



# Advocacy Update

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## Domestic Violence Awareness Month: It's Time to Stand Up Against Gun Violence

It sometimes feels that we're constantly in the aftermath of another instance of gun violence. In October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we have an opportunity to shed light on a population that is particularly vulnerable to gun violence. In the United States, [one in three women, and one in four men, have been the victim of physical abuse](#) at the hands of an intimate partner; however, domestic violence is an issue that typically remains silent and kept behind closed doors. This violence is heightened when there is a history of abuse and when a gun is accessible or in the home, as [it is 500% more likely that the victim will be murdered](#).

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior in a relationship where an individual uses intimidation, physical, emotional, financial, and/or verbal abuse to gain power and maintain control over their intimate partner. It is extremely prevalent in the United States; every 9 seconds a woman is assaulted or beaten in a domestic situation. As a result of the control the perpetrator has over the victim, it tends to be difficult for the victim to leave the relationship.

While we must recognize that this issue affects both women and men who are victims of domestic violence, the disproportional effect on women has led to a deeper focus on discussing violence against women. The intersection between [gun violence](#) and [violence against women](#) resonates with our Jewish values. Jewish tradition emphasizes the sanctity and primary value of human life. In Leviticus 16:19 we are told "do not stand idly by while your neighbor's blood is shed." On the treatment of women, Maimonides wrote, "And thus the sages commanded that a man should honor his wife more than he honors himself, and love her as he loves himself [...] He should not intimidate her too much; he should speak with her gently, and should be neither saddened nor angry." (Mishnah Torah, Sefer Nashim 15:19)

Women of Reform Judaism's [2013 statement on gun violence prevention](#) highlighted the fact that "the need for the implementation [...] for new gun violence prevention measures has become even more apparent." We are called to take action to prevent gun violence, including advocating for new legislation that closes existing loopholes in gun safety laws.

[More than half of homicides against women are committed with a gun](#) and [nearly half of intimate partner homicides are committed by dating partners](#), but there are still loopholes that allow abusers who are convicted of misdemeanor violence against a dating partner to legally purchase firearms. [Two pieces of legislation](#), Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act (S. 1520) and Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abuser Act (H.R. 3130), would close these loopholes by extending domestic violence protections to include "dating partners" or others "similarly situated to a spouse," and make it illegal for convicted stalkers to own guns.

As Jews, we have an obligation to act. As women, we know that we must intervene and advocate for our sisters.

### **This Domestic Violence Awareness Month, don't stand idly by.**

- **Urge your Members of Congress** to support the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act and the Zero Tolerance for Domestic Abuser Act.
- **Educate yourself** on your [state's domestic violence laws](#) and the [risks associated](#) with guns and domestic violence.
- **Learn to** recognize [signs of abuse](#) and develop [personal safety plans](#).
- **Participate in** the National Domestic Violence Month Day of Action [Thunderclap today at noon](#), and the National Network to End Domestic Violence [Week of Action](#) October 16-22

WRJ Resolutions on Gender-Based  
Violence