

More Proof the Red Flag Petition System is Cruel and Dangerous

Ever since the infamous “Red Flag” petition system was implemented in Massachusetts, GOAL has had serious issues with it. Other than the process being purely unconstitutional, the whole system is completely void of anything that helps those in desperate need.

For years, GOAL has tried to educate legislators on the complete failure of these petitions to address the underlying issue of mental health.

For starters, the system can only be used against lawfully licensed gun owners. So, if we believe someone is in desperate need of help and may be suicidal, but doesn't legally own firearms, the Red Flag system can't be used. The same is true if we believe that someone may be the next mass murderer.

Let's address the suicide part of the system. If we believe someone to be a serious danger to themselves, we can file a petition in court. If, after what little process exists, the court agrees what happens? Their license is revoked, the guns are confiscated, they are given a pamphlet and sent on their way. How cruel is that?

In Massachusetts suicide by suffocation/hanging is by far the leading cause of suicide. While suicide by firearm is a serious problem that we all need to continue to address, that means of taking one's life is less than a quarter of the problem.

Our argument has been all along that a suicidal person that is subjected to the Red Flag system will likely find other means of suicide. This would be in great part because there is no follow up, mental health evaluation by professionals, or even some other type of assistance.

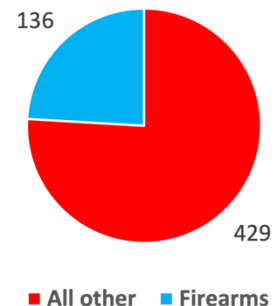
The other ugly underbelly of this focus on guns only is something called [“Means Matter”](#). This is a nation-wide effort to focus only on the gun rather than the overall problem. According to Harvard:

“Suicide attempts with a firearm are almost always fatal, while those with other methods are less likely to kill.”

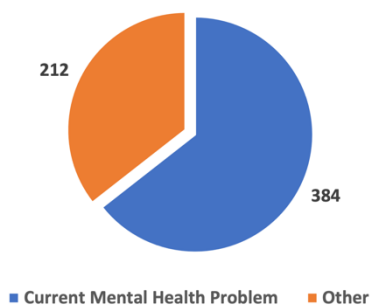
Whether the fatal part is true or not, in Massachusetts firearm related suicides account for less than a quarter of the deaths. Some may say that is because of the gun laws in the Commonwealth, but they would be wrong again.

Since the 1998 Gun Control Act suicide by firearm has only dropped around 5%. ([See GOAL's Report](#)) In the same timeline, suicide by suffocation/hanging increased from 173 (1998) to 248 (2021). That represents an increase of around 43%. Apparently means do matter. Just not the way they wanted us to believe.

2021 MA Means of Suicide
MA Dept of Public Health

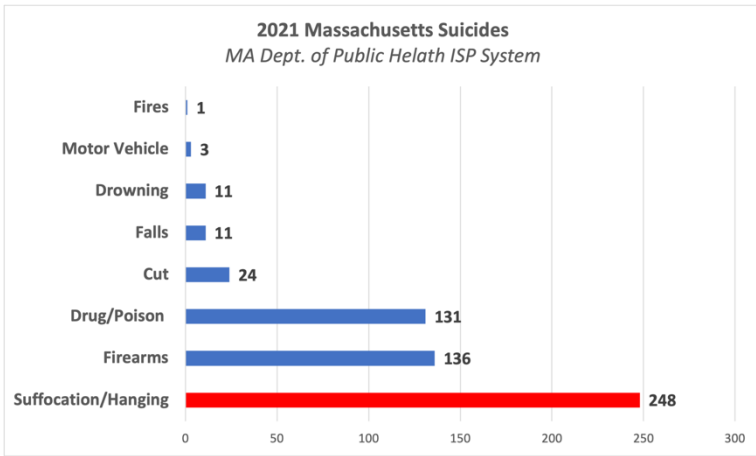


2021 MA Mental Health Related Suicides
MA Dept. Public Health



The other damning piece of data that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health provides us is that the vast number of suicides in the Commonwealth are committed by people with known mental health problems. Somewhere around 65%. This data exemplifies our concern about just taking someone's gun away and sending them on their way. More likely as not they will find other means to take their own life.

Currently there is an effort to drastically expand the Red Flag petition system. All of the data provided by the State government makes it very clear the system is only about taking away Second Amendment Rights, not about preventing suicide.



References:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2021-mavdrs-suicide-data-table-pdf/download>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/>

<https://goal.org/Massachusetts-Gun-Related-Homicides-Up-111>