

## **EXHIBIT 3**

Burgess Op Ed on Gun Violence  
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## Common sense, public health approaches to reduce gun violence

By Tim Burgess

Every year taxpayers in Seattle pay for millions of dollars of emergency medical care for people who have been shot. It's time for the gun industry to chip in to help defray these costs.

Every year guns are lost or stolen, then used in crimes. It's time we require mandatory reporting of lost or stolen firearms to help the police track down illegal guns.

The City Council will soon consider two gun safety measures to address these issues in our continuing effort to reduce gun violence in our city.

### Firearms and Ammunition Tax

A gun violence tax on the sellers of firearms and ammunition in the city will raise money for gun safety research and prevention programs, a practical, common sense approach to the epidemic of gun violence we face.

Washington State levies other taxes for public health benefits on cigarettes, alcohol, and even wood-burning stoves. Why not guns and ammunition? By passing this local tax, we can hopefully set the stage for statewide action, just like we have done with paid sick leave and the \$15 minimum wage.

Through homicide, suicide, and unintended discharges, gun violence rips lives apart across all segments of society. And the public bears the cost. In 2014 alone, more than \$17 million was spent on the direct medical costs for 253 victims of gun violence at Harborview Medical Center, our region's trauma center. Taxpayers paid more than \$12 million of this amount.

The total economic damage from gun violence, including lost earnings potential, is much higher. Public Health of Seattle & King County estimates the total economic costs of firearm deaths and injuries in the county averaged \$181 million per year from 2009-2013; nearly \$1 billion over five years.

Like many other public health interventions, investing in gun violence prevention can reap big returns, and the gun industry should fund these common sense efforts. But in Washington, D.C., the gun lobby and their allies in Congress have shamefully blocked funding of basic research on gun safety by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since 1996. Why wouldn't we ask doctors and public health officials to look at a major cause of death in America (33,636 deaths in 2013)?

In 2013, Seattle became the first city in the nation to conduct basic medical research on gun violence. The City Council-funded research led to a report from the Harborview Injury

Prevention and Research Center that established that “gun violence begets gun violence.” Individuals hospitalized for a firearm injury were 30 times more likely to be re-hospitalized for another firearm injury than people admitted to the hospital for non-injury reasons.

As a result, and building on earlier work with alcohol-related injuries, Harborview’s research and medical staff developed a hospital-based intervention program for gun violence victims designed to reduce future hospitalizations from gun violence. In the mid-1990s, Harborview pioneered a similar intervention for alcohol-related injury patients in a trauma center. It worked. New hospital admissions among this population declined by nearly 50% and Harborview’s intervention is now a best practice in trauma centers across the nation. This is exactly the type of gun violence response the new tax will fund.

The gun violence tax would be \$25 per firearm and \$0.05 per round of ammunition sold in Seattle. Don’t worry, it’s not like the gun industry can’t spare the change. From 2008 to 2012 (the latest year with complete data available), the number of firearms imported into the U.S. or produced in the U.S. (excluding exports) increased a staggering 91%, from 6,876,842 to 13,135,646.

Let’s tax the gun industry to help pay for the damage their products produce.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

The Council will consider another measure that would require mandatory reporting to police of lost or stolen firearms. Already adopted in nine states, the District of Columbia and other local jurisdictions around the country, this common sense requirement would aid in the tracing of crime guns and help police solve crimes. It will also return lost guns to their rightful owners and protect gun owners from being falsely implicated in crimes.

Gun crime is no small problem. Seattle police officers have taken into their evidence lockers 2,657 firearms since January 2012. Guns play a significant role in many crimes against persons in Seattle: 69% of homicides, 17% of robbery incidents and 8% of aggravated assaults between January 2012 to May 2015. The ability to trace crime guns is a key component of successful policing.

A January 2011 national poll found that 94% of the respondents favored a reporting requirement, with similar levels of support among gun-owning households. Another nationwide poll in May 2012 likewise found strong, two-thirds support from gun owners for this proposal. The general public is clearly ready for common sense measures like this.

### **Common Sense Steps**

After the recent horrific Charleston, S.C. church murders, President Obama called for us to acknowledge that gun violence is a problem unique to the United States in its size and scale, and for us “to shift how we think about the issue of gun violence collectively.”

These two simple measures—a gun violence tax and mandatory reporting—are a practical response to the president’s plea. They will increase safety and help police solve gun crimes.

From tobacco to seatbelts, using a public health lens of research and prevention and taking a common sense approach has allowed us to save lives in countless other areas. We can do the same for gun safety and Seattle can lead the way.

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