

# News From The States

## EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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When Republicans advance bills that target trans kids or roll back child labor laws, they typically claim it's to help, or protect, kids. Some of them probably believe that, though it's hard to understand how. I can't discern what's in someone's heart, but I *can* debate the merits of legislative proposals — and based on that, it's hard to understand how Republicans might seriously think they're helping anyone.



### The Big Takeaway

**There is no clearer example of this than guns.** Thursday marked [the 11th anniversary](#) of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, where 20 first graders and six educators were murdered by a gunman wielding [an AR-15](#). Senate Republicans responded by tanking gun control proposals that would have [expanded background checks](#) and [banned assault weapons](#). ([Fifteen Democrats](#), mostly from red states, also voted against the ban. That didn't affect the outcome — even with their votes, the bill wouldn't have cleared the almighty filibuster — but still, it matters.)



*It matters.*  
(Photo by Getty Images)

It would be the last substantive gun control debate until 2022, when Congress approved modest reform measures after 19 students and two teachers were murdered at an elementary school [in Uvalde, Texas](#). The bill, signed by President Joe Biden [in July 2022](#), broke a decades-long stalemate on gun policy, mostly because it did little to actually restrict access to guns. This is infuriating and unsurprising. The debate was over after Sandy Hook, when lawmakers decided that classrooms of dead school children were an acceptable side effect of unfettered access to guns.

**As a result, we all reside within the culture of guns**, regardless of our personal feelings about guns. Democratic lawmakers in Republican-majority states have adjusted their legislative strategy accordingly, abandoning ambitious gun control measures in favor of incremental (and less controversial) changes. They still fail regularly, even when data indicates that the proposed changes could help stem the tide of gun violence. It's a familiar process that's playing out now in Indiana, where a Democratic lawmaker vowed to revive a failed gun storage bill after an unprecedented surge in unintentional shootings by children, [the Indiana Capital Chronicle reported](#).

Nine children have died and 18 were injured in [25 unintentional shootings](#) in Indiana this year, the third-highest nationwide behind Texas and Florida. The incidents, which involved children as young as three and as old as 17, surged

[even in cities](#) where overall homicide rates decreased. This is part of a broader trend — nationwide, firearm-related injuries are now the leading cause of death for children and teens — but it's also a specific problem that stems from carelessness. If children do not have access to guns, they cannot accidentally shoot them.



*Gotta close it all the way.  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

Safe firearm storage would have been mandatory for adults in homes with children under [a 2022 bill](#) introduced by state Rep. Mitch Gore, an Indianapolis Democrat. But Republicans refused to schedule a committee hearing for the legislation, leaving it to languish in purgatory until the end of the legislative session. Gore plans to resuscitate it next year, likely as an amendment to an existing criminal statute rather than a new standalone law. Either way, the goal — and the need — are clear, Gore said.

“The crux of it ... would make it unlawful, specifically, to leave a firearm unattended when it’s likely that a child could gain access to it,” he said. “The idea, of course, is to prevent these tragedies that we’re seeing more and more where children access an unsecured firearm and then use it to injure themselves or another.”

**This seems like a no-brainer, which means exactly nothing in terms of its chances.** Commonsense policies fail all the time at the hands of right-wing

lawmakers, who have embraced a policy agenda consisting mostly of nonsense like objecting to the existence of transgender kids. Ohio Republicans joined the (non) cause Wednesday, [approving a bill](#) to ban gender-affirming care for minors and bar trans athletes from participating in women's sports. Only one Republican voted against the proposal, which awaits a likely signature from Gov. Mike DeWine, [per the Ohio Capital Journal](#).



*Senate President Matt Huffman doesn't make laws for you!  
(Photo by Graham Stokes/for the Ohio Capital Journal)*

**The bill is a carbon copy** of similar policies enacted by [red states across the country](#), most of them approved along party lines and over the objections of [medical professionals](#), advocates, parents and transgender people. Republicans in Ohio passed their version over the objections of the Ohio Children's Hospital Association, the Ohio Academy of Family Physicians and multiple children's hospitals, along with hundreds of people who testified against the proposal last week. Asked to explain this, Senate President Matt Huffman all but snorted.

"We don't make laws just for the hundreds of people that come and testify," he said. "We make laws for over 11 million people."

**Republicans in Florida turned their attention to the state's able-bodied teenagers**, who could finally achieve the childhood dream of full-time employment under [a bill](#) that would eliminate work restrictions for 16- and 17-year-olds, [the Florida Phoenix reported](#). The proposal, advanced Wednesday by

a GOP-majority committee, would roll back most child labor protections, allowing older teens to work more than 30 hours per week on shifts that begin before 6:30 a.m. — even on school days — or end after 11 p.m. Employers would still be required to provide 30-minute breaks after four hours of continuous work, but only for employees 15 and younger.

[Sixteen states](#) have considered similar policies in the past two years, including 13 this year alone. Florida's proposal is among the more moderate, particularly when compared to [Iowa](#), where 15-year-olds can now work on assembly lines and in meat coolers and industrial laundries. But it could still exploit teenagers and empower employers to cut wages, according to Democrats. Republicans disagreed, saying the bill would simply align Florida with federal child labor laws as well as policies in states like Iowa (but without the meat coolers).



*It's retail, not meat processing!*  
(Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

Besides, the kids *want* to work, according to Rep. Linda Chaney, the bill's lead sponsor. Kids *love* work! They talk about it on the internet and everything!

"In 1938, 60% of 16- and 17-year-olds were working. Today that has dropped to 38%," Chaney told members of the House Regulatory Reform & Economic Development Subcommittee. "Nearly a million [internet] searches have been performed, 'How can I get a job as a teen?' They want to work."

You will be unsurprised to learn that the bill is a big hit with restaurant and hotel owners, who flooded the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association with “positive support,” according to Samantha Padgett, the organization’s vice president.

“This would significantly help them and make a positive difference in their business, and also make a positive investment in the future of their business by being able to invite 16- and 17-year olds into the workforce and start their career development early,” she said.



*A formal invitation.  
(Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images)*

**Democrats did what they could to stop the bill**, by which I mean they introduced a bunch of amendments that had no chance of passing and then tried to make their case using logic, which also failed. GOP Rep. Jeff Holcomb dismissed the complaints as political posturing, which is a classic sign of an adult who did not spend their formative years pulling up their bootstraps in the salt mines.

“I’m shocked at the grandstanding for this bill,” he said before detailing the halcyon days of a childhood spent blissfully washing dishes and busing tables. “I learned a work ethic. I learned the value of a dollar. I learned how to save money from those jobs.”

**OK Jeff:** [Florida school voucher providers have until year’s end to clarify what parents can purchase ...](#) [Kansas school district turns against books that mention nudity, sexual orientation, gender identity ...](#) [Louisiana won’t move incarcerated youth back to Angola – at least no sooner than January ...](#) [Michigan flu survivor: ‘I hope other families —](#)

[especially young kids — never have to go through what ours did' ... Parents vent frustration and concerns over Michigan school district's handling of lead contamination ... Mother of 11-year-old shot by Mississippi officer demands public release of body camera footage ... Ohio law banning gender-affirming care and trans athletes heads to Gov. Mike DeWine's desk ... South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster announces \\$40M for school safety priorities in his upcoming budget proposal ... Virginia Supreme Court backs fired teacher who refused to use transgender student's pronouns ... West Virginia's Hope Scholarship expands to accept year-round applications from students](#)



## State of Our Democracy

The Florida Supreme Court will fast-track an appeal attempting to restore a North Florida congressional district capable of electing a Black congressional representative that was dismantled by Republicans at the request of Gov. Ron DeSantis, [the Florida Phoenix reported](#).



*See you on Dec. 29!*

*(Photo by Michael Moline/Florida Phoenix)*

In response to a request from voting rights organizations, justices gave the state's attorneys until Dec. 29 to file legal arguments in the case. Both sides have agreed

the case should be resolved swiftly to ensure time to prepare for next year's congressional election.

The deadline comes two weeks after an appeals court upheld DeSantis' preferred map, which spread Black voters across five new districts dominated by white Republicans. The court's decision ignored state Supreme Court rulings that created the original district and also the desires of both the voting rights groups and the state, who had appealed directly to the high court.

**Whoops:** [\(Alaska\) Cookies and budget hints served at governor's holiday open house in Juneau ... Arizona GOP lawmaker Alexander Kolodin sanctioned for 2020 'kraken' lawsuit, other election cases ... Donald Trump celebrates Iowa Poll lead as he rallies for caucus support ... Kentucky Supreme Court affirms voting districts in gerrymandering challenge ... Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear calls for an amendment on redistricting though passing it would be 'challenging' ... Cameron never came close to matching Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear campaign's fundraising ... Michigan fake electors back in court, as state elections director testifies ... Washington ballot measure would erase restrictions on police pursuits ... University of Wisconsin System Regents reverse course to approve deal with GOP lawmakers on funding, DEI ... White House says funding for Ukraine is running out, with no deal in sight in Congress](#)



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## One Last Thing

A 17-year-old [passed the bar exam](#) in California, probably because the state wouldn't let him work a full-time job.

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