

OPINION

Sen. Schumer, lead the charge to ban assault rifles

By Gail Schwartz
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Dear Sen. Schumer,

My 14-year-old nephew, Alex Schachter, was killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. That gunman used an AR-15 to easily shoot through the door to Alex's classroom and kill him. After that tragedy, it became abundantly clear to me that if the federal ban on assault weapons had never expired, my nephew would still be alive.

This summer, I was joined in Washington by family members from the Parkland, Sandy Hook, Uvalde and Highland Park mass shootings to urge congressional members to vote for the legislation to ban assault weapons. Still grieving and devastated, we poured our hearts out to them. We retold the most traumatic day of our lives when the bodies of our children and loved ones were pulverized by weapons made for war.

It was due, in large part, to our advocacy and determination that we convinced 217 members of the House to pass [the assault weapons ban of 2022](#). With no end in sight to the slaughter of innocent Americans by killing machines, I urge you and the Senate to now take up [the companion bill](#).

With midterm elections looming, this is another chance for you to prove to voters that the Democratic Party cares about preventing mass shootings. In doing so, you will help

convince [undecided voters](#) who rank gun-related issues as their top issue to vote Democratic.

We understand that such a vote may be politically inconvenient, including for members of your own caucus. But Leader Schumer, none of us want excuses. Every day you delay the vote, more lives are stolen. The Senate must meet the moment with decisive, immediate and bold action. As you know, this legislation already has the [support of President Biden](#); he has been emphatic about the need to prioritize electing candidates who will vote to reinstate the ban.

[Researchers](#) estimate if we still had a federal assault weapons ban, we'd suffer 70% fewer mass shooting deaths. Basic common sense, combined with real data, shows that halting the proliferation of killing machines like the one used to kill my nephew will save lives.

If you have been watching the ongoing Parkland murder trial and listened to the medical examiners' testimony, you will know that all 34 students and educators were shot in a bit more than three minutes. [Speaking about one victim, one medical examiner testified](#) that "a hail of rifle bullets cut her down in her classroom, the high-velocity bullets caused extensive damage to her body." She was shot four times. One fatal shot pierced her chest, then her heart, lungs and ribs.

Based on defensive wounds to the hands, it was clear another child appeared to try to shield himself. The teen was shot eight times and would have stayed alive for a short time. Another suffered five wounds, including a lethal shot to the brain. Another child was shot nine times, at close range, including shots to the head and torso.

The primary reason my nephew and 16 others did not survive their gunshots that day at school is because the AR-15 rounds can liquify organs and leave exit wounds the size of oranges due

to their much higher projectile speeds. Several of the children killed in the Uvalde mass shooting could only be identified by DNA or remnants of clothing.

The survivors and family members of gun violence have sacrificed enough for the benefit of gun manufacturers' profits, don't you agree? It is high time the gun industry sacrifices something for us: the end of arming killers with weapons of war.

This is not about your personal opinion. I know that if it were up to you alone, you would reinstate the ban. But this is a moment that calls for leadership. Because you are the leader of the Senate and already a co-sponsor of the bill, now is the time to call for a vote in the Senate. The entire gun violence prevention community is counting on you. Do the right thing so no other family has to go through what we are going through.

If you still have doubts about why this bill must be voted on prior to the election, I urge you to meet with us. I will be joined by Newtown Action Alliance and family members from mass shootings across the country in D.C. next week. We are not giving up until this bill passes and neither should you.

Schwartz is the founder of [Ban Assault Weapons Now](#).