to serve patients as a medical oncologist, while developing molecular tools to engineer robust and safe cell-based therapies.

### **3. Wazhma Sadat**

#### **Immigrated from Afghanistan**

Wazhma has worked on various initiatives across Afghanistan that improved women's access to education and furthered the economic empowerment of Afghan women.

She is the first Afghan woman to graduate from Yale College. Soon after college, she cofounded Firoz Academy, an ed-tech startup that aims to provide educational and e-employment opportunities for the less privileged in war-stricken countries such as Afghanistan.

Currently, Wazhma attends Yale Law School by day and teaches students in Afghanistan by night. She believes her life's work will be to advocate for and provide educational opportunities for the less privileged in the Muslim world.

### **4. Yessica Martinez**

#### **Immigrated from Colombia.**

As a high school sophomore, she joined other undocumented students in their struggle to secure the passage of the DREAM Act, a grassroots effort she continued at Princeton University where she led the creation of a scholarship program for undocumented youth, planned lobbying visits, and coordinated efforts to stop the deportation of a Salvadorian migrant.

Yessica majored in comparative literature and creative writing in order to uncover marginalized peoples' perspectives and push back against dominant narratives. Advised by current United States poet laureate Tracy K. Smith, Yessica traveled along the US-Mexico border and developed a poetry collection on state violence and migration. Her academic work and activism earned her the Moses Taylor Pyne Honor Prize, the highest distinction conferred by the university on an undergraduate.

As an educator, community organizer, and writer, Yessica hopes to empower marginalized communities by affirming their strength, resilience, and creativity.

For more information about the fellowships, visit: [www.pdsoros.org](http://www.pdsoros.org).

# Resolution on Climate Change and Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions into the Atmosphere

**WHEREAS:** Recent evidence indicates that climate change is accelerating, as seen by record increases in average global temperatures in 2017, slowing of key Atlantic ocean currents affecting northern hemisphere climate patterns, increasing sea level rise and accompanying coastal flooding, and increasing numbers of extreme weather events; and

**WHEREAS:** The Administration refuses to recognize that human-caused climate change exists, to the point of withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, eliminating all references to climate change and prohibiting the use of the term "climate change" in Federal agency publications and websites; and

**WHEREAS:** The Administration attacks science and scientists, including removing scientists from EPA advisory groups, preventing EPA and other Federal scientists from speaking or presenting papers at environmental events; and

**WHEREAS:** The EPA is replacing scientists with fossil fuel and chemical industry lobbyists in key policy positions, now extending to the recently confirmed Deputy Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, a lobbyist for Murray Energy, Inc., a coal mining company with a particularly disastrous environmental record; and

**WHEREAS:** The EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, a long-time advocate for fossil fuel companies, is pushing to eliminate as many environmental regulations established by previous administrations as possible, such as: limits on methane emissions from "fracking" on public lands, the Clean Water Rule, greatly relaxing motor vehicle emission standards, and restrictions on coal ash production and storage; and

**WHEREAS:** The Interior Department is attempting to greatly reduce the size of certain National Monuments (Bears Ears, Great Staircase/ Escalante) to open up these areas to oil drilling and coal and mineral mining, as well as attempting to open up parts of the Atlantic coastline and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration and drilling;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** That because climate change is an immediate threat to human life and health, especially in poor and vulnerable communities, and in the somewhat longer term to the next generation and ultimately to the human race, the National Federation of Democratic Women gives its full support to the US rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement, with the accompanying steps to reduce our carbon footprint; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That the NFDW will exert every effort in localities, regions, and nationally to press for carbon reduction programs, such as establishing fees on carbon-based fuel producers, and for other incentives to move rapidly toward greater reliance on renewable sources of energy; that the NFDW will make every effort to advocate for evidence-based scientific environmental research, support candidates and lawmakers committed to taking immediate and strong action to slow climate change and mitigate its effects, and join campaigns by environmental organizations to stop the Administration's roll back of environmental regulations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That the Secretary of the National Federation of Democratic Women forward a copy of this resolution to all chartered National Federation of Democratic Women Clubs throughout the country.

*Resolution submitted by the Woman's National Democratic Club to the National Federation of Democratic Women, May 1, 2018  
(Note: WNDC is a Club member of the National Federation of Democratic Women.)*

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## Democratic Party Candidate in Focus - Report

Rufus Gifford, a candidate for the US House of Representatives from the Massachusetts 3rd District, spoke at a meeting of the "F Street Democrats" at Dacor-Bacon House, April 19. Gifford, who most recently returned from serving as US Ambassador to Denmark, was formerly finance director for Barack Obama's reelection campaign in 2012.

Discussing his own campaign, Gifford agreed with a questioner that in selling himself it was better to keep his focus local. He said, however, that there were a number of exceptions. Education was a big focus for his constituents and he thought it was useful that they should know that in Europe, college students' tuitions were paid by the government. Those European students did not emerge from their higher education in debt, as so many students do in the US. He also thought that what he could tell voters about Denmark was highly relevant to the debate in the US on climate change, particularly on the President's focus on reviving the coal industry. It should be pointed out to American audiences, he said, that the clean energy industry - wind power in the case of Denmark - creates jobs, and significantly, good jobs. Piling up low-paying jobs to make ends meet, as is so often the case in the US, does not create a healthy society.

Gifford made a point of how strongly he finds American voters distrust public institutions. For that reason, Gifford favors an old fashioned approach to campaigning: making phone calls, knocking on doors, shaking hands, and having face-to-face conversations.

Concluding his talk, Gifford made a point of saying he was not going to run a negative campaign. He doesn't plan to talk about Trump at all, but instead plans to articulate strong, positive Democratic Party programs and policies.

--Elizabeth Clark, Chair, Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

# Victims in the Shadows

## The Pain and Cost of Non-fatal Gun Violence

by Henry B. Ryan

With stunning frequency we learn of a gun massacre somewhere in the United States, often in a school. We hear that there are 12 dead, 14 dead, 17 dead, and in the worst so far, this time at an outdoor concert, 58 dead. For a while, the media identifies these horrors using the number killed—"58 shot dead in Las Vegas," or "14 dead in California Mass Shooting."

Those headlines are understandable, but, unfortunately, they mask one of the worst effects of American gun violence. They sideline and often overlook the enormous number of wounded. According to news reports, the Las Vegas shooter, for example, besides murdering 58 people, injured at least 500 others. Despite that huge number, however, those victims have tended to fade in the public's awareness. Still, in terms of human suffering and societal cost, they comprise an enormous part of the story. Many will be crippled for life, confined to wheel chairs, dependent on oxygen tanks and crutches, forced to remake or leave their homes, give up their jobs, abandon their careers, rely heavily upon relatives, and give up sports and recreational activities in which they can no longer participate. The list of life-diminishing, life-complicating adjustments they will need to make every day for the rest of their lives is nearly endless, and the overall number of non-fatal victims is massive. It amounted to almost exactly 85,000 in 2015, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the last year it made figures available.

But just as the non-fatal victims of gunfire are often overlooked, so is the enormous economic impact of their new circumstances. It includes the costs not only to them and their families but also to public and private institutions that are required to accommodate their many special needs. These include, especially, emergency and long-term medical care backed by financial assistance, much of it provided by state governments. Ted Miller is an economist at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), a non-profit organization that studies public health, education and safety issues. An expert on the costs of violence, he estimates that the overall total of medical bills, follow-up care, and life adjustments for victims of the Las Vegas shooting alone will come to at least \$600 million. And that is only one event, albeit the worst. The CDC, in one of the few studies it has made of the subject, estimates that between 2001 and 2015 more than 1 million Americans were wounded in shooting incidents.

Stanford School of Medicine researchers, looking at the problem from a purely medical viewpoint, estimate that initial hospital care alone for gun shot victims in the United States comes to approximately \$735 million per year. Looking at the issue in terms of individual cases, the University of Iowa estimates the average hospital admission cost per shooting victim is \$20,989. Corinne Peek-Asa, a member of the Iowa Study, which was published in July 2017 in the journal *Injury Epidemiology*, said, "being admitted for a firearm injury is very expensive." The study showed that it amounts to more than double the cost of the average hospital stay and pointed out that government insurance provides reimbursement for some 33% of victims of gunshot wounds, and that about an equal percentage are uninsured. Consequently, in some two-thirds of the cases either government or various medical institutions pick up the tab. Private insurance pays very little. As Peek-Asa pointed out, the expense of treating gunshot victims "is a public cost."

Ted Miller concluded in a study in 2012 that the total cost of caring for victims of shootings came to \$229 billion per year. That includes \$8.6 billion in direct costs--for example, emergency care, other medical expenses, and also for court and prison costs, items rarely considered as part of this problem. The remaining \$221 billion represents indirect costs such as productivity loss and expenses incurred by victims and their communities as the injured adjust to their new circumstances. That research is now six years old, but both overall costs and the annual number of victims have only increased so there is little reason to believe that those numbers are lower today. According to CDC, deaths alone have gone from more than 33,500 in 2012 to more than 38,600 in 2016, the last year in which federal data was available.

Data gathering on gun violence, including economic statistics, has been beset by a piece of legislation called the Dickey Amendment. It is an amendment added to an omnibus spending bill in 1996 by Republican Congressman Jay Dickey of Arkansas, which stated that no funds provided to the CDC "for injury prevention and control" could be used "to advocate or promote gun control." While it does not prohibit the Center from studying gun control issues, it has seriously inhibited it from doing so. But by far the principal inhibitor has been simply the denial of funding for such studies. In 2018, for example, no funds for gun violence studies have been made available to CDC. Although, in the new atmosphere of gun reform following the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, and the nationwide student protests, the National Institutes of Health in April 2018 made \$5 million available to study ways to prevent children from being shot, the second largest cause of child death in the country. This is its first grant to study gun issues in 20 years.

In fact, lack of data is no longer an excuse to avoid legislative action. The web is awash with statistics and data of all sorts regarding gun violence. Furthermore, the information comes from reliable sources, many of them medical faculties of major universities. In addition, the field got a boost in April 2018 when the giant health organization, Kaiser Permanente, announced that it would make \$2 million available to study ways to reduce the nation's gun violence. It was motivated, it said, by the large number of gun injuries treated in its facilities nationwide--some 11,000 in a two year period, 2016/ 2017. The company hopes to spur similar investments by other health-care organizations, helping close the research gap, which it says CDC created by walking away from the subject more than 20 years ago.

The Trace is probably the best place to start a search for data on gun violence. It is an online publication that describes itself as "an independent, non-profit news organization dedicated to expanding coverage of guns in the United States." Besides providing large amounts of data, it gives links to numerous other sites and publications that look at the topic from many difference angles. Certainly, it would be an enormous public benefit to have more private organizations like Kaiser Permanente focus on this subject, just as it would be to have CDC return to the table. There is, however, no longer any reason for anyone to maintain that meaningful legislation on gun violence in America is hindered by the absence of essential data. If America's political class has the courage and the will to control this problem, the data to back necessary legislation is readily available.

