

## IA4GS PowerPoint Script (12-1-2021 ver)

1. Thank you for being part of this vitally important conversation about serious issues—I think we can call them life-or-death issues. And there’s a reason it’s especially important for us to have this conversation now...
2. ...because in November of 2022 our election ballot will include a proposed amendment to the Iowa state constitution related to gun ownership. More on that in a minute.
3. Our organization, Iowans for Gun Safety, wants to defeat the proposed amendment as it is written, so that in the future we citizens haven’t given up our right to have this vital conversation.
4. Over the next few minutes, I’ll cover four related topics: some points that need to be made clear, the idea of gun safety as a public health issue, the ways we already know of to reduce gun violence, and the specific impact of the proposed amendment.
5. This information is presented by Iowans for Gun Safety, a not-for-profit organization in Iowa that is dedicated to making gun ownership and use safer. **[pause for slide reading]**
6. We found four ideas that often disrupt or confuse good conversations. Here’s the first one: Many people cite the second amendment as the basis of their beliefs about guns.
7. But the proposed Iowa amendment goes far beyond what’s in the second amendment of our federal Constitution—which is why we’re opposed to it.
8. Next, let’s get clear about the National Rifle Association, the NRA, which claims to speak for gun owners. In fact, at least 93% of gun owners, and 80% of hunters don’t belong to the NRA. And NRA membership includes only 1.5 percent of all Americans. But it does include 100% of firearms manufacturers, the real beneficiaries of “gun rights” legislation. By the way, we have a separate list for you of all the sources of these numbers.

9. Responsible Iowa gun owners and dealers don't want to prohibit reasonable safety measures, like universal background checks, gun safety training, and requiring a license to carry a gun in public.
10. Third clarification: Gun lobbyists, like the NRA, want people to believe that mental illness is what causes gun violence...
11. ...but we know that mental illness is rarely involved in gun violence between people. If we take 100 incidents of shootings, only 4 of them will involve mental illness. But all 100 of them will definitely involve guns.
12. Mental illness is more often a factor when people use guns to kill themselves. That's why we need what are called Extreme Risk Protection Orders (sometimes called "red flag laws"), which temporarily restrict certain people's access to guns.
13. Finally, let's look at the idea that gun ownership is what divides us when it comes to our opinions. A nationwide survey of more than 1300 Americans in 2019 found that a majority favor red flag laws and want background checks for gun purchases. More than 500 of the people in this poll were gun owners, which tells us that even they want stronger legislation.
14. We view gun violence as a public health issue because we are focused...
15. ...on the numbers of people, young and old, dying and injured by guns.  
**[pause for slide reading]**
16. Guns are the 2nd highest cause of deaths among children and youth and the leading cause among young African American men. Women are another group that's especially vulnerable..**[pause for slide reading...]** although that final statistic on this slide is more hopeful—that women's lives are made safer by gun laws.
17. Bringing these statistics closer to home, guns are involved in the deaths of approximately 281 Iowans annually. 221 of those (79%) are suicides.
18. Some other statistics tell us that by having a gun in the home for protection—which is what about 2/3 of gun owners say they want—you risk having an opposite, tragic result. **[pause for slide reading...]**

19. In this third part of our four-part presentation, let's look at some solutions to this health problem that we know are effective. The first is to have a public health perspective instead of a political one. If enough people are willing to say, "Gun violence is a public health problem with public health solutions," we can think about and talk about the health and safety of all Americans...
20. ...without ignoring individual rights and choices. Iowans have the right to not get shot!
21. The second powerful solution involves laws that are based on research and science. Here's a completely different example than guns: We've recognized other things in our lives that are potentially life-threatening—like cars...
22. ...and we've chosen to respond to rising vehicle accident and death rates by enforcing laws and encouraging new safety features—without taking cars away.
23. This seems similar to the conversation that we're having about guns. We can use evidenced-based research and laws against the epidemic of gun violence...
24. ...because we know that gun laws and lower numbers of deaths are connected. The Giffords Law Center analyzes gun laws in all 50 states, scoring them on their strengths and weaknesses. The scores are tabulated and each state gets a letter grade, A-F. The graded categories are compared to gun death rates released by the CDC. The 22 states on the far right side of the graph have the weakest laws and, you can see, the highest rate of people dying by guns. (In this chart, Iowa was one of the "C" states in the center, but now that permitless carry and elimination of state background checks have been enacted in early 2021, we will likely receive a poorer grade—and more gun deaths will follow..)
25. The effect of laws brings me back to the proposed constitutional amendment that I mentioned at the beginning. Here's what it says, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed" - that's wording directly from our federal constitution. The next sentence reinforces that first one and places it in our state: "Iowa affirms and recognizes this right...". But it's this third sentence that creates problems: "Any restriction shall be subject to strict scrutiny."

26. Promoters of this amendment make the argument that Iowa is one of only 6 states without gun rights amendment in our constitution. Okay—but this one goes beyond the 2nd amendment. **[pause for slide reading]**
27. Here they are side by side. You can see that the proposed Iowa amendment goes much further than the US amendment. **[pause for slide reading]**
28. Only three states have amendments with this strict scrutiny wording: Alabama, Missouri, and Louisiana. Iowa should not follow in their footsteps. Alabama's gun death rate is the fifth highest among all states, Missouri's is the seventh highest, and Louisiana's is the sixth highest.
29. Why did the promoters of this amendment include this extra language? "Strict scrutiny" is legal language, having to do with how judges consider the cases that come before them.
30. Here's an example: A man in Louisiana, who had been previously convicted of burglary—a felony—was later caught in a car with a handgun in the backseat and an AK-47 with a 30-round clip in the trunk. He was arrested because Louisiana has a law that says felons cannot have guns. But the judge, applying a "strict scrutiny" review to the case, decided the arrest was unconstitutional...
31. ...and dismissed the charge against this convicted felon. In Iowa we've been trying to find the right balance between gun rights and gun laws. Like Louisiana, we've chosen to keep guns out of the hands of convicted felons. We've also kept guns out of schools and made machine guns illegal to own. Every one of these laws could be challenged in a future court case that would be subject to this special level of "scrutiny."
32. This is what the promoters of this amendment intend. It's not just about gun ownership. It's designed to make it harder to enforce laws already on the books and to discourage us from introducing other sensible laws that are proven to prevent gun violence.

33. A poll conducted in 2019 suggests Iowans will be open to this “Vote No” message. Registered Iowa voters were asked their opinions on various gun laws—this group contained Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, fairly evenly divided, and by nearly 2 to 1, they rejected this type of amendment. We like those odds, but we know that we can’t take any chances with this important vote...
- 34... Plus, those survey results were related to accurate information-sharing **[pause for slide reading]** – just like we’re doing here. We also know that the promoters of the amendment may offer various distortions—for example, they’re already saying the amendment will not affect existing gun laws, but that case in Louisiana shows it certainly can do just that.
35. Iowans for Gun Safety encourages your NO vote on this amendment, as it is worded, so that we can keep talking about and working toward the best balance between the rights of gun owners and the rights of all Iowans to be safe in public places. We want to keep that conversation alive so we can keep Iowans alive!
36. Make history! You’ve taken the first step by coming to this presentation. Think about spreading the word with the people you know. Support our work with a contribution, and stay in touch so we can give you up-to-date information.
37. Questions?