

Resolution #2 – In Support of the Yes on Question 2 – Extreme Risk Protection Order Referendum

Resolution Title: In Support of the Yes on Question 2 - Extreme Risk Protection Order Referendum

- 1 RESOLVED that the epidemic of gun violence remains one of the most devastating crises of our time.
- 2 Its impact on communities is profound, and the number of lives lost is staggering. The Episcopal Church
- 3 in Maine’s commitment to common sense gun reform is strong. Through the combined advocacy of
- 4 MEPPN, and congregations all over the state, and our partnership with the Maine Gun Safety Coalition,
- 5 we believe in the power to put an end to this violence, and be it further

- 6 RESOLVED that the 206th Diocesan Convention urges all parishioners to support Question 2 – Extreme
- 7 Risk Protection Order on the November 2025 State of Maine election ballot.

Brief Explanation:

New statistics released from the Department of Public Safety showing an increased use of Maine's current 'yellow flag' law underscore the need for an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) law as proposed in Question 2, which will appear on the ballot this November.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders empower families to go directly to a court when a loved one is in crisis and, if deemed dangerous, a court can temporarily restrict that individual's access to firearms. Law enforcement can still initiate the process, and if Maine had a real ERPO law in place at the time, perhaps one of the many warnings about the Lewiston shooter could have prevented the shooting.

Claims that ERPOs don't have the same due process protections are false and misleading. When the Maine Supreme Court upheld Maine's current law, finding it protected due process, the court found that the requirements that a subject of a protection order request be notified within 24 hours and that a hearing must be scheduled within 14 days and the person be represented by a lawyer upheld due process—both of those due process provisions are included verbatim in the language of Question 2.

Having the ability to take timely action when warning signs appear is critical for saving lives, especially when firearms are involved. Suicide can be an impulsive act particularly so for teens who are suffering from mental health crises at even higher rates. In the majority of mass shootings, including the mass shooting that occurred in Lewiston in October 2023, the perpetrator has exhibited dangerous warning signs that could be addressed.

ERPOs, also known as red flag laws, are an effective means to de-escalate an emergency and save lives. They allow law enforcement officers, after a petition by loved ones and an evidentiary hearing for a court order that must meet specified standards, to temporarily remove a gun from the possession of someone with a mental health crisis who is determined by a judge to be at risk of harming themselves or others with a firearm. If such a finding is made, the gun is taken into custody by law enforcement. Within a short time thereafter a second hearing is held when additional evidence may be presented to determine if the initial order should be extended.

In 1976, The General Convention of The Episcopal Church passed the first of numerous resolutions calling for gun reform. Between then and now, Convention would pass many more resolutions on topics ranging from stronger gun manufacturing regulations to a restriction on assault weapons and investments in community violence intervention. During this time, the Church has also passed several

resolutions to address the intersection of gun violence with issues such as criminal justice reform, police reform, and access to mental health resources.

“We stand together in hope. We stand together in faith. We stand together in love. We stand individually as ambassadors of hope, vessels of faith, and sentinels of love. We stand as a community committed to making no peace with gun violence. We pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inflame and enkindle our lives, our churches, our communities, our cities, and our nation with a passion for lasting peace; through Jesus Christ the Author of Peace. Amen.”

Supporting website links (if any): Acts of Convention: Resolution # 1976-C052

Episcopal Church Policies on Gun Safety and Gun Reform – The Episcopal Church

Submitting individual or organization: Ben Cooke.

Contact person: Rev. Benjamin Cooke

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Submission Questionnaire

Do you have an individual or organization co-sponsoring this resolution? No

Does this resolution have any budgetary impacts to the Episcopal Diocese of Maine (EDOM) Annual Budget? No

Apart from financial impact to the diocese, would implementing this resolution have any financial impact to our congregations? No

Does the action proposed by this resolution fall under the charge of an established diocesan committee, commission, council, or ministry? No

Who will be responsible to present and address questions regarding the resolution at town halls and at the convention? Benjamin Cooke

Email address: clergy209@gmail.com

Phone number: 207-530-7666

Assuming passage, who is responsible for completing the action being resolved by this resolution? Bishop of Maine's office

If the resolution is adopted, how long do you plan on the action(s) being in effect? Indefinitely.

Reporting on an adopted resolution's progress is required at the 2026 Convention. Who will be responsible for performing this task? Bishop's representative or the Bishop in writing to the diocese.