

Draft Statement of the Mission, Principles, Goals, and Activities of MUS-GV 7/10/09

Montanans United to Stop Gun Violence is a grassroots movement, formed to demand an end to improper, and often violent, misuse of firearms--within our communities, our state, and this nation. MUtSGV advocates for a strong and effective response, consistent with our democratic values and with a basic democratic principle: *Namely, the granting in our society of the privilege of individual gun ownership carries with it both individual and societal responsibilities:, to protect the safety and well-being of all of our citizens from unsafe, improper, and often violent misuse of firearms.*

The recognition of this principle, and our acceptance of its full implications, no doubt will not come quickly or easily—indeed these will require profound changes in the cultural norms of a society with a great deal of violence in its past. Nevertheless we are convinced that American society can—in this matter as in so many others in our past--rise to the perception and acceptance of its true moral obligations.

We in MUS-GV see it as our individual and collective responsibility to do everything that we can as a group, and collaboratively with other citizen groups both locally and nationally, to hasten the process of change.

Our principles:

Like any other right possessed by a law-abiding citizen in a democratic society, the privilege of possessing firearms carries with it both individual and societal responsibilities to protect the rights of others. Specifically:

1) Possession of firearms should be denied to individuals with a record of violence or of criminal behavior. Furthermore it is the responsibility of all gun owners to prevent weapons which they own from falling into the hands of such dangerous or irresponsible individuals, or of children. Furthermore there are times and places in which the carrying of firearms, or certain types of firearms, are inappropriate and should be denied to all private citizens. Likewise possession by private citizens of certain types of weapons and of ammunition should be banned.

2)While (according to the Supreme Court’s most recent interpretation of the Second Amendment), law-abiding citizens have the right to possess guns for self-protection, particularly within their homes, no individual or group has the right to take the law into its own hands. To the contrary, the primary responsibility for protecting citizens and their property has been delegated by our Constitution to our democratically elected government, and under no circumstances is to be preempted by a self-anointed group of private citizens.

Our initiatives:

We intend to mobilize a strong and effective grassroots movement within Montana, composed of individual citizens and a network of collaborating organizations, to speak out against gun violence and challenge the agenda of the gun lobby. Our own agenda will include:

- 1) research, to gather relevant statistics on gun violence in the Northern Rockies, to analyze the effectiveness of regional regulatory controls of gun ownership and use, and to probe the implications of gun-related legislation enacted by or proposed to the Montana Legislature.
- 2) education and community outreach: through the print and electronic media, through presentations at community forums, and through lectures and workshops which feature expert speakers and panelists; and finally
- 3) taking policy positions on proposed legislative and regulatory actions, through newspaper and radio commentary, and testimony before legislative and regulatory bodies.

Our short-term goals:

During our initial year we will concentrate on recruiting membership, organizing an Executive Board and volunteer staff, and acquiring visibility as a significant force within Montana's *body-politic*. We will be preparing and submitting required documents to qualify as a non-profit non-governmental educational corporation, and begin to pull together our network of collaborating organizations. We will also begin our research into the nature and effectiveness of legislative and regulatory machinery to control gun violence within Montana.

Since 2010 is a legislative election year, we will undertake to inform the public on the pros-and-cons of policy questions which will be at issue in the new legislative session, as well as the policy stance taken by national gun-control organizations such as the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, the Freedom States Alliance, and Mayors Against Gun Violence.

To get on our mailing list, please send us an E-mail, titled SUBSCRIBE, at MUtSGV@gmail.com. In your message please include your name, address and phone number. Thanks!

MUtSGV Steering Committee, Bob McKelvey and Mike Chessen, co-chairs.

