

## Registering To Vote



## Current News

On September 4, 2024, a 14-year-old student, Colt Gray, shot and killed four people at Apalachee High School shortly after arriving on campus. Gray started school two weeks late on August 14 and was absent for nine additional days leading up to the shooting.

### Timeline of Events:

**8:15 AM:** First period starts; Gray arrives with a semiautomatic rifle hidden in his backpack.

**9:50 AM:** Gray's mother calls the school, warning staff about Gray's distress after receiving a troubling text from him.

**10:20 AM:** Gray opens fire in a hallway and classroom, resulting in multiple injuries and deaths.

**10:26 AM:** Gray surrenders to school resource officers.

**Legal Consequences:** Gray faces four counts of murder and additional charges may follow. His father, Colin Gray, has also been charged for allegedly providing access to the firearm.

Apalachee High School reopened on September 23, with a focus on mental health resources and student well-being.

## Students Personal Accounts

Spanish teacher of 20 years, Jennifer Carter, described her terrifying experience during the school shooting. Instead of telling her students the truth, Ms. Carter told her students the shooting was not real and was just a drill. She did this to keep the students calm and quiet, but the truth became apparent in the next 10 minutes. At this point, all the students were able to hear the banging on doors and yelling in the hallway. The students all hid behind couches which Carter had specifically arranged to defend from the shooter. Thankfully, none of her 18 students were harmed, but Carter later posted on Facebook that those tense minutes were "the worst 20 minutes of my career".

Bri Jones, a student at Apalachee High School, was in the classroom that Gray, the shooter, first tried to enter. Her teacher asked her to open the door for Gray, but as she went to open the door she saw Gray pulling a gun out of a bag. Jones mentioned in an interview, that it was because of her mothers teaching her to look before opening a door that kept herself and her class safe that day.

"I thank God that I did not open that door"

After Jones refused to open the door, he

moved on to Jones's sister's classroom.

Another student, Malaysia Mitchell, was forced to watch her teacher, Richard Aspenwall, die from fatal gunshot wounds. She told a CNN reporter, "We had to drag our teacher, our teacher's body, fully into the classroom. We heard him take his last breath". Mitchell went on to describe how she felt powerless to save her teacher. After watching her teacher pass, Mitchell suffered from a seizure.

These personal accounts are just some of the hundreds of experiences told by school shooting victims. If action is not taken, this number will only grow. Ask your representative what they are doing for your community schools and vote in upcoming elections.



Community members gather for a vigil at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia Megan Varner / Getty Images

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## Registering To Vote



### Registering to vote early

Registering to vote is a significant process in our country and community that affects everyone worldwide. When voting, you get to help make decisions that will influence the lives of friends and family, while also being able to back up your values.

Often voting can conflict with the schedules of citizens and voting centers contain huge crowds and lines of people. Voting early can help avoid such problems that occur during regular voting days. This event provides citizens with a way around the abundance of people when voting, and prevents any scheduling or ballot complications. In 2020, 67.5% of the population in the United States voted early, which made a big impact on all of the election results. Your vote matters! Although voting may seem like a burden there are many ways around conflict.

*How do you register to vote?* To register to vote in Iowa you must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, must be an Iowa resident, and cannot be a convicted felon. You can register to vote online, by mail, or even at your county auditor's office. When registering you will need to prove your identity and have proof of residency.

Registering to vote and voting are very important to make change for citizens around the United States. Using your abilities to speak out against topics you feel strongly about by voting is the best way to make a change for your community. As stated before, your vote matters.

### Kamala Harris's Gun Policy

Kamala Harris is a proud supporter of universal background checks, red flag laws, and an assault weapon ban. At the 2020 Presidential Gun Safety Forum, Harris outlined a bold plan to tackle gun violence from every angle, working with those in Congress to pass effective legislation. Since becoming Vice President, she has helped implement rules to regulate ghost guns and arm-brace-equipped assault weapons. She also played a vital role in creating the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which provided billions of dollars in funding for violence prevention, mental health resources, and school safety. By doing this, she broke a 30-year logjam on federal gun safety legislation just as VP, and we expect she could do a lot more as president.

Note that Harris is NOT proposing a "gun grab" — guns will not be seized from citizens, assuming they don't break any previously passed laws that required weapons be taken from a dangerous individual (i.e. for individuals convicted of domestic assault).

Together, President Biden and Vice President Harris aimed to award roughly \$500 million for schools to invest in evidence-based solutions through the STOP School Violence Program, with funding supplemented by BSCA. The program was designed to improve K-12 school security by providing schools, students, and teachers with the tools they need to recognize,

respond quickly to, and help prevent acts of violence and ensure a positive school climate. For obvious reasons, this funding is paramount in today's America. Regrettably, this act was not passed in both chambers of Congress, passing in the House but not the Senate. A Harris administration would undoubtedly push for this vital legislation.

The policy regarding gun violence the Biden-Harris administration has passed has been impactful and was much-needed. The policy that was unfortunately not passed is still much needed, however, and a Harris presidency would help secure funding for programs such as the STOP School Violence Program detailed above, as well as strengthen enforcement of

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### Topics Relation to Gun Violence

The right to vote is one of the most important rights we are granted as American citizens. It gives us the vital ability to play a role in enacting the changes we want to see in our society. Whether it be for economic, social, or personal reasons we get the opportunity to make a difference in the community through our vote. That's why it is so important this November to be informed on your candidate's gun violence prevention - or lack thereof - policies. Your vote will matter especially when it comes to instituting common sense gun laws like Red Flag Laws (which will prevent dangerous individuals from possessing a firearm) and universal background checks (a policy that requires background checks on all gun sales and transfers regardless of circumstances).

While the attention is heavily centered around the upcoming presidential election, it's very important to remember that the way you vote locally matters just as much. We strongly encourage every voter to take time to research each candidate's gun policies and what they will do to combat the violence we see in our state. Visit sites like Ballotpedia.org to find out which candidates are on your ballot. You can then visit candidates' websites to learn more about

their values and policies. Change starts from the bottom up and when we start putting in candidates who will fight for the policies to prevent needless gun violence we will start seeing results.

Although gun violence may seem like an insurmountable issue plaguing our society, every one of our votes is critical to pushing back against the epidemic of gun violence and freeing Americans from living in fear of guns.

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