



Bridging Policy and Compassion With the White House's Quest for Gun Violence Prevention

Join us for an insightful discussion uncovering the impactful efforts of [the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#). RBB hosts Kelly and JJ are joined by Brady President [Kris Brown](#), along with Deputy Directors [Greg Jackson](#) and [Rob Wilcox](#). Together, we analyze [the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#), delve into [challenges surrounding victim compensation](#) and legislative gaps, and highlight strides in firearm law reforms. Our dialogue showcases the collective determination against gun violence, emphasizing the importance of individual action.

As we conclude, we recognize grassroots advocates as the driving force behind change, acknowledging the shift towards community well-being. We invite you to be active participants in this journey towards a future without gun violence, fostering hope, healing, and humanity.

Further reading:

[Two Men Affected by Gun Violence 'Turn Pain into Purpose' as Leaders in the White House's New Gun Safety Office](#) (People)

[White House announces new state-based gun violence initiative](#) (Politico)

[Biden Creates Federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#) (New York Times)

Watch the full podcast, in video, [here](#)!

JJ Janflone: 0:08

This is the Legal Disclaimer, where I tell you that the views, thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to our guests and hosts and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay, we find it disturbing too. Hey, everybody, welcome to a very special episode of Red, blue and Brady.

JJ Janflone: 0:46

I'm JJ, one of your hosts, and in this week's episode, my co-host, Kelly Sampson, and I were so fortunate to sit down not just with Chris Brown, the president of Brady, but with Greg Jackson and Rob Wilcox of the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and we sat down in the you may have guessed it White House.

JJ Janflone: 1:07

Greg and Rob welcomed all of us in to talk not just about the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and Brady, but about the reality of fighting for gun violence prevention in 2024, and what we can all be looking forward to in the year ahead as activists,



advocates and, you know, american citizens. If you want to see our beautiful smiling faces and have an extended version of this podcast, feel free to hop on over to Brady's YouTube page, where a full, unedited version is posted and you can see what it's really like to be in the room with us when we record. A link to that will be in the description of this episode. So without further ado, I'm just going to slide us right on into the episode itself. Enjoy and remember the office. And you know this podcast wouldn't be here without you.

Kris Brown: 1:57

I'm Chris Brown. I am the president of Brady.

Rob Wilcox: 2:00

United Against Gun.

Greg Jackson: 2:00

Violence and I'm very.

Kris Brown: 2:02

I have a lot of good days, some really hard days, and today's a great day to be here with the leaders of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and with you guys. So thank you.

JJ Janflone: 2:12

I love a good day.

Kris Brown: 2:13

Yes, we have to celebrate, though.

JJ Janflone: 2:15

Like, I feel like give people their flowers when you can and like, enjoy the good times of the good conversations Absolutely, and so with that, maybe we can kick it over to you two, gentlemen, I'll start so.

Greg Jackson: 2:24

Greg Jackson one of the deputies for the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, also special assistant to the president.

Greg Jackson: 2:31

I guess my job here is to help us build out this really historic, transformative effort to address gun violence in our country, and we'll talk more about our office as a whole. But Rob and I have really been a yin-yang, building out this all-government approach and thinking about the reactive efforts that need to be built out as well as the long-term and short-term proactive efforts, and so I'm excited to be here kind of lean deeper into the investments and how we can bring more resources to those who have been impacted by gun violence and so excited to build that momentum.

JJ Janflone: 3:04

Rob, how about you?

Rob Wilcox: 3:05



to those who have been impacted by gun violence and so excited to build that momentum. Rob, how about you? So I'm Rob Wilcox. I'm the other special assistant to the president for gun violence prevention and deputy director of this White House office, and I think we're here to carry out the president's and vice president's vision and commitment, because both of them know that this issue is filled with pain, but they know that with that pain comes so much purpose.

Rob Wilcox: 3:24

But it only gets them with policy, and so this office is meant to execute that policy and implement that policy, and so we honestly come to this job every single day with really just one goal in mind, which is saving lives, and using the incredible tools at our disposal in the federal government that have, honestly, never been used before to do that.

JJ Janflone: 3:43

And I love that you highlighted the pain to purpose part of this, because I think so many folks have come to gun violence prevention because they've been directly impacted and I know that's the reality for both of you unfortunately, and so I'm wondering, as much as you're comfortable, if everyone at the table could share how you got into this gun violence prevention work, as opposed to like there's so many other social good things that you could be doing.

Greg Jackson: 4:05

you're all clearly brilliant well, I mean, for me, I was someone who was always passionate about politics and government and I I was that kid when I was young and even though I grew up in rural virginia, part of my youth I was watching c-span and reading about martin luther king and obsessed over the malcolm x movie and was, like man, there's so much power in people, you know, to make the world a better place, and all I could see was challenges and I thought, well, if I could get into politics and government, maybe this people power I could be one of those leaders to help harness that to make our country better. So I started my career really in politics and did two presidential campaigns, a couple Senate campaigns and a handful of congressional campaigns as well. I thought that was kind of my calling. It was, you know, kind of helping to become a kingmaker for future leaders, until I was shot in April of 2013,.

Greg Jackson: 4:55

And the bullet that hit me hit two arteries near the cost of my life, and there was just two distinguishing moments. One was how I was treated in the hospital. Two distinguishing moments One was how I was treated in the hospital. When I entered the hospital, I was interrogated by investigators about my role in the crime and I was treated as a suspect while I was fighting for my life, literally, and so I just that really stuck with me that, no matter what I had done to make this world a better place, in the most urgent moment of my life I was seen as a potential criminal, as opposed to a life to save.

Greg Jackson: 5:28

And then the other side of it was when I made it through my surgery, I turned on CNN and I was shot three days after the failed Senate background check vote and I was watching the same leaders that I helped elect, that I believed in and I was passionate



about that I had devoted most of my life to serving or fighting for, make excuses of how they couldn't take action on this issue and that this wasn't the time and they couldn't find the solution, couldn't come to common ground.

Greg Jackson: 5:53

And so I lost, frankly, a lot of faith in just empowering people to be those leaders and decided that I was going to pivot from electing and fighting for leaders to fighting for this issue, and if those leaders aren't aligned with this issue, then they're not aligned with me. And so that's where I made that hard pivot from campaign politics to really issue advocacy and issue organizing. And so, yeah, I hadn't turned back. But I spent 10 years in that fight alongside a lot of you here. It was not easy. I think the first six or seven years we were just kind of yelling at the wall.

JJ Janflone: 6:29

We're going to talk about that in a minute. It's just like how much has changed so quickly.

Greg Jackson: 6:32

Yeah, yeah and so, but that's really what got me started, and I'm just really thankful that that moment of trauma really has led to now kind of an era of triumph for our movement, and I'm just glad to be a part of that.

Rob Wilcox: 6:46

And to your point, JJ, about things changing quickly, they also took time. Yes, and I think about how I got involved and I grew up in Brooklyn, new York, between a couple of housing projects in the 80s and 90s and there was violence, but my family never thought about themselves as the ones.

Greg Jackson: 7:05

They thought about us, my brother and I.

Rob Wilcox: 7:09

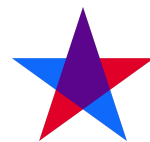
But I think what brought the issue of guns directly to our family was a cousin across the country in Northern California and she was beautiful inside and out and my aunt and uncle, Nick and Amanda, had been donating to Brady for years, which is wild to me. But then she was home from winter break from Haverford and volunteering at the local mental health hospital and this individual stopped taking his medicine and he walked in and killed her and his brother saw the sign and wanted to take action and did it and that funeral.

Rob Wilcox: 7:35

I wasn't there but I went right to the funeral. And that moment sticks with me and I think about it. And I told myself then that I was going to do what I could about this issue.

Rob Wilcox: 7:44

And then I went to DC right after I graduated college and I came right to Brady because that's who was doing incredible work. But I can tell you, in 2001,. What I remember clear as I sit here now, was the article in the Washington Post where the NRA said with the



election of George W Bush they'd work out of the West Wing. And we're going to talk about a lot of this in this podcast, but what I can tell you is, 20 years later, they're not working out of the West Wing. It is gun violence survivors and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

JJ Janflone: 8:10

Yeah, and that's amazing, y'all have a plaque. You're there.

Kris Brown: 8:14

You know what?

JJ Janflone: 8:15

I mean, and I think that that's astounding for folks who, as I mentioned, for decades have been working in this, for decades have been seeing people who we've lost, who have been taken from us, and are saying, okay, well, I'm still going to be here, I'm still going to fight, but now we're starting to see that momentum. I think really fall there. And I'm wondering too, like for Chris so you don't come to this movement?

Kelly Sampson: 8:34

as a survivor.

JJ Janflone: 8:36

How do you get involved with this? You know how did what made you decide Brady's going to be the thing, gun violence is going to be the thing that you devote a lot of your professional life to.

Kris Brown: 8:45

Yeah, well, I think, like many people of my generation, I remember exactly where I was when Jim Brady was shot in the assassination attempt of Ronald Reagan. That was a seminal moment in my life, and so I think, as an American, regardless of where we are, what we do, especially fast forward to. All of these years later. The reality is, most of us feel like we're only a few steps away from potential violence with guns, and so what brought me to this is I worked on the issue of gun violence prevention when I worked on Capitol Hill a long time ago now Capitol Hill a long time ago now.

Kris Brown: 9:26

I got to meet Jim and Sarah Brady and I viewed them as most staffers did, who would clamor to meet these folks, because they did it with passion and enthusiasm, just like these guys do every single day, and what they bring to the roles. But they also had heart and humor, and that's how it is that you get things done over a long period of time six years and seven votes. To me that was a testament of great success. Like my hero, John Lewis right, I think of our movement as basically a movement right, a collective movement for a safer America for all. For me, what brought me back was I lived overseas with my family. I have two children. Back was I lived overseas with my family. I have two children, two girls. I lived in Switzerland where per capita it's the highest gun ownership in all of Europe and they don't have gun violence like we have here.

Greg Jackson: 10:17



The fact of the matter is, you are inspected randomly for how you store guns in Switzerland.

Kris Brown: 10:19

Wow, right, so safe storage is required. And it gave me a different quality of life and that was meaningful enough to me that when I moved back to the United States, I thought this is the issue, that I think that I want to spend my time on as an activist as an activist because I care about my country, I care about its future and I think, if you consider yourself a deeply patriotic American, the only thing you can choose is to be a champion and an advocate for gun violence prevention.

Kris Brown: 10:53

So that's why I'm so proud to sit here today.

Kelly Sampson: 10:55

I feel pumped up now, but thank you all for sharing how you got involved and I know for some people listening to the podcast they're familiar with you all, but I hope everyone listening has heard that. Robin Greger the real deal and they are in the white house for you, and so I'm wondering if you could break it down and start from the beginning. What does it mean to have an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the White House? Some people might be thinking well, don't we already have Congress?

Kelly Sampson: 11:25

Like what is it, what does it do, what's the purpose and why was it founded?

Rob Wilcox: 11:30

Look it's founded because the president has a commitment to this issue period and the president has taken action on this issue since the first day and he's done. He's made more executive action than any president in history, not just on one type of gun violence, but all Domestic violence, community violence, mass shootings, school shootings, firearm suicide. He tried to do as much as he could with the tools that he had.

Rob Wilcox: 11:56

Thanks to this movement, we also passed the law, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which gave a whole set of new tools and investments, and so this office is the manifestation of his desire to do every single thing possible to address this crisis. And so when he hired us, he said I need you to do four things. This is where Greg and I were tag team.

Kelly Sampson: 12:16

But he said I need you to implement the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act my executive actions.

Rob Wilcox: 12:21

So we've had to dig deep into where's the funding going, how's it being prioritized? Are we actually solving this problem and are we using the tools to ensure that guns aren't getting into the wrong hands and we're holding the gun industry accountable? The second thing is to be bold. Bring your new ideas, think of new executive actions, thing he



said be bold, bring your new ideas, think of new executive actions. And so we put 80 ideas in play across 16 agencies, because his view and vision and that of the vice president is that it isn't just a single agency's problem, it's not a single person's problem, it's all of us, and so we've really broken it down so it's not just a Department of Justice, but Department of Labor, education, health and Human Services.

Rob Wilcox: 12:57

And each of them are asked a simple question education, health and human services. And each of them are asked a simple question what can you do for this crisis? And our first week on the job, the vice president and president convened the cabinet and a third of that meeting was taken up on our issue, where they were challenged to bring ideas to the table.

Greg Jackson: 13:13

And then we were sent to go make sure that we were getting it done and these things are showing up in real ways.

Rob Wilcox: 13:18

It's grant programs for youth employment that prioritize communities that have suffered violence, that are serving the kids who've been just as impacted, because we know summer youth employment means less violence. It's the Department of Education leaning in and saying we're going to talk about secure gun storage, we're going to encourage principals and give them the tools they need to make sure that we are helping communities do better, because we know safe gun storage saves lives, means less teen suicide, less accidents, fewer school shootings, fewer thefts, and so that, I think, has been some of the big challenges that we've gotten, and it's because this president and vice president believe to their core that we have to be doing everything in our power to address the number one killer of kids and youth in this country. But those are just the first two that she's missing, and Greg can talk to the next two.

Greg Jackson: 14:06

Well, the third big charge was how do we expand partnerships at the state and local level? And I think, as activists, especially folks who are very active in their cities and in their states, you know, we know those fights in state legislatures or in budget meetings, the city council, pretty intimately, but it's rare, I think, especially as activists, for us to see the White House play a role in those types of battles. And so the president laid out that, hey, we need to help them fight these fights. We know that we're seeing historic momentum across the country, whether it's assault weapons ban in different states or 30 states that are investing in community violence intervention for the first time. But how do we get in and help?

Greg Jackson: 14:48

And so the first thing we did was we pulled together a convening of state legislators to highlight those who are doing outstanding work, especially in states that are a little tougher because of the Democratic makeup or the legislative makeup. And we thought we would have maybe 10, 20 legislators come, but we had over 100 legislators representing 39 states. It was the largest convening in White House history of state



legislators. Of any issue of this administration but of gun violence, this was the largest they've ever had, and we packed the room and the energy wasn't somber, it wasn't anger, it was energy and excitement. And we saw folks from red states that were like, hey, we're moving forward with victim services. We saw folks in blue states that were like, hey, we can do better on state storage.

Greg Jackson: 15:26

And we saw folks in the middle that for the first time, saw their role in the fight and so in that convening we rolled out our Safer States Agenda which frankly was a collaboration, along with so many different organizations throughout the movement, of really the best of what they've been fighting for years, whether that's creating offices, fighting for trauma recovery centers, looking at loss of stolen guns, all of the different fights that we as a movement have been fighting for so long.

Rob Wilcox: 15:51

We laid those out as a.

Greg Jackson: 15:52

Sanford State's agenda and showed that hey these are all ideas that the White House supports. These are ways that you can save lives. And guess what? Here's a report card to show where your state is, and many of them are like whoa, you know, we're going to walk through and brag.

JJ Janflone: 16:10

No, you've got to work on these, right. New York, you've got to get here. Oh, guess what?

Rob Wilcox: 16:14

Texas is ahead of you here.

Greg Jackson: 16:16

Whoa, texas, yes, texas is ahead in this area, and so that was a big eye-opening moment. And, on top of all of that, this was when we first started the vice president closed the event and she challenged them. She said I know we can do more, I know we can succeed, I know that we can change this, and we need an aggressive fight at the state and local level, just like we're seeing federally. And so, of those 39 states, 27 of those states have already advanced, introduced and some have even passed new legislation from that agenda and directly credited the Safer States Agenda, which we know was a collaborative effort across the movement.

Greg Jackson: 16:48

So we're going to keep building on that, looking at cities, looking at counties and really showing communities across the country how they can all play a role in making our country safer, as opposed to just waiting for Washington to take action. Our last big challenge, which I'm most passionate about, frankly, is improving in services for victims and communities that have been impacted by gun violence. The president saw in Buffalo, in Uvalde, in frankly, all the day to day gun violence, the letters that are mailed to



him he actually reads many of the letters that folks write that we're not doing enough for victims.

Greg Jackson: 17:22

We're leaving them behind and we're leaving them with hospital bills, we're leaving them with trauma and we're leaving them without hope, and that is fueling this cycle of violence. And we saw in Buffalo and Ubalde, where communities that were already struggling with resources and supports were totally destroyed by these tragedies. And so our team has been building out a 12-agency FEMA-style response. We've done a series of listening sessions. We talked with Howlin Park last week, we talked with the community in Baltimore two weeks before that, and we're hearing from these communities, in the aftermath of their tragedies, what could have been done differently?

Kelly Sampson: 17:56
what?

Greg Jackson: 17:56
supports could they have and how do we improve moving forward?

Greg Jackson: 17:59
Secondly, we're looking at how do we make changes to the supports for people who don't get the media and looking specifically at VOCA, and just recently we introduced a new proposed rule that will expand the usage of VOCA, that will make it more equitable, that will remove some of those barriers that we know are blocking folks from getting the resources they need, and the comment period is open until April 5th of 2024.

Greg Jackson: 18:23
So we hope that folks who have been impacted by this crisis will look to that and really weigh in on. Is this going far enough? How do we improve the resources for victims and those who have been impacted by gun violence? And our office is working really closely with agencies to make sure that we are doing as much as possible to help people recover after tragedy violence, and our office is working really closely with agencies to make sure that we are doing as much as possible to help people recover after tragedy. And the one last challenge is and this is from the vice president director she said that if there's something great, that's happening in the country she wants to know about it.

Greg Jackson: 18:51
And if we can lift it, we should, because the best ideas are not always coming from this building. They're coming from communities all over the country, and so we're doing our best to lift things, whether it's the CBI Leadership Academy, the University of Chicago or Palo Corp, which is using AmeriCorps resources to provide employment opportunities in Philadelphia or Detroit, where they have folks who are volunteers.

Greg Jackson: 19:14
They have young folks who are now working with law enforcement and doing some of the civilian back-of work to support law enforcement with the Urban Safety Corps. Like these different, creative, innovative ways that communities are working to address this crisis. We're lifting and trying to help facilitate the sharing of these ideas, because that's



what a true all of government but really a true public health approach is is applying all of these different ideas from different angles and knowing that we don't have all the answers, but we're in a place to help lift all of that.

Kelly Sampson: 19:45

And I mean thank you both so much for everything that you do and also for explaining that, because I think what you're really showing is, without this office, there's so many resources that people would never get access to. And I'm just wondering you mentioned VOCA if you could for people who are listening, who don't know what that is like.

Greg Jackson: 20:00

Briefly, oh yeah, so VOCA the Victims of Crime Act the key piece I'm talking about is it provides federal funding for victims of violent crime to be compensated after that tragedy by the government. And so for me, when I was shot, I had twenty two thousand dollars in hospital bills and thanks to VOCA and victims compensation, I was able to be reimbursed for those bills.

Greg Jackson: 20:23

But, unfortunately, across the country, so many folks either don't know about these resources they're, either that the process is too difficult when you've lost a loved one, to fill out paperwork and process receipts and reimbursements is a really heavy toll on top of everything else or the bigger problem is that folks are being denied, and we've looked very deeply at the law and realized that there's a lot of gray area of what does it mean for you to contribute to that shooting right in the current law? If you jaywalk and get hit by a speeding car, well, did you contribute? Or should that car not have been speeding in the first place?

Greg Jackson: 20:56

And that's unclear in the current way that the VOCO rule is defined, and so we're proposing to clarify what it means to contribute. We also are looking to prohibit the use of previous criminal history to decide whether or not you should be compensated for your victimization.

Kelly Sampson: 21:12

But then lastly, looking at, how do we?

Greg Jackson: 21:14

create a clear definition of what it means to be compliant and to work with law enforcement. And so, for me personally, when I was shot, I was interrogated while I was in and out of consciousness after being shot and suffered from blood loss. So if I don't answer a few questions during that investigation, it doesn't mean I don't want to help solve the crime.

Kelly Sampson: 21:34

It means maybe.

Greg Jackson: 21:34



I'm fighting for my life, and that is still unclear in too many communities and in too many situations. Still unclear in too many communities and in too many situations, and so this new proposed rule will provide clearer definitions and clearer responsibilities. That the state and the overall government should play a larger role in ensuring that everything is being done to solve the crime, but we're not putting pressure on people that are fighting for their lives or just lost a loved one to weigh in in order to be compensated.

JJ Janflone: 21:57

And that's so important, because so much of what I'm hearing is that this is community driven, this is need driven. This is not. This is how we think in an academic sense. We'll solve the problem, though I'm certain, knowing all of you, that, like, there is an academic plan behind it, but that these are issues that folks brought and said these are things I need, these are things I want and do and I think that's so essential and so important and probably makes people feel a little more comfortable to accessing those resources, seeing an office function in that way and I know just from spoiler alert.

JJ Janflone: 22:26

Red Bull and Brady associated with Brady, but I know from working at Brady that's a lot of how our action comes from too. It's not necessarily what we think in kind of a highfalutin nonprofit sense, but like what we know people have been asking for in kind of a highfalutin nonprofit sense, but like what we know people have been asking for and for. Chris, on your end, Brady just celebrated 30 years of the Brady Bill and then 50 years of existence in the month of February.

JJ Janflone: 22:52

And so I'm wondering for you what does it feel like to say, okay, it's been 30 years since the Brady Bill, it's been 50 years since the formation bill, it's been 50 years since the formation of our nonprofit. This is the year we have an office of gun violence prevention. What does it feel like for you to have this resource now present and to exist, and did you think this was going to happen?

JJ Janflone: 23:12

Well, I'm not going to say no but you know, was this on your do we give us to say on the bingo card and like the 2023 bingo?

Kris Brown: 23:20

card that you thought was going to happen Well, if. I had a wish list, which I did, of things that I wanted to have happen this? Was probably at the very top, and it was for many in the movement who really thought that having an office like this was essential to bring all of government together I think Rob and Greg in particular, as survivors, but also as experts in the area of gun violence prevention, because this is a complex area.

Kris Brown: 23:50

It's very straightforward in the one sense we have individuals who are being shot, the number one killer of our kids right, these are basic facts. The solutions are multifaceted and complex and we have long thought of it as a particular agency, for example HHS or CDC. Let's get more funding so that we can. Let's get some funding Gun violence.



Kris Brown: 24:17

Well, yes, that's very basic and, of course, this is a top priority to continue for this office, but when you think about the power of the federal government, to lead the many agencies that have a role in potentially advancing gun violence prevention, in assisting victims, as Greg has said and we hear from many survivors as a survivor-led organization Jim and Sarah and we hearkened back when we celebrated our 50th anniversary to Pete Shields so many others who have come before us who've made changes For us.

Kris Brown: 24:50

we are looking, though, for catalytic change, and I would say that the Office of Gun Violence Prevention is part of that catalytic change, because it's transforming something where we would say, hey, let's make a priority CDC funding, since we were zeroed out all this time.

Kris Brown: 25:05

Now, we say let's look at every agency of the federal government and see what they can do. And not only that. We understand, too, that mayors across this country right city councils across this country view gun violence as one of their top priority issues. The impact is local many times for everyday gun violence, and the reality is new ideas and assistance that the federal government can provide along the lines that you're saying, Greg, are so integral so important and the policy expertise that this office brings for the myriad additional rules that are stemming from the executive actions.

Kris Brown: 25:48

I mean this president honestly has done more to combat gun violence than any president in history. So having an office that can do this in this multifaceted way was a top priority and something I hoped and dreamed would happen, but I do think that it's catalytic, along with so many other things that we're now seeing happen at the federal level, and I hope many states will follow suit.

Kelly Sampson: 26:15

Thanks for highlighting that to the catalytic nature of it, because I know one of the things that happens just by having this office is that you continue to have pressure instead of just having it be headline go away, headline go away.

Kelly Sampson: 26:27

Now it's the very president and the vice president of the country who have made this a permanent part of their agenda, which is huge. And we're sitting here in March, so the year's still got a long way to go. So I'm wondering for 2024, what sorts of opportunities do you see? And then, what sorts of challenges do you see specifically for gun violence prevention? This year there's a lot.

Greg Jackson: 26:50

You know, I just I want to brag on Rob real quick. When you think about opportunities, because Rob is, he's the Beethoven at the piano at times. But yesterday, just yesterday,



we had a meeting with 12 agencies and in the Roosevelt room I mean the president, the heroes of people in the old room, that's the old office, that's how close we were.

Greg Jackson: 27:15

And Rob facilitated a meeting with some of the most senior leadership across these agencies and talked specifically about safe storage and the importance of storm firearms, and we talked with the Department of Defense, we talked with Veterans Affairs. It's already doing this throughout their community. Doj has already rolled out the most comprehensive guide on safe storage.

Greg Jackson: 27:30

But then we also turned and looked to the Department of Interior and found that they already have a huge campaign in the tribal community that they've already built out, but they hadn't partnered with the Department of Justice before. We looked over to the Office of the Department of Agriculture, who knows that farmers are at great risk to suicide by firearm, and now are sitting next to Veterans Affairs and saying, wow, we could use these exact same resources to expand what we're doing. And we saw housing and urban development, a community that's unfortunately often overlooked.

Kelly Sampson: 27:59

Seeing that, oh, I have resources in the Department of Justice here here.

Greg Jackson: 28:03

Here that can all weigh in and that type of collaboration has never even happened on a Zoom call. But here we are in the Roosevelt room having a discussion about how we can approach an all-government effort to shift the culture around how people see responsible gun ownership and really lift the standard. And that was facilitated by Rob, and I could have never been more proud to work alongside him.

Greg Jackson: 28:27

But I think there's moments like that where we think that we're doing all we can and maybe one agency is doing a tremendous job.

Greg Jackson: 28:34

But in all of these efforts whether it's funding strategies to support communities that have been devastated by gun violence, whether it's shifting the culture through awareness, whether it's making sure a policy is being fully implemented there is a ton of opportunity even from just pulling together different agencies to zero in on this. And that's what we did with COVID-19. And you saw how we were able to drastically turn around what was the largest health crisis of many of our lifetimes. But in America the president says this himself you know we have a history of going through crisis and coming out stronger, and that's because of the power and the will of the American people, but also the collaboration and leadership of the White House. And our biggest opportunity in this moment is to bring together all of these agencies to fight for these big areas and these big opportunities to shift culture, to shift policy, but also bring resources to those who are most in need. And I'm sure Rob has some more concrete things, but I had to just brag for him because I'm sure he wouldn't do it.



JJ Janflone: 29:35

As we said, this is a time for like celebration of flowers and acknowledging that you know this is a hugely important Thing and that you don't have to question it If we need to be so bold, so how about you Rob anything here in the coming year?

Rob Wilcox: 29:47

I mean, look, we know that we have seen rates of gun violence that were both unaccepted and Exceptionally high, and we have seen a president who's leaned in To kind of pull all the levers he can pull, and what we've finally seen is some of this gun violence go down, but not nearly enough.

Rob Wilcox: 30:03

And so I think what I'm looking forward to is doubling down, and I think we can accelerate the investment. We can accelerate taking on irresponsible actors in the gun industry. We can accelerate strengthening our background checks, and I think about just a few things. We can accelerate strengthening our background checks and I think about just a few things. You know, just a few weeks ago, for the first time ever, the president, in a message to the country, named Community Violence Awareness Week, and that was thanks to Greg Jackson who proposed it, and the president said yes, and then we spent a week focusing on the solutions to community violence raising awareness of the

Greg Jackson: 30:35

issue rethinking it, reframing it and committing ourselves to addressing it, and so we brought together state legislators.

Rob Wilcox: 30:42

We had the first ever convening with nearly 1,000 leaders across the country to talk about funding opportunities, not just at one agency but across three. We went to Philadelphia to see how the work was happening on the ground and we had this incredible graduation with 31 of the really the brightest stars in the community violence intervention field who got to spend their graduation with the vice president and the governor of Maryland and Greg and myself and it was beautiful and they walked out fired up, but they're going to go do the most incredible work, and so that inspires me that this summer we're going to have

Rob Wilcox: 31:17

less gun violence than we've had since before COVID me that this summer we're going to have less gun miles than we've had since before COVID. It inspires me that I think about the Brady background checks in 30 years, how much work we've just done in the past couple of years and how much we'll be able to do. We're in the process of finalizing a regulation that could effectively close the gun show loophole, close the online sales loophole.

Kelly Sampson: 31:34

Things that.

Rob Wilcox: 31:35



Chris and Brady have been working on for years.

Rob Wilcox: 31:39

I mean Jim and Sarah. Brady and I worked at Brady in 2001 and again in 2013,. We've been trying to close that for a long time and we've come up short a number of times. In 2000, after the horrible shooting at the Columbine High School, there was a bipartisan bill that came to the floor and it got 50 votes in the Senate, with Al Gore casting a tie-breaking vote, and it fails in the House. The Senate with Al Gore casting a tie-breaking vote and it fails in the House. And, honestly, it was a dark period for the gun safety movement.

Greg Jackson: 32:03

for years, the gun industry got more protections than ever before.

Rob Wilcox: 32:06

We didn't invest in solutions and we are living with the consequences of the NRA writing our gun laws. And in 2013, when we saw another tragic shooting, there was another bill that sought to take over this gun show loophole, this online sale loophole, to expand the Brady background checks that we know work. And again it fails. It only has 50 Democrats to vote for and four Republicans. And then, 10 years later, in 2022, we see another horrible shooting at a school and a terrible shooting in Buffalo. And this time we go back to that negotiating table with more momentum than we've ever had before, with more movement power, with more ideas. Yeah, because we didn't just go and say let's get background checks. We said let's go in and get funding for red flag implementation, let's go in and make an enhanced background check, let's fund community violence intervention, let's make the largest commitment to youth mental health in history. And instead of failing, we succeeded. But it wasn't just that we had 50 Democrats, which we did again, but we had 15 Republicans show up.

Rob Wilcox: 33:05

And when the NRA said no the senator said yes, and now we get to implement that law and we are about to implement some of these pieces that will take the Brady background checks to places they've never seen Getting at people who are offering guns for sale at gun shows or online ads the source of so many of the traffic guns. And this enhanced background check is like Brady background check 2.0. I mean, instead of just looking at the database, we're calling into states, looking for information, and so we're doing this for 18, 19, 20-year-olds. And do you know, what we found is, since we've implemented this, we've increased denials for that population by 25% and the stories are life-saving. There was one individual who tried to buy a gun at a gun store. It had to be a long gun or shotgun, so like an AR-15. And the Brady Packers said go. But when they called in with this enhanced check, what they found is they had been committed to a mental institution just a few weeks prior, a person who was literally just in crisis.

Rob Wilcox: 33:59

So instead, of a yes, it was a no, and so, instead of a tragedy, potentially a life saved and this, to me, is what's exciting is we are focusing on the real problems community violence, suicide, threats to our schools, threats in the intimate partner setting and we



are applying all the solutions. So I am like filled with optimism because, for all the heartbreak that we share in this movement, it is the hope and possibility of saving lives that keeps us going. So I cannot wait to come to work tomorrow and the day after that, and the day after that, because that is the privilege the president gives us in this entire movement a chance to work on this issue every single day, because that's what we know it deserves.

Kelly Sampson: 34:41

Well, your hope is infectious. I feel it. I feel it and I think.

Greg Jackson: 34:46

Oh, I wanted to add something too. I mean, even beyond introducing new solutions, implementing new developments, one of the most powerful things of this office existing is that we're able to connect those who have been impacted with the real government resources that exist. And so I just think about the last two weeks. We all know about Uvalde and how challenging and tragic that was, and many of us know folks who were there, or families or survivors, and I've heard multiple times from mothers and families how difficult the process to get support was for them of the DOJ Office of Victims of Crime, and they laid out all of their challenges and now there's a chance for them to talk through and help refine things.

Greg Jackson: 35:31

You know we were rolling out funding for 14,000 school-based mental health professionals as a result of the Bipartisan Safety Communities Act. When we looked at the first round of folks who applied, there were clear gaps and one of the gaps was that there wasn't enough HBCUs at the table 264 wards, only two HBCUs. But just yesterday we brought together 12 HBCUs and the morning that the actual funding for the second round was announced 8 am it was announced 11 am 12 HBCUs were being briefed on these resources and we found that in Morgan State they're already doing the work in Baltimore schools. In Howard University they're already building out mental health strategies to help and they even have a mobile crisis center that they're about to launch.

Greg Jackson: 36:18

So we're seeing that we're connecting the real people who are impacted with the resources that exist and that watchful eye and us being that bridge, I think might be the most powerful part of this is that there's already so much the government can offer, but for too long the communities and the activists and the leaders we have been trying to figure it out on our own, and now you have a team here that is getting the biggest crash course possible on what exists out there and then are empowered not just encouraged, empowered to connect those communities with what's possible in the government, and so we're just so excited to do that. We have four events this week. I mean every week. I think we probably set a record for how many people we bring in this building.

Greg Jackson: 37:02

Because we always have a herd of folks here, because we want to make sure that we are being that bridge and facilitator of how do we get the communities and the



individuals who have been overlooked not just in the room but at the table, getting the resources and helping to shift and impact the decisions that are made here.

Kelly Sampson: 37:20

I was going to say that's what's so beautiful about the office. You mentioned the CDI week, and those are communities that are often suffering from the. They're being disenfranchised or being oppressed or being hurt in all these ways, and for the White House to go out and say you're coming in here and you're going to have to think.

Kelly Sampson: 37:37

The table is incredibly powerful, especially in an era when so many people are cynical about government and about democracy. And it's now the office of the presidency and the vice presidency is going to some of the most impacted communities and saying come here, we want to hear from you, we want to help you. That's so beautiful.

Greg Jackson: 37:53

I mean one quick story on that. We had a call with there were 28 teens that were shot in a mass shooting in Baltimore and didn't get the media, didn't get the press. We did a listening session and there were mothers there that talked about how teens were shot on their front porch and were there for hours trying to get help and they had to come back. So that was their home. You know, that was their home and they were in public housing and had housing assistance.

Greg Jackson: 38:20

One person said that her son wouldn't come home for a month because he was just too afraid, terrified, and they were telling these stories, bawling, and they said you guys got to work on your city services and I said wait, man, this is not the city, this is the senior leadership for housing and urban development for the country that you're talking to. So we're not just helping, we're just not focused on changing your condition. You're informing how we look at this issue from housing and urban development forever. And that is the small example of how these gaps, these bridges that we're building, are not just helping individuals. It's really shifting the entire culture of how government responds and thinks about addressing this issue.

Rob Wilcox: 39:01

To Greg's point, going from what we can do federally to the challenge that I think we have is it shouldn't just be this energy coming from the White House.

Rob Wilcox: 39:10

We need it in governor's mansions, we need it in city halls, we need it everywhere, because for too long this issue was just in a single lane. But what we know to address the public health crisis is you have to do it all, and so we need offices in all of these places, but they can't just be tucked away. I think some of the magic in this office is where the president and vice president demand to be placed, which is one step below them. We are literally one person away from the president when we need help, we need action, when we are briefing, and that gives us tremendous ability to actually make this change. So that is essential. And then you've got to get the right people, the people who



understand this issue, to understand this pain, but also the promise of the policy, and you've got to give them the mandate to do it all. And that is what we need right, because it can't just be a White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

Greg Jackson: 39:59

We need a Maryland.

Rob Wilcox: 40:00

Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and I know our friend, governor Moore, is working on that, but we also need local offices of violence prevention. That is the ecosystem this issue deserves so that we actually can tackle this in all its forms. And so, as we are working to build this, I think we need everyone's help to put this in place everywhere, so that we can make sure we're saving lives.

JJ Janflone: 40:21

Well, and I think that that leads to kind of a great, maybe even final question for us to start segueing into, because the danger with danger, with this, of course, is I know you're- all very busy people but Kelly and I will track you forever and you've got lives to save. So you can't just talk to us forever. Although we'd like it, we would take it, but I you know so obviously your advocacy efforts, not new right advocacy efforts of Brady.

JJ Janflone: 40:46

It's not a new thing. What the office has accomplished in short time is amazing. Right, you guys hit the ground running and have been like sprinting in a marathon, although I was thinking really re-describing it. It's almost like before gun violence everyone was kind of running in a race together, but not touching. Now we've all kind of linked hands, which is a beautiful yet terrifying image right, you don't want to get in your way or away as we get to that finish line.

JJ Janflone: 41:11

But I'm wondering, you know, what can listeners who are out there in the world? What can they be thinking about doing? What is something that they can do actionable in?

JJ Janflone: 41:20

the next year, in 2024, specifically, that could help move the needle, could help make their community safer, could help make their family safer in many ways. Is it advocating, as you said, for we need all of these offices, Was it? Are you calling your mayor? Are you calling your governor? What is it that they can be doing and what on kind of maybe on the advocacy end for Brady, are you really excited about saying move Chris.

Kris Brown: 41:44

Well, I think the answer always is do all the things. I think the point that was made around the first of all the fact that they're one person away, Greg and Rob and Steph Feldman one person away from the president and the vice president is super important.

Kris Brown: 42:03

Their power to actually bring people together to convene not only folks who may be heads of agencies, but also the impact on victims of gun violence to be able to come in



and have that audience with these senior leaders where a lot of victims have felt denied that. So I guess the first thing that I think is really important as advocates, as activists that we're thinking about our Brady chapters is spread the good news Because in a lot of ways the enemy of the gun violence prevention movement is not always the folks on the other side, what I would say. Second amendment extremists right.

Kris Brown: 42:42

We're not against gun owners. Right, we have many gun owners who are a part of this. It's hopelessness. So make sure that you understand how important this office is, the gains that we're making across this country, and then take action around. What I always talk about is your sphere of influence. We all have that right and the ability to be able to think about the kinds of things this officer is doing.

Kelly Sampson: 43:06

Think about where you live. Think about the people who have this officer is doing.

Kris Brown: 43:08

Think about where you live. Think about the people who have some role to play in reducing gun violence in your neighborhood, in your community, and get engaged with them. Get engaged in your community with others who may be part of your civic association. If you're a parent, your PTA. Engage in discussions with your school systems around, say, storage. We have a whole now proposal and approach coming from the.

Rob Wilcox: 43:33

White.

Kris Brown: 43:33

House about what that should look like, but ultimately it's us as citizens who can engage our elected officials at the local and state level to ask what are you? Doing to combat gun violence.

Greg Jackson: 43:47

And have you thought about not only?

Kris Brown: 43:49

all of the things that you can do from a policy standpoint, but also enforcement. A policy means nothing if we don't come together and help ensure that that policy is enforced and then engage. Make sure that, as individuals, we're supporting the people who represent us who are going to?

Kris Brown: 44:08

become and are gun violence prevention champions. All of those things are super important. That's how we're here, that's how we get the catalytic at change and that's how we look 5, 10, 15, 20 years from now hopefully even shorter back and say we solved this public health crisis. Let's move on to the next hard thing.

JJ Janflone: 44:28



That's our goal. Yeah, I mean, that's beautiful and I think, before we continue like, I even think of just I think my experience has been so different because I only came into the gun violence prevention movement about four and a half years ago. Kelly, you've been in it for quite a while longer. I think how long About eight years.

Kelly Sampson: 44:44

That's not a sure.

JJ Janflone: 44:51

Time has no meaning for me anymore. But I think it's one of those things where I've seen such a culture change and the way that people are talking about gun violence and even my short time at Brady from people who early conversations were so hard and I would be struggling and people in the office who had been working on it for eight, 10, 15 years would say oh, you should have seen it 15 years ago.

JJ Janflone: 45:06

I couldn't get a meeting. This is amazing now and I feel like even in the last year we've been on a rollercoaster of folks are really, even if they even if folks aren't necessarily engaged they want to know and I think that a lot of that probably we can, we can credit to some of the culture change work that Brady's doing, but also to the incredible work that your, your office, is doing.

Greg Jackson: 45:26

So what are things that people can?

JJ Janflone: 45:27

be doing right now. That could help you out.

Rob Wilcox: 45:30

Well, I don't think it's about helping us out, as much as we're here to serve the people of this country and fulfill the president's wish to end gun violence in our time.

Greg Jackson: 45:40

I will say that I think a lot of what we're doing needs people to take action.

Rob Wilcox: 45:43

So the secure storage piece that Chris just mentioned I mean in some ways that was both a ground up and now it's a spread out right. I think so many Brady volunteers and Moms of man Action volunteers really thought up this idea in the first place of going to schools and saying why don't we talk more about secure storage?

Rob Wilcox: 46:01

I know my aunt and uncle, who are my heroes, Nick and Amanda they did a lot of that work in California alongside Sheikha Hamilton, and that then boils up to the US Department of Education saying we should all do this. But then it goes back down and it's up to the schools yet again to pick up that mantle and people in those districts to say why are we doing this? And not just how do we raise awareness, but how do we make devices secure, storage devices accessible, right? And so there's always going to be more to do locally, to take what we're doing and run with it. And when we're talking



about these grant programs that we think can be so impactful, we can talk about them, we can release them, we can promote them, but it takes people to say hey, are we applying to them?

Rob Wilcox: 46:40

Mayor, have we thought of our comprehensive plan? Do we have an office, and so I would hope that we are serving people number one, but number two, the things that we're putting out. They should just pick up and run with, because hopefully, all these pieces are things that we end up doing together, because that's the only way we solve this.

Greg Jackson: 46:57

I think you said it earlier, right, it's never going to be a top-down approach.

Rob Wilcox: 47:00

This is how we do it, but what we can do is make tools and resources available for people to design the strategies that work to heal their communities for people to design the strategies that work to heal their communities. So I think that's what I would say, but it's not anything that they have to do for us. They certainly not. I think we're here to serve them.

Greg Jackson: 47:22

Yeah, I'll just add. I mean I think we also we really need everyone to lean in on the solutions. I think we talk so much about the problem of gun violence, how bad it is and how unsafe it is and where you can't go to school or you can't go to a parade or you can't go to church, but we don't spend enough time talking about the solutions and what's working and we think about oh, it's not safe in my neighborhood, well, how do I protect my home versus how do I get out there and help my neighborhood become a safer place? And that's one thing that our office is completely focused on is like how do we advance as many solutions as possible? But if we can get everyone who's concerned about this issue to get into a solutions oriented mindset, it will make a major difference. And we always talk about how, you know, hurt people, hurt people. And our mantra is more the heal people, heal people. So how can we figure out how to heal as many folks as possible, knowing that that spread will have a huge impact?

Greg Jackson: 48:17

And I put on my phone because there's a quote from Martin Luther King that I always hang on to it's that darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that and hate cannot drive out hate. Only light can do that and hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that, and we are really fighting against darkness. At the end of the day, this is the most traumatic and, unfortunately, in so many moments, some of the most heinous tragedies that we're witnessing on this planet, and we have to figure out how do we bring light into this and get to those who are in crisis, get to the youth that are, that are scared, that are fearful, that are lashing out, get to those who are afraid to move in the world and maybe want to end themselves. Like how do we get light to those who are most in need, knowing that that's the real battle that we're fighting?



Greg Jackson: 49:05

you know, we joke we don't talk about the nra anymore. I mean they they're bankrupt and they're you know, just lost his case. The real battle is how do we help shift the American mindset from a place of fear and despair to hope and love, because that's what we have to accomplish and all of this policy, I think, is a part of how we get there. But that internal shift can start with us, because we've seen the worst of it and for us to still be hopeful, I think is a very courageous thing.

Kelly Sampson: 49:34

Completely agree. I was just going to say I feel like the theme emerging from what you shared and what you shared is just like you were saying sometimes we think that the enemy or not the enemy, the opposition, is someone else, and really it's our own attitude and our own posture of like we can do this, we can do this. We can actually live in a country of philosophy. So I really appreciate that.

Kris Brown: 49:56

I do think that one of the things that's related to the point you make is how we think about change in this country, and there's a quote that I'm going to completely mangle, but I will attempt it anyway.

Kris Brown: 50:14

There's a quote that I'm going to completely mangle, but I will attempt it anyway that change is slow and slow and slow, and then it happens all at once. Right, and I think about that as we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of Brady, knowing that Jim and Sarah took six years and seven votes to get the law passed, that in that time, 30 years later, 4.9 million sales had two prohibited purchasers have been stopped, and that there are people walking around alive today because of that law, and not a small number at all. And so, while it may be that sometimes a year or two or three goes by, where we're toiling in what feels like the salt mines, there's a reason for it and there's a purpose behind that. All of us sitting here today really stand on the shoulders of others who came before us, who said enough, and in my small way, even if I don't know that tomorrow something monumental can happen, I'm going to howl into what can feel like a hurricane, but it still is something that.

Kris Brown: 51:12

I must do, and if every American can be so inspired, we'd be done with this. And that, I think, is very compelling to me when I think about why what you're saying is so important and your point, Kelly, which is the hope is in each of us. We carry that and the light is there, and that's what guides what we do every single day, and so I like thinking about dwelling on that as sort of a final thought.

JJ Janflone: 51:45

And this was a very I'm going to like. This is one I bottle. This is one of like the episodes I think I'm gonna come back to when I need inspiration, because I think that that's such a big, important note maybe to leave on for our listeners. A lot of folks who listen to us are folks who work in gun violence prevention, whose names, unfortunately, I will never know. Yeah right, because in their community, every day they're getting up to do gun



violence prevention work, but they're never going to be on a national stage they work for, maybe like a small organization they're doing the work by themselves, or when they come, they're like they're working with brady but we don't get to see them.

JJ Janflone: 52:17

You know it's that kind of thing, but they're part of this office and that means they're in these rooms and so they are talking to the president. They're there and I think that that's a really beautiful thing to hold on to. So thanks so much to all three of you. Thank you to you two in the office for hosting us. Hey want to share with the podcast. Listeners can now get in touch with us here at Red Blue and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, cat pictures, whatever.

Kelly Sampson: 52:54

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