

America mourns another school shooting. By Ian Thomsen, May 2025

The murders of at least 19 children and two teachers at a Texas elementary school (Uvalde, May 2022) have led to more demands for a coherent approach to gun and mental health reforms in the United States.

Shortly after his 18th birthday this month, the school shooter bought two assault rifles and 375 rounds of ammunition. He attacked Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, a town of 16,000 people 80 miles west of San Antonio.

It was the 212th mass shooting in the U.S. this year involving four or more victims, injured or dead, and the 27th shooting at a U.S. school.

“When in God’s name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby?” President Joe Biden said a few hours after the Texas shooting. “Why are we willing to live with this carnage? Why do we keep letting this happen?”

Jack McDevitt, a professor in criminology, who helped drive a new package of gun laws in Massachusetts, says a starting point for overhauling U.S. firearm laws should include mandatory licenses for guns, much the same as driver’s licenses are demanded of anyone who operates a motor vehicle. “This kid in Texas could just walk into a store and buy assault weapons, and he wasn’t required to get a license,” says McDevitt. “We in Massachusetts have demonstrated—as well as in New York, Hawaii and other states—that requiring a gun license provides a whole lot of things, including a background check so that you know that the person is someone who should be able to get a gun.” “As a result, Massachusetts became the safest state in the country in terms of gun suicides as well as gun homicides”. But those efforts failed to spread throughout the U.S.

Another expert Mr Fox notes that legally purchased guns were used in Uvalde and Parkland, Florida, where school shootings occurred. “Do we need to expand background checks? Yes,”. “Would they have prevented those two shootings? No.”

The complexity of America’s contentious relationship with guns is underlined by school shootings, says Fox, who argues that the responding safety measures—which have included the arming of teachers and surprise intruder-alert drills—can themselves be traumatic to children.

Instead of waiting for federal legislation that may never come, McDevitt says he would like to see a grassroots drive throughout the U.S. to help people who may be vulnerable. “If you think someone in your family is going through a difficult time, we should care about that person enough to take guns away from that person for a short period of time, until everybody’s satisfied that they’re not going to be a danger to themselves or others,” McDevitt says. “We need an educational campaign and additional mental health services to help people in that time when they might be dangerous.” (466 words)