

Ending the Gun Violence Epidemic in America - Levi Strauss

<https://www.levistrauss.com/unzipped-blog/2018/09/04/ending-gun-violence/>

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Levi Strauss & Co. has long been known as a pioneer of the American West, one of the great symbols of American freedom. A company born in 1853, we've seen and been part of some of the biggest transformational movements that have shaped U.S. culture.

As an iconic global company, we know that what we say and do matters. In 2016, we heard from a number of our retail employees who expressed concerns over consumers carrying guns in our stores. That same year, we had an incident where a consumer accidentally shot and injured himself while trying on a pair of jeans. These events prompted our CEO, Chip Bergh, to write an open letter asking gun owners not to bring firearms into our stores, offices or facilities. While not everyone agreed with our decision, we stood firm because we have never been afraid to take an unpopular stand to support a greater good.

We are inspired by the young people who are speaking up on America's gun violence epidemic. It's an issue that affects all of us in this country and is all too prevalent in daily life – whether it be our children participating in active shooter drills at school, worries about our own safety at work or in our community or, most tragic of all, someone we know being hurt by the daily gun violence in this country (one quarter of Americans say they have been directly affected by gun violence).

No single activist, organization or lawmaker is going to reverse this trajectory. It's going to take an entire nation standing up and demanding change. And the business community plays an important role.

That's why today, on top of our previous actions, Levi Strauss & Co. has pledged its support for gun violence prevention in the following three ways:

1. **The Safer Tomorrow Fund:** We've established this fund to direct more than \$1 million in philanthropic grants from LS&Co. over the next four years to fuel the work of nonprofits and youth activists who are working to end gun violence in America.

2. **Everytown Business Leaders for Gun Safety:** We are partnering with Everytown for Gun Safety and executives from the business community, including Michael Bloomberg, to form a coalition of business leaders who believe that business has a critical role to play and a moral obligation to do something about the gun violence epidemic in this country.

3. **Employee Support:** We are doubling our usual employee donation match to organizations aligned with our Safer Tomorrow Fund. Additionally, we're encouraging employees to utilize their five hours a month in paid volunteer time to get more politically active.

"As business leaders with power in the public and political arenas, we simply cannot stand by silently when it comes to the issues that threaten the very fabric of the communities where we live and work," wrote Chip Bergh, LS&Co. president and CEO, in [an op-ed for *Fortune*](#). "While taking a stand can be unpopular with some, doing nothing is no longer an option."

A safer tomorrow

Through the Safer Tomorrow Fund we will fuel the work of national and grassroots organizations that are working to stem gun violence in America. Initial grant partnerships include support for:

Live Free: A movement of interfaith organizations and congregations committed to addressing the causes of pervasive violence and crime in communities of color. Led by Pastor Michael McBride, Live Free is also a founding member of the Black & Brown Gun Violence Prevention Consortium (BBGVPC), which is working to scale strategies that reduce urban gun violence in high-risk communities across the U.S. With LS&Co.'s support, the BBGVPC will train youth impacted by gun violence on successful gun violence reduction strategies in an effort to create an intergenerational pipeline of expertise and leadership. Additionally, the Levi Strauss Foundation will support a series of town halls in cities across the U.S. that are disproportionately impacted by gun violence.

Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence: A national nonprofit organization committed to fighting for a safer America, one where our children grow up without fear of gun violence. We will work together with Giffords to support business community engagement and education on the issue of gun violence prevention.

Everytown for Gun Safety: Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country that brings together Americans who are fighting for public safety measures that can save lives. We will support training and leadership development opportunities that empower young people to be advocates for gun safety. This will include supporting a series of Youth Leadership Summits organized by volunteers from Students Demand Action, a part of Everytown for Gun Safety led by high school and college students. These summits, many of which will be held in cities disproportionately impacted by gun violence, are aimed at empowering students to lead the charge to prevent gun violence in their communities across the country. And earlier this year, we made a donation to benefit Everytown from the Levi's® x Karla Welch collection.

This is just the beginning. As we continue to learn where we can be most helpful on the issue, we will continue to distribute grants to support those working to shape an America that's free from gun violence.
