



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — Feb. 15, 2018

## **Froct: 'Thoughts and Prayers are not enough'**

Sen. David Froct, D-Seattle, released the following statement following the Feb. 14 shooting in Parkland, Florida:

"I was devastated to learn about the tragic shooting yesterday in Parkland, Florida. The 17 people fatally shot were in a school, a place where they should have been safe. The 19-year-old shooter used an AR-15 with several magazines of ammunition. Initial reports indicate this was a firearm he purchased legally.

While this happened in Florida, more than 3,000 miles from here, this could happen in Washington.

In our state, you can legally purchase an AR-15 or an AK-47 from a licensed dealer at age 18 — even though we know the rational part of the human brain does not fully develop until age 25. You have to be 21 to purchase a handgun from a licensed dealer in Washington. While there is a background check required when purchasing assault weapons, the check is not as extensive as the background checks we have for the purchase of a handgun. This does not make sense.

We must pass legislation to impose the same regulations and background checks on the purchase of an AR 15 as on handguns. We began that conversation this year with a hearing on [Senate Bill 5444](#), which I introduced at the recommendation of state Attorney General Bob Ferguson. It's imperative we pass measures like this to ensure the safety of our children, and of all Washingtonians. This measure passed out of the Senate Law & Justice Committee but did not have enough support to pass the full Senate.

After every mass murder — and how sad is it that mass shootings have become so common that we refer to them in the plural and have had 30 this year alone — there is inevitable talk about the intersection of mental health and guns. Clearly, we must find ways to address the needs of these young people who are socially isolated and fixated on violence as expressed on social media. The [Sandy Hook Promise](#) is trying to find ways to identify and help these people in school and in our communities before they act out. We need public policies to support this effort. At the same time, *we should not shy away from the simple fact that it is easy access to high-powered weapons in*

*combination with these social pathologies that is leading to the now all-too-common massacres we are witnessing.*

The opposition refuses to give. But we have to keep pressing forward and let public officials know that this is a voting issue that will cause people to lose their jobs if they don't act. When energized opposition prevents progress, it must be countered with energized support.

A few years ago, I sponsored the Extreme Risk Protection Order bill, designed to prevent individuals at high risk of harming themselves or others from accessing firearms. The same interests who vigorously opposed that bill opposed our measures this year. The public was ahead of the elected officials however, and that measure later passed via the initiative process, with a resounding 69 percent of the vote.

The same dynamic continues to play out in Olympia. The majority of voters are ahead of the majority of politicians on these common-sense measures, and things will only change if there are mass numbers of voters who make their voices heard."

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