

GUN VIOLENCE IN MISSOURI

When Missouri repealed a key gun law, few protested. The result: More deaths than ever

BY KAITLIN WASHBURN, HURUBIE MEKO AND HUMERA LODHI

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Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, then a St. Louis City State House Representative, opposed the passage of a 2016 bill that repealed the state's requirement for a permit to conceal carry a firearm and included stand-your-ground language. Sept. 14, 2016. BY MARCUS DORSEY



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The rollback of Missouri gun laws

Missouri state lawmakers removed most gun restrictions in recent years. A study showed the repeal of permit to purchase laws in 2007 led to more firearm deaths.

EXPAND ALL

Frank Randle was pulling his truck into the parking lot of 9ine Ultra Lounge for his shift as a security guard at the club in January 2020 when chaos broke out.

Gunshots pierced the frigid air as people ran in all directions, screaming and trampling each other. In his rearview, he saw a woman on the ground bleeding.

Just feet from his truck, Randle saw a man with a Draco AK-style rifle firing into a crowd of people waiting to get into the nightclub. The shooting [killed a young woman](#) and injured 16 people.

“At that point, I had done security work for many different venues for 15 years, but that one night, that was just the one that was the most unreal one I have ever been a part of,” said Randle, who has since stopped working security because he no longer felt safe after that night.

“I’ve seen people shot at or shot, but not like that.”

In the days after the shooting, Jackson County Prosecutor [Jean Peters Baker pointed out](#) it might never have happened if not for rollbacks in Missouri gun laws.

Over the past two decades, Missouri lawmakers have carried out a long-term dismantling of virtually all of the state’s significant gun restrictions. That has left the state in the bottom five for the [weakest gun laws in the country](#).



Since January, 19 people have been shot and two others have been killed at the 9ine Ultra Lounge in Kansas City, seen here on Sept. 1, 2020. The nightclub is in a shopping center near U.S. 40 and Noland Road. Tammy Ljungblad tljungblad@kcstar.com

That has meant repealing permit and safety training requirements to buy guns and carry them concealed, and expanding legal safeguards for using deadly force in self-defense.

Researchers point to the 2007 General Assembly session specifically for its [repeal of the requirement to obtain a permit to purchase a handgun](#).

That one piece of legislation led to anywhere from 49 to 68 additional firearms deaths each year in Missouri over the following decade, [Johns Hopkins researchers found](#).

Jolie Justus, a freshman senator from Kansas City in 2007, said she recognized what was going on: The Missouri General Assembly was carrying out a long-term strategy, orchestrated by the National Rifle Association, to take apart gun laws piece by piece, until there was virtually nothing left.

“One of the things that just really concerned me at the time was what appeared to be the slow chipping away at all of the regulations that we had relating to firearms in the state of Missouri,” said Justus, who served as a state senator from 2006 to 2014 and was one of the few to vote against the bill.

“I felt very strongly that we had a public health crisis related to gun violence and that there was nothing that removing regulations — common sense regulations — would do to help that crisis. It would only make things worse.”

Former lawmakers, advocates and experts on gun policy agree that Missouri was part of a larger, national NRA effort to politicize firearms ownership and push for looser gun regulations to expand Second Amendment rights.

To understand how that happened, The Star analyzed the General Assembly, compiling data on how those in office at the time voted on [Senate Bill 62](#), the omnibus crime bill that included the repeal of permit to purchase.

The Star reached out to 50 former lawmakers who served in the 2007 General Assembly; none of the members were still in office. Of the 10 who responded, the

majority said they couldn't remember discussing or voting on removing permit to purchase.

In 2007, opposition to the bill was virtually nonexistent — 108 Republicans and 73 Democrats voted yes, while only nine Democrats voted no. Seven lawmakers were absent from the vote.





Former Missouri state Sen. Jolie Justus, shown on the floor of the Senate, said that during her freshman term in 2007, she recognized the Missouri General Assembly was carrying out a long-term strategy to take apart gun laws piece by piece. *Missouri Senate*

Since permit-to-purchase was removed in 2007, the state's firearms death rate had increased 58% by 2019, according to a Star analysis of state firearms death figures. The actual toll may be higher, as some local law enforcement agencies recorded higher numbers of deaths in their counties than the state reported.

"When there's a process where you have to get a permit to purchase, that seems like it's just a bureaucratic thing, what does that matter? But it turns out it matters more than any other gun law or any other public policy that I can think of," said Daniel Webster, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research.

While firearms deaths doubled in St Louis County and Jackson County during that 10-year period, the destruction wasn't limited to cities. Laclede County, a small rural county in south-central Missouri, saw the largest increase, from three to 10 deaths, driven entirely by firearms suicides.

Jasper County, home to Joplin in the southwest corner of the state, and St. Francois County to the east also saw a sharp spike in gun deaths due to suicides.

"I wish we had had more foresight if that truly would have prevented deaths. But even if we had foreseen this, I doubt the legislative outcome would've changed," said Jeff Smith, a Democrat from St. Louis who served in the state Senate in 2007 and was absent for the vote on the bill repealing permit to purchase.

"Three things you can count on are death, taxes and the Missouri legislature passing a gun bill every election cycle."

In 2021, the Missouri statehouse passed one of the most expansive gun rights laws in the country, called the Second Amendment Preservation Act.



Missouri Senate Republican leadership held a press conference on May 14, 2021, with a show of weapons after passing House Bill 85, which would allow state gun laws to supersede federal gun regulations. *The Missouri Times*

The new law establishes that state firearms laws trump federal ones, going as far as penalizing local law enforcement \$50,000 per infraction if they are found to be working with federal agencies, like the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives or the FBI, on gun-related crimes.

'DEATH BY A THOUSAND PAPER CUTS'

As Justus stood up to start a filibuster toward the end of the Missouri Senate's 2007 session, she could sense the exhaustion in the room. The final days of the

session were nearing, and lawmakers were antsy.

But Justus, a freshman Democrat from Kansas City, was adamantly against adding stand-your-ground language, allowing for anyone to use lethal force anywhere if they feel threatened, to a larger firearms bill — it's a public safety risk that would lead to more gun deaths, she argued.

The NRA's lobbyist already had tried to entice her with an "A" legislative grade in return for a yes vote. Her rural Democrat colleagues tried to convince her. But nothing worked, and deciding it wasn't worth losing the bill altogether, the bill's sponsor took out the stand-your-ground language so Justus would end her filibuster.

She doesn't remember the included repeal of permit to purchase. But ultimately, it would prove to be one of the most consequential rollbacks to drive increases in gun violence across the state.

Aside from the filibuster, the passage of the bill came with little fanfare. Other legislation from the session received far more attention, such as reforming the state's Medicaid program, restricting abortion access and declaring English the official language of Missouri.

The bill eliminated a provision that had been in place since 1921 requiring handgun buyers to get a permit from their county sheriff or police department before purchasing the firearm. The permitting process gave law enforcement seven days to review the application and conduct a background check.





Former Missouri Republican state Rep. Brian Munzlinger introduced a bill that eliminated a provision that had been in place since 1921 requiring handgun buyers to get a permit from their county sheriff or police department before purchasing the firearm. Tim Bommel *Missouri House of Representatives*

The repeal of the permit to purchase was introduced into the larger bill by a House committee. The language was the same as a House bill sponsored by Brian Munzlinger, a House Republican from Lewis County.

Munzlinger, who would go on to be a state senator in 2010 and now serves on the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole, did not respond to requests for comment.

Support for the bill was strong. All Republicans who voted and the vast majority of Democrats, from urban, rural and suburban Missouri districts, voted yes on the legislation, while nine Kansas City and St. Louis Democratic lawmakers voted against the bill, according to records from the Missouri statehouse.

Financial contributions from the NRA and other pro-gun groups amounted to very little around that time. A total of \$1,700 was given to four Republican Missouri House representatives, and five Republican senators received a total of \$6,600, according to the National Institute on Money in Politics' Follow the Money database.

In the Star's effort to reach lawmakers who served in 2007, most declined to speak or didn't respond to requests for comment. Hardly any former lawmakers remember the legislation, and none recall the permit-to-purchase component.

Some said they don't remember the legislation, that too much time had passed for them to comment, that their current jobs prevent them from speaking on the record.



1 of 3

2007 Missouri General Assembly

There were 113 Republicans and 84 Democrats in the Missouri General Assembly when permit to purchase was repealed.



Republicans Democrats

Humera Lodhi, Kaitlyn Washburn and Neil Nakahodo, The Kansas City Star

* A Flourish data visualization

Jack A.L. Goodman, the Republican state senator from Lawrence County who sponsored the bill, declined to comment as he currently serves as a judge for the Southern District of the Missouri Court of Appeals. Lawrence County's firearms deaths increased by 32%, from nine to 12, from 2007 to 2018.

Allen Icet, a former House Republican from St. Louis, said he voted in favor of the repeal to reduce the amount of hoops someone has to jump through to get a gun.

Icet, who lost a relative to firearm suicide, said he would still vote the same way today.

“I would come at it from the constitutional framework, the rights of Americans to possess firearms,” Icet said. “If I had to choose one side, I would be against the permit-to-purchase requirement. I think I would maintain that same position in 2007.”

Danielle Moore, a Republican from Callaway County who served in the House, remembered the bill but not its contents; however, she declined to comment further because her husband owns a small, struggling firearms store. Callaway County was one of the few Missouri counties to experience a decrease in its firearms death rate from 2007 to 2018, from 10 to eight.

Jake Zimmerman, a Democrat who served as a representative from the St. Louis area and is now St. Louis County’s assessor, said he does not remember the legislation. He voted yes on the bill.

“When I was serving in the legislature, gun violence was a serious problem in Missouri and nationwide. Sadly, it’s still at epidemic levels. I strongly support all efforts to curb this terrible scourge,” Zimmerman said.

Multiple attempts to reach Gov. Mike Parson, who served in the General Assembly as a representative in 2007 and a senator in 2016, and Matt Blunt, Missouri’s governor in 2007, went unanswered.

Jeanette Mott Oxford, a former state representative from St. Louis, also does not remember the bill but was one of the few who voted against it.

Mott Oxford was always suspicious of last minute omnibus bills.

“We would get these omnibus bills laid on our desk that would come in the middle of the night, and I would be very worried that in some bill 300 to 500 pages long, that there would be something appalling in there and then I wouldn’t be saying yes to it,” Mott Oxford said. “I figured that to err on the side of caution was the wisest thing to do in those situations.”



Jeanette Mott Oxford, a former state representative from St. Louis, does not remember the repeal of permit to purchase bill but was one of the few who voted against it. Michael B. Thomas *Special to The Star*

Mott Oxford, citing the study finding that the law's repeal increased gun violence in the state, says the consequences of the 2007 bill aren't surprising.

"A lot of people would claim that there's no connection or whatever," Mott Oxford said. "But certainly, it seems to me that a lot of people make snap judgments. And if it's easy to get their hands on a gun, a lot of mistakes will happen."

To Jonathan Metzl, author of "Dying of Whiteness: How the politics of racial resentment is killing America's heartland," the overwhelming support for the measure isn't surprising.

At the time, repealing the permitting requirement was seen as getting rid of an annoying bureaucratic process, he said, and it didn't raise red flags. The subtlety was intentional.

“What they didn’t see at the time was this was part of a much bigger [NRA] agenda that was going to lead to death by a thousand paper cuts. And so this was just the beginning of a kind of opening up the floodgates, when they kind of got away with that,” he said.

Multiple attempts to reach pro-gun groups the NRA and the Missouri Firearms Coalition went unanswered.

While writing his book, Metzl explored how racial anxieties played into the repeal of gun laws in Missouri. When speaking to people throughout the state about guns, he found a lot of racism, Metzl said.

“For a lot of people, guns became their identity, so that was certainly part of it. Guns became more guns, even more guns, and unfettered Second Amendment rights that became part of what it meant to be a conservative, rural white person,” he said.

However, for a lot of Black community members in places like St. Louis, Metzl heard about how hard it was to limit the flow of guns into their communities because of lax regulations.

“So the whole story was written as a story about white freedom and liberty, but in fact, it had horrible effects for communities of color,” he said.

STUDYING GUN LAWS

The repeal of permit to purchase led to at least a 25%, and as much as a 47%, increase in firearms homicides and a 23.5% increase in firearms suicides in Missouri in the years since it passed, according to researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research.

Webster, the director of the center and one of the authors on the study examining the effects of 2007’s repeal, studies gun laws throughout the U.S. to identify the impact they have on firearms deaths.

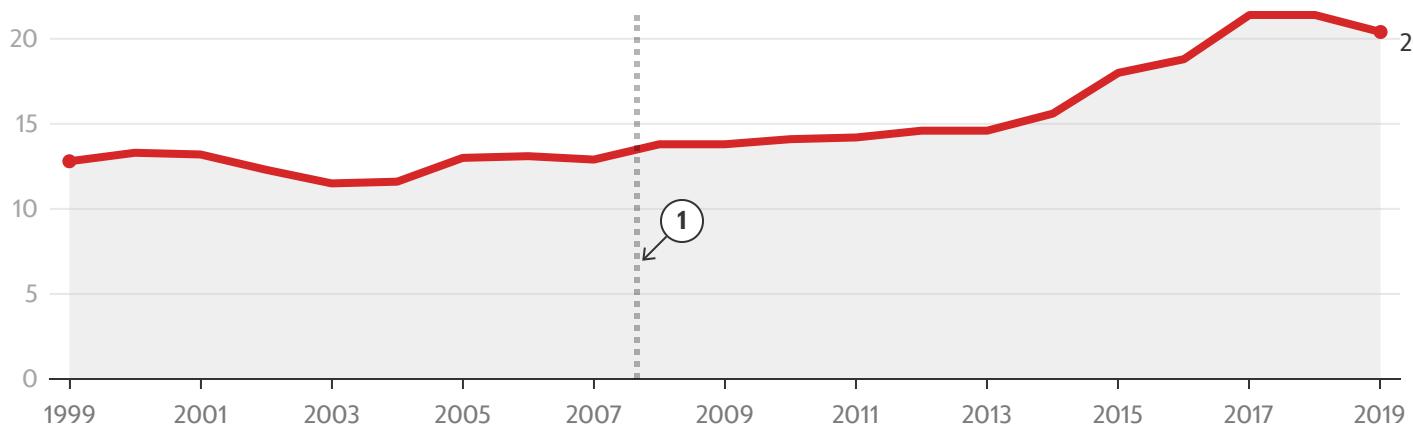
He considers the 2007 repeal to be one of the most important firearms regulatory rollbacks in the state.

“Around the time of this change of the repeal, we documented a two-fold increase in guns, moving from a retail sale to crime involvement in less than a year [in Missouri]. That’s very unusual,” Webster said.

“The gun stock, or guns that people generally possess that are relatively old, is usually 10 or more years old. To get a sudden shift that currently more criminals are being arrested with these pretty new guns tells you it’s more likely to be a regulatory thing that’s going on.”

MISSOURI GUN DEATHS PER 100K, 1999-2019

In 2019, the Missouri gun death rate was 1.5 times higher than in 2007 — the year the state removed gun purchase permit requirements. Research found the repeal of permit to purchase led to an increase in gun deaths in the state.



① Missouri passes bill removing permit to purchase

Similar studies have also examined the impact of the repeal of the permit-to-purchase requirement. Researchers from a variety of Missouri universities and hospitals found the repeal was associated with a 21.8% increase in firearms suicide rates in young adults ages 19-24.

The impact of adding permit-to-purchase laws has also been shown in other states.

Connecticut, after passing a version of permit-to-purchase in 1995, saw a 40% reduction in firearms homicide rates during the first 10 years the law was in place, according to a companion study examining gun law changes.

The law strengthened background check requirements, raised the handgun purchasing age from 18 to 21, required prospective buyers to apply for the permit in person at a local police station and mandated at least eight hours of approved handgun safety training.

After 2007, Missouri's firearms deaths continued to increase statewide. Over the years, a mix of both urban and rural counties experienced spikes that were driven by firearms homicides and suicides.

Boone County, home to Columbia in mid-Missouri, had the second highest spike over a 10-year period at 133%. Firearms deaths in the county jumped from 17 in 2008 to 45 in 2018. Most years, suicides outnumbered homicides in the county.

Small, rural counties throughout the state had large increases mostly due to rising rates of firearms suicides.

While the reasons for suicides are complex, advocates and mental health professionals say the easy availability of guns, minimal access to resources and concentrated poverty are contributing factors, especially for rural communities.

'PERFECT STORM'

In September 2016, Kim Gardner knew she had to try one last time to convince her colleagues in the Missouri House of Representatives to vote against a bill she believed would make life more dangerous for people in all corners of the state, especially in St. Louis.

Already elected as St. Louis' next circuit attorney, Gardner was about to cast her last vote.

She was arguing against overriding then-Gov. Jay Nixon's veto on the wide-ranging and controversial legislation that would allow for permitless concealed carry of firearms, eliminate the safety training requirement to carry a firearm and legalize stand your ground law.

By giving broader access to guns and simultaneously decreasing the standards for self defense, Gardner argued, the legislature was going to make her job harder as a prosecutor.



St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, a former state representative from St. Louis in 2016, argued against overriding then-Gov. Jay Nixon's veto on legislation that would allow for permitless concealed carry of firearms, eliminate the safety training requirement to carry a firearm and legalize stand your ground law. Michael B. Thomas *Special to The Star*

“We can find a balance for your Second Amendment rights, but at the same time, we can stand with law enforcement who is against this bill, we can stand with prosecutors who are against this bill, we can stand with sheriff’s officers around this area that are against this bill, because they know that blurred line, it costs lives,” she said. “It costs innocent lives.”

As soon as Gardner finished, a representative from Franklin County got up to address what he called the “hypocrisy behind some of this nonsensical rambling we just heard.”

A combined chorus of some whoops, but mostly boos, immediately erupted from legislators in the chamber, until the speaker called for decorum.

Law enforcement, gun owners and people who taught permit training courses all testified in serious opposition to the permitless concealed carry bill, recalls Kristin Bowen, a gun safety advocate from Columbia and volunteer with Moms Demand Action.

“It was hard to watch our lawmakers sit and have to enact this bill under pressure from the NRA — who at the time was very involved — the gun lobbyists in our state, and the sort of extremist allies in the legislature to vote against law enforcement and public safety,” she said. “It was really distressing. It was very frustrating for me as an activist to see our local laws, our local law enforcement voices and our public safety experts being overlooked.”

When he was president of the Missouri Police Chiefs Association in 2016, Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams said the organization fought against the bill.

“Our concealed carry permitting process was the gold standard,” Williams said. “It restricted folks in a good way, we were able to deny certain people from carrying a gun or we were able to remove guns.”

Following a short debate — during which the bill’s supporters argued that it would give people even more rights to protect themselves — the veto override easily passed, almost entirely along party lines: 112 lawmakers voted in favor, with only three yes votes from Democrats, and 41 lawmakers voted against, with three Republican nos.

Permitless concealed carry and stand your ground became law.

“And there has been an increase in Springfield and statewide in gun violence ever since,” Williams said.

“I stood up on the House floor and I said this is creating the perfect storm of hopelessness,” Gardner said in an interview in early October. “We are seeing the

effects of what I said on that floor come to fruition.”

As Gardner predicted five years ago, gun violence in her community has only increased. In 2016, 177 people died by firearm homicide in St. Louis City, according to The Star’s analysis of police data. In 2020, that number increased to 266 firearm homicides — a 50% increase.

All of the increase in firearms deaths can’t be linked to one specific law, but Gardner argued at the time, and still believes, that the bigger problem is the deregulation of firearms laws combined with the overall deficits in social determinants of health found in many of Missouri’s communities — deficits such as disparities in income, housing, healthy living environments, food insecurity and quality education.

LOophole for Domestic Abusers

The passage of permitless concealed carry in 2016 also created a hole in state law that allowed individuals convicted of domestic abuse to have firearms.

As a result, women like Leslie Washington, who fled her abusive ex-husband in 2013, live their lives looking over their shoulder.

After enduring nine years of his abuse, Washington escaped her ex in St. Louis and went to a safe house in Cape Girardeau. She stayed terrified of him after she got away. He owned a gun.

“The fact that he carried a firearm haunted me,” Washington said. “It seemed like I was the one being punished.”

State senators at the time discussed the unintended impact during floor debates, saying, “we’re going to have to come back to fix this,” recalled Bowen with Moms Demand Action.

A bill to close the loophole has still not passed.

BEHIND OUR REPORTING

Why we did this story

During our work on the Missouri Gun Violence Project, experts pointed out how 2007 was a pivotal year for Missouri gun laws. We decided to examine that year's legislation and how the Missouri General Assembly's actions over the years have had an impact on gun violence in the state. [Read more by clicking the arrow in the upper right.](#)

This year, Rep. Ron Hicks, a Republican from St. Charles, [sponsored a bill](#) preventing individuals with either a domestic violence misdemeanor or protection order against them from possessing a firearm. The legislation never made it beyond a House committee.

“Gun violence is preventable, but lawmakers continue to abdicate their responsibilities to make the necessary changes to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and other people with dangerous history,” said Washington, who also volunteers with Moms Demand Action.

“Even as other states enact laws to stop domestic abusers from getting guns — heck, if I lived even in one state over in Kansas, my situation would have been different.”

“It’s sort of the biggest, most glaring example of lawmakers weakening our gun laws and undermining public safety in that time,” Bowen said. “We experienced in that year something that we’ve experienced many years since then, which is multiple pieces of extremist legislation being filed.”

LOUNGE MASS SHOOTING

Despite the freezing temperatures, the energy at the packed 9ine Ultra Lounge that night in 2020 was celebratory — the Kansas City Chiefs had just earned their spot in the Super Bowl for the first time in 50 years.

Jahron Swift, a 29-year-old Kansas City man, had gotten into a disagreement with some of the people waiting to get into the club. Witnesses said he was looking for a lost cellphone. One of the men in line shoved Swift, and he tripped off the curb. Swift got up and walked into the parking lot.

When he returned, he was carrying the Draco AK-style rifle. He fired into the crowd of people. He kept pulling the trigger even after he ran out of bullets, witnesses said.

Craig Williams, along with other security guards, ran out to confront Swift, yelling for him to drop his weapon. Instead, after a short pursuit through the parking lot, Swift raised a weapon in his left hand, Williams recounted to police. Williams fired twice, and one bullet struck Swift, killing him.

The whole situation occurred within minutes. It took only seconds for the shooter to kill one young woman and injure 16 others.



A police evidence photo from outside the 9ine Ultra Lounge shows yellow evidence markers amid stocking caps and liquor bottles after a mass shooting there in January 2020 *KCPD Crime Lab*

Raeven Parks, the 25-year-old woman who was killed, left behind a 7-year-old daughter and had hopes of attending college.

Some of the surviving victims required surgery for their injuries; others were quickly released from area hospitals. The youngest was a 20-year-old and the oldest was 36. They came from across the metro area, mostly Kansas City but also Raytown, Olathe and Kansas City, Kansas.

In a recent interview, Baker, Jackson County's prosecutor, said Swift likely would have been in prison in January 2020 and the shooting might have never happened if it weren't for the passage of permitless concealed carry in Missouri.

In 2015, Baker's office had charged Swift with unlawful use of a weapon and possessing a controlled substance. While that case was working its way through the courts, Swift was charged again with unlawful use of a weapon in 2016.

However, the second charge came around the time the Missouri legislature repealed the requirement for permits to conceal carry a weapon. Baker's office dropped the charges in accordance with the new law.

A large problem with Missouri's race to deregulate firearms is that it tied the hands of law enforcement, said both Baker and Gardner.

The passage of the laws didn't stop the criminal activities that can lead to shootings, Baker said, it just means that it's now more difficult for law enforcement to take weapons away.

"I don't mean this in the literal sense, but we are flying a white flag outside the prosecuting attorney's office, you know, because we're just like, 'we give up, we give up.' I mean, on guns, honestly, it's hard to know what more they could do," she said.



After a disagreement with people waiting to get into 9ine Ultra Lounge, Jahron Swift, a 29-year-old Kansas City man, went to the parking lot and returned with a 9mm handgun and a Drako AK-style rifle, shown here in a police evidence photo. He fired into the crowd, killing one and injuring 16 before being killed by a security guard. *KCPD Crime Lab*

Baker remembers members of the legislature publicly getting upset with her for pointing out the role the gun law change played in the 9ine Ultra Lounge shooting.

“They’re pretty thin skinned. They make these law changes, these dramatic sweeps and changes, and then they don’t want there to ever be any negative consequences for it,” she said. “That guy was a negative consequence.”

NOT DURING THIS GENERATION

Soon after that mass shooting, Missouri entered [a historically deadly year for gun violence](#).

A mass shooting in Springfield left five dead, and Kansas City [experienced one of its deadliest summers](#).

The historic level of homicides in 2020 was driven by the state’s two largest cities, with 266 gun homicides in St. Louis and 161 in Kansas City. Both cities have for

years ranked high among U.S. cities for gun violence. But Springfield saw its fatal shootings more than double, with 23.

Last year's victims included [a pregnant Kansas City mom](#) pushing her baby in a stroller, [a St. Louis high school freshman](#) who loved to dance and [a 1-year-old boy](#) who was shot and killed while riding in a car with his mom and dad.

This year, a new Missouri law penalizing law enforcement for working with federal agencies on gun crimes has triggered lawsuits and caused confusion. The Missouri Police Chiefs Association seemed to acknowledge the lack of clarity on how to follow the new law in a memo to members obtained by The Star.

The memo listed a series of questions for police chiefs to ask their city managers: Should police departments pull out of federal task forces? Should officers continue logging information into federal databases, like those for tracking stolen guns or ballistics? Can officers continue seizing guns for safekeeping, as in suicide attempts?

The Missouri Police Chiefs Association did not respond to requests for comment.

Justus, the former state senator from Kansas City, thinks there's the possibility for change in Missouri's trajectory, but that will have to happen over a long period of time and things will have to get worse before it gets better.

"There were a lot of things in this country that had to be forced down people's throats, like wearing seat belts and stopping smoking," Justus said.

"If we have a continual beating of the drum about why this is dangerous for everybody, and we can continue to get people to actually go and vote and to vote for people who make smart decisions, that's when we're going to start to turn the corner, but we're not there yet. I think we're on the wrong side of it right now. It won't be during this generation."

After the 9ine Ultra mass shooting, Randle, the security guard, started feeling as if his life were at constant risk.

He decided to leave the security industry. He now works in shipping.

“There’s so many unnecessary shootings, and people that shouldn’t have had guns or any type of firearm have them,” he said.

“That could have been me out there.”

Julian Nazar, Joy Mazur, Sophie Ménard, Zoe Hormell, Laura Evans, Khue Nguyen, Mallory Daily, Skylar Laird and Grace Zokovitch, students from the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and Jason Hancock of the Missouri Independent contributed to this report.

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