

GOOD AFTERNOON – I AM JUDY SHERRY, CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF GRANDPARENTS FOR GUN SAFETY, A LOCAL ALL-VOLUNTEER GROUP COMMITTED TO THE PREVENTION OF GUN VIOLENCE AND THE VISION OF GUN SAFETY.

WE FOUNDED THE ORGANIZATION, THEN NAMED GRANDMOTHERS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE, AS A RESPONSE TO THE LACK OF ANY GUN REFORM LEGISLATION AFTER SANDY HOOK. AND SADLY, THAT IS STILL THE CASE – TEN YEARS LATER.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT WHEN WE HAD THE FIRST MARCH IN 2018 – WE WOULD BE BACK FOUR YEARS LATER – WITH INCREASED GUN DEATHS AND CONTINUED SCHOOL SHOOTINGS...AND STILL NO PROGRESS ON THE FEDERAL LEVEL TO ENACT ANY COMMON GROUND GUN LEGISLATION?

BUT THEN – WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT AFTER COLUMBINE. OR SANDY HOOK. OR PARKLAND, THE PLEAS FROM BEREAVED FAMILIES WOULD BE IGNORED?

AFTER EACH OF THESE INCIDENTS, ELECTED OFFICIALS CAN ONLY OFFER THEIR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS AS IF THESE ARE THE ONLY POSSIBLE WORDS THEY CAN FIND. I HAVE SOME OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR THEM. HOW ABOUT HORRIFIC. TRAGIC. UNACCEPTABLE. UNFORGIVABLE. UNNECESSARY. PREVENTABLE.

IN SPITE OF THE INTRANSIGENCE OF CONGRESS, I FEEL HOPEFUL AT THIS MOMENT. I BELIEVE WE'RE AT A TIPPING POINT. AFTER THE CARNAGE IN BUFFALO AND THEN IN UVALDE –THE PUBLIC IS FINALLY ENGAGED AND ENRAGED IN A WAY THEY HAVE NOT BEEN BEFORE. IN FACT –A MARIST POLL TAKEN AFTER UVALDE SHOWS A HUGE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC FAVORS CONTROLLING GUN VIOLENCE RATHER THAN PROTECTING GUN RIGHTS. THE 59% TO 35% SPREAD IS THE HIGHEST IN DECADES.

THAT'S INDEED GOOD NEWS – BUT BEFORE WE GET TOO COMPLACENT, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT FOR MANY YEARS POLLS HAVE SHOWN THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS SUPPORT EXPANDED BACKGROUND CHECKS, RED FLAG LAWS, BANNING ASSAULT-STYLE WEAPONS AND LIMITING THE SIZE OF MAGAZINES. OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS JUST DON'T CARE. THEY FEAR THEIR BASE AND GROVEL FOR NRA MONEY. THEY ARE NIBBLING AT THE EDGES NOW IN AN EFFORT TO "LOOK GOOD" BUT THEY WON'T TACKLE THE BIG ONES – BANNING ASSAULT-STYLE WEAPONS OR EXPANDING BACKGROUND CHECKS.

BUT WE CAN WORK TO MAKE THEM "UNELECTED OFFICIALS" BY CONTINUING OUR WORK TO MOBILIZE THE PUBLIC – AND ENSURE THAT THEY VOTE. LET'S ADOPT THE PHILOSOPHY "IF YOU CAN'T CHANGE A LEGISLATOR'S MIND; GET A NEW LEGISLATOR!" THE WORLD SEES US AS A COUNTRY THAT LOVES OUR GUNS MORE THAN WE LOVE OUR CHILDREN. THAT IS NOT A FAIR DESCRIPTION OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC AND FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE ENDURED THE "TYRANNY OF THE MINORITY" AND WE HAVE IT IN OUR POWER TO SAY ENOUGH.

I AM ENCOURAGED BY THE STRENGTH OF PURPOSE OF THOSE OF US HERE TOGETHER TODAY. I HAVE TREMENDOUS FAITH IN YOU - THE MILLENNIALS, THE GEN Z'S AND THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS MOVING UP - AND BELIEVE YOU ALL ARE THE KEYS TO MAKING PROGRESS. YOU HAVE THE ENERGY, THE COMMITMENT, AND THE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS TO REACH BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS – TO MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD AND DEMAND THEY PASS THE GUN REFORM LEGISLATION WE NEED TO CURB THIS EPIDEMIC. AND I KNOW I SPEAK FOR THE "GROWN-UPS" WHO ARE HERE TODAY - WE WILL BE RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE. AND TOGETHER, SPEAKING UP AND SHOWING UP – WE WILL SUCCEED!

*Delivered June 11, 2022, at the March Four Our Lives rally in KCMO*