



Legislating Access to Firearms in the First Six Months of 2023.

For most of the 21st century, debates over access to firearms have been a constant in state legislatures. These debates are long-standing and often expose deep-seated partisan divides. Across the country, legislators have prioritized policy changes that either impede or expand access to guns.

It can be tempting to tie any legislative trend to a single event. However, mass shootings have become so common in the United States that it's difficult to identify the exact motivation leading to legislation. According to the Gun

Violence Archive, the U.S. is on track for over 600 mass shootings this year. 2023 will be the fourth straight year of this high rate of gun violence. With this violence, it's safe to assume that a desire to save lives motivates much of this legislation.

Gun control is a mainstay within U.S. political discourse. Given this fact, the Plural team sought to examine how and where gun control policy has been in the first half of 2023. We leveraged Plural's legislative dataset, categorizing legislation according to whether it increased or decreased access to firearms.

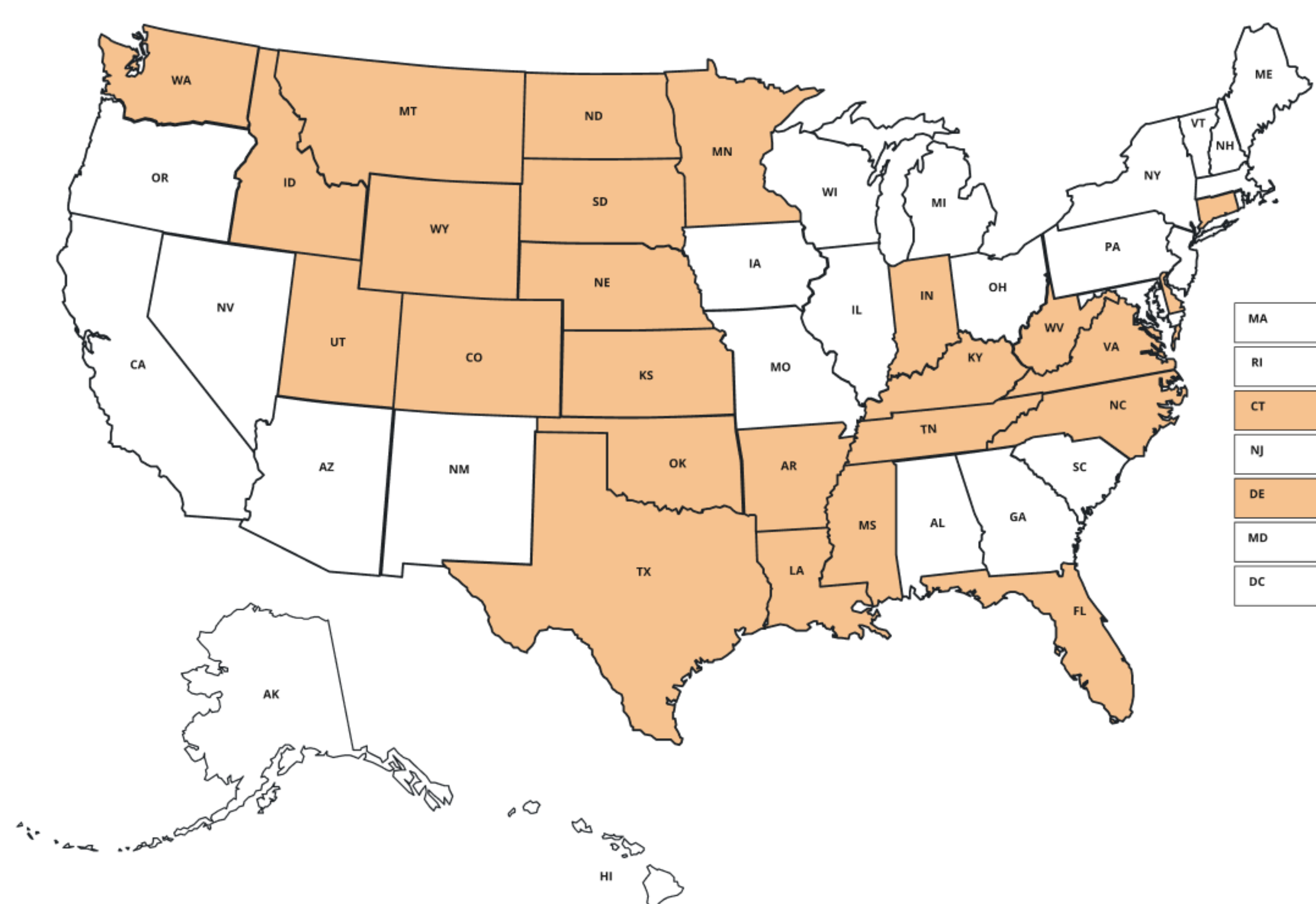
EFFORTS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO FIREARMS

All 50 states and both chambers of U.S. Congress have introduced legislation expanding access to firearms. In fact, 986 pieces of such legislation have been proposed in the first six months of 2023. 83 of these measures, across 25 states, have been passed into law so far.

Arkansas, Montana and Tennessee saw the most legislation passed in this category. Illinois, Oklahoma, and New York saw the most legislation introduced seeking to expand access to firearms.

Most Active in Introducing and Passing Bills Expanding Gun Access in 2023			
Introduced		Passed	
Illinois	162	Arkansas	10
Oklahoma	83	Montana	10
New York	66	Tennessee	8
Minnesota	55	Utah	6
Tennessee	45	Mississippi, North Dakota, West Virginia	5

STATES THAT PASSED LEGISLATION EXPANDING ACCESS TO FIREARMS IN 2023



Many of the bills introduced and passed so far this year are well-known. This includes bills to expand the right to carry firearms in public. Efforts to decrease registration, permitting and training requirements have also received attention. While the full dataset is helpful in understanding the breadth of

action, the Plural team focused on a few notable trends.

Alabama's permitless carry law went into effect on January 1, 2023. Permitless carry is sometimes called constitutional carry. Following this passage, 25 states allowed for permitless carry, while 25 states still required a permit. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis tipped the balance to 26-24 by signing HB 543. The law, which went into effect in early April, allows for permitless carry in Florida. Beginning on July 1, most Florida residents can carry a gun in most public places.

Mississippi ranks first in gun deaths per capita. Despite this, state legislators passed five laws expanding access to firearms. These laws:

- Authorize police officers to possess weapons with greater flexibility
- Prevent regulation of firearm suppressors
- Prohibit firearm recordkeeping
- Allow for the arming of school employees

Legislators in Arkansas, Delaware and Minnesota passed laws that protect marijuana users' access to firearms. Minnesota HF 100 legalizes and regulates recreational marijuana. The bill includes provisions that prevent the denial of a firearm permit due to the use of marijuana. For Minnesotans who have had their records expunged from a marijuana-related conviction, it also restores the right to access a firearm.

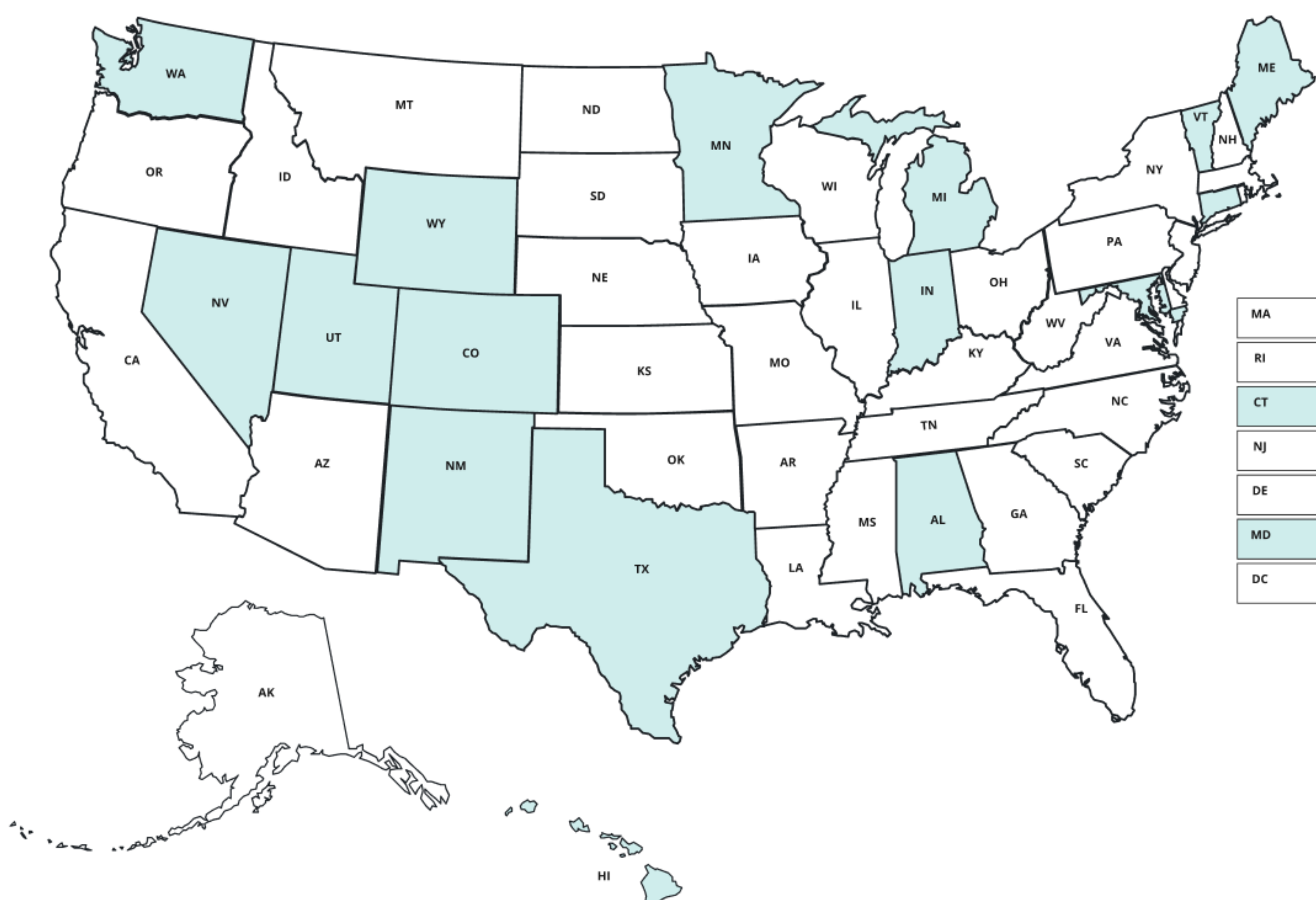
EFFORTS TO LIMIT ACCESS TO FIREARMS

Across 49 states (all but Idaho), D.C., and Congress, 1,162 pieces of legislation proposed limitations on access to firearms. Fifteen states have passed 47 of these measures into law. View the complete data [here](#).

Over 30% of this legislation was introduced in Texas, Illinois and New York. Washington, Colorado, Maryland and Michigan succeeded in passing the most gun control legislation.

Most Active in Introducing or Passing Bills Limiting Gun Access in 2023			
Introduced		Passed	
Texas	141	Washington	8
Illinois	120	Colorado	5
New York	92	Maryland	5
Pennsylvania	58	Michigan	5
Massachusetts	48	Utah	5

STATES THAT PASSED LEGISLATION LIMITING ACCESS TO FIREARMS IN 2023



A few states in this map may appear as a surprise. Legislators in Alabama, Indiana, Texas, Utah and Wyoming often celebrate access to firearms. The initiatives passed in these states are relatively minor in scope, and unlikely to have a significant impact. For instance, [TX SB 1236](#) prohibits the use of firearms in a stream or riverbed, with exceptions.

However, Utah passed several bills championed by gun control advocates. [HB 199](#) requires that law enforcement provide domestic violence victims with information on their right to request the transfer of a firearm to law enforcement. [HB 481](#) requires schools to provide parents with information on how to limit access to firearms when reporting a threat of suicide or a bullying incident.

Democrats in Michigan and Minnesota gained control of their respective legislatures in 2022. They were successful in part by campaigning for stricter gun laws. These new majorities have passed universal background checks and expanded extreme risk protection orders, sometimes called “red flag laws”, into law.

Finally, in April 2023, Washington became the tenth state to ban the sale of assault weapons with [HB 1143](#). Legislators in ten other states have introduced measures banning the sale of these weapons. However, none have passed into law.

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CONCLUSION

Data on gun policy shows us how many of the trends of the past decade continue to play out. It should also remind us that state legislatures are constantly introducing and passing new policies.

States like Florida and Washington continue to trend toward opposite positions. At the same time, states like Utah, Michigan and Minnesota have proven to be factories of significant change. Understanding this continuing, heated debate requires an understanding of both the policy being introduced, which may set the conversation, and the policy being enacted, which will affect conditions in our communities.

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