



Hello Friends:

I am Erin Shank, Candidate for the Texas House of Representatives on your November 8, 2022 ballot. I am writing columns twice a month in your local newspaper in order to introduce myself to you, the voters in McLennan County, so that you are an informed voter during the upcoming election in the Fall.

This weekend, my husband and I were cleaning out an old storage room and stumbled upon a box of my childhood memories. I found a paper that I had written as a college freshman. The assignment was to do something that involved all five of your senses. I took a camping/fishing/hunting trip with my Father, Bill Baker, in order to complete this assignment. My paper, typed in 1980 on an IBM electric typewriter, explained how my Father had taught me how to shoot a gun on that trip. I distinctly remember him carefully teaching me how to load the gun, shoot the gun and safely store the gun. My paper also included pictures of me and Dad during this trip. I have to admit that looking at those old pictures and remembering that precious time with Dad really brought a tear to my eye.

Unfortunately, Dad died before he could meet my husband John. However, they would have really loved each other. Both my Father and my Husband are Veterans, love to build things with their hands, always have something under construction and own guns. Although John is not the avid hunter that my father was, he is a proud gun owner.

The tragedy in Uvalde has made our nation once again turn its eyes towards the issue of gun safety, and to remember the other mass shootings that have recently occurred in Texas. In 2017, a 26 year old gunman with a domestic violence conviction opened fire at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs during Sunday morning services, killing 26 people and wounding 20 others. Universal background checks could have saved those lives and prevented those injuries. In May 2018, a 17-year-old student opened fire at Santa Fe High School near Houston with a shotgun and .38 revolver legally owned by his father killing ten individuals and injuring 13 others. The campus

had an active shooter plan and two armed police officers on duty at the time of the shooting. If Texas had a safe storage law in place, those lives and injuries might have been prevented, because Texas law would have required that father to safely lock and store his weapons. In 2020, a 21-year-old gunman was apprehended by police after opening fire at a Walmart in El Paso killing 23 individuals and injuring 25 others. Days before that shooting, the shooter's mother called local police scared of her son's behavior and was informed that the police could do nothing. Red flag laws, which give a gun owner complete due process of law with a hearing in front of a Judge who ascertains if the individual is a potential threat to himself or others, could have saved those lives. Uvalde's killer, who bought a weapon of war on his 18th birthday along with a massive amount of ammunition, would not have been able to kill those precious children and their teachers if Texas increased the age limit on purchasing weapons of war to 21 years of age and had a red flag law in place that would have enabled someone to report the large ammunition purchase this shooter made.

If I am elected to represent you in the Texas House of Representatives, I will not take anyone's guns away. However, reasonable gun safety requirements, like my father taught me so many years ago, do not violate the Second Amendment. Over 200 mass shootings have occurred in the first six months of 2022. We must enact reasonable safety measures in order to protect our children, our friends, our neighbors and our relatives. We must protect our community so that what happened in Uvalde, Santa Fe, Sutherland Springs and El Paso does not happen in our McLennan County schools, churches and Walmarts.

There is no guarantee that any one safety measure will prevent another unnecessary death, but standing by and doing nothing is no longer acceptable.

If you believe that Texas should enact gun safety laws that do not violate the Second Amendment, vote Erin Shank for Texas House. Let's save lives at the ballot box on November 8, 2022.