



LCAV Case Study

Collaborating with Municipal Leaders to Reform State and Local Gun Laws— Analysis and Strategy to Support the City of Chicago’s Efforts to Secure Effective Gun Policies

The Challenge: Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley is a nationally-recognized leader in promoting policies to reduce gun violence in Chicago and elsewhere. Mayor Daley’s efforts to curb gun crime across Illinois include his support for stronger state and local gun laws in Illinois. In recent years, Mayor Daley has supported measures to: ban assault weapons and 50 caliber rifles; license and regulate gun dealers; limit handgun purchases to one per person per month; require background checks at gun shows; and require trigger locks on handguns sold in the state. Despite some recent successes (most notably, the passage in 2005 of bills to require background checks at gun shows and to require gun dealers to sell trigger locks with handguns), victory on other measures has remained elusive.

Contributing to the difficulty of passing gun violence prevention legislation in Illinois is the perception that gun violence is a problem that is limited to the City of Chicago. Therefore, while Chicago-area legislators generally are strong supporters of legislation proposed at the state level, downstate legislators are much more skeptical. Mayor Daley turned to LCAV for legal and technical assistance, asking LCAV to join in the Illinois Gun Law Reform Project, a multi-year collaboration to help the City secure reasonable gun violence prevention laws and policies at the state and local levels in Illinois. The project has two objectives: (1) to identify priority issues and create effective legal and analytical materials promoting the City’s interest in gun policy reform, and (2) to develop and implement an ongoing strategy to build necessary coalitions and secure adoption of gun policy measures of interest to the City.

LCAV’s Role: Thus far, the cornerstone of the Illinois Gun Law Reform Project has been LCAV’s “Evaluation and Comparative Analysis of Illinois Gun Laws,” a report prepared in 2005 for the City of Chicago that summarizes state and local gun laws in Illinois and compares them with laws in place at the federal level and in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The report enables the Mayor’s staff to consider innovative gun policies that have proven effective in other jurisdictions, and evaluate how such laws would supplement existing laws in place in Illinois.

In addition, LCAV has convened and managed a Working Group of key staff from various City departments. The Working Group brings an interdisciplinary approach to the City’s work on gun violence prevention, including representatives of the Police, Public Health, Law and Intergovernmental Affairs departments. LCAV also participates with the Working Group in collaborating with outside gun violence prevention advocates and public officials, to develop a statewide strategy for law reform.

Results: Although still ongoing, the Illinois Gun Law Reform Project already has strengthened the City’s approach to gun policy. Backed by comprehensive legal research and analysis, the City is working with a broad array of public officials and advocacy groups to speak with one voice whenever possible. LCAV continues to consult with the Mayor’s staff and other City officials on policy alternatives and approaches for building coalitions and allies across the state, providing legal and technical assistance to help the City achieve its policy objectives.

LCAV is a public interest law center dedicated to preventing gun violence. Formed in the wake of the 1993 assault weapon massacre at 101 California Street in San Francisco, LCAV provides free legal assistance to activists and public officials, including law enforcement and government attorneys, working to prevent gun violence. To learn more about our services or to request assistance, visit our web site, www.lcav.org, the nation’s most comprehensive source for information on U.S. firearms regulation.

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