

## Jeff Schumann

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**Sent:** Wednesday, March 13, 2019 11:38 AM  
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**From:** "Jeffrey Kaufman, M.D." <[JeffreyKaufmanMD@gmail.com](mailto:JeffreyKaufmanMD@gmail.com)>  
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**Cc:** "Peggy Delaney" <[PDelaney@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:PDelaney@leg.state.vt.us)>  
**Subject:** Suicide Not Prevented By Firearm Purchase Waiting Period

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Members,

Psychologists and psychiatrists assess whether a person is suicidal, a danger to themselves, based on whether the person has a detailed plan to kill themselves and the means with which to accomplish it. Neither, by itself, is sufficient. The person is questioned in depth. Saying they're going to shoot themselves is not an indicator of suicidal risk, unless their plan includes, for example, the particular firearm they're planning to use, where, when and how they're planning to use it, alone or with others, have they discussed their plan with anyone. They must also have means: access to a firearm, a combination to a safe, access to ammunition, money to purchase a firearm and/or ammunition, etc. Secondary gain is also assessed, who else will be affected by the suicide, who will be harmed, what statement is being made, what message is being sent, if any.

It is exceedingly rare for a person to commit suicide without first having made detailed plans. They may put a plan on hold, then pick it back up at a later time, but it does not come to fruition without planning and consideration. Mandating a waiting period by law, before the purchase of a firearm, is placing a requirement the suicide has already met. It's not a deterrent. The suicide accomplishes their goal, if not now, then later. Those not truly suicidal do not die, also deliberately.

The proposed waiting period legislation will impact ONLY law abiding Vermonters and would not be expected to reduce suicides!

In the tragic case of Andrew Black and his family who ask in Andrew's obituary for "cooling off" legislation to prevent suicide, there are many questions and few facts known.

<https://vtdigger.org/2018/12/21/parents-calling-gun-waiting-period-say-efforts-wont-end-obituary/>

it is understandable the family would like some good to come from their loss. The question is whether any good would come from their request. We know imposing a waiting period in firearm purchasing puts some people at risk, those at risk of imminent deadly violence would be prevented from meaningful and effective self defense mechanisms. Further, they'd lose the deterrent effect of firearm possession, often effective without having to fire a shot.

The family refuses to reveal details of Andrew's state of mind or what lead to his suicide. However, without analyzing these and many other currently unexplored factors, one can not understand what might have prompted this young man to take his life nor what measures might have reduced the chance of that happening. The grieving family is in pain, may feel some guilt, and is using the power and broad scope of Statewide legislation and media attention to self soothe.

Included in the analysis would be the question of why Andrew chose to use a firearm? He spent considerable money to purchase the hand gun he used to kill himself, instead of choosing a method which was without additional financial expenditure. His father had firearms in the family home, locked. What is the connection, if any? He brought the weapon into and killed himself in the family home. This makes a very big statement! He left no explanatory note. These are meaningful pieces to the picture. The family understands some of the picture, but will not share with the public. Instead, they wish to impose restrictions on all Vermonters, though Andrew's case may be specific only to himself and his family. There may be no valid generalization that can be drawn from his actions which are applicable to anyone else. Without a forensic psychological examination of Andrew's behavior, statements, social media writings, notes, conversations, etc, we're just guessing. That's not a basis for writing restrictive anti-selfdefense legislation.

Neither the case of Andrew Black, nor suicide data, provide a compelling reason to knowingly endanger those at imminent risk of lethal danger by preventing them from purchasing self defense firearms at the time of need and requiring an intentional delay of several days! I encourage you to reconsider the wisdom of this legislation as it is likely to do harm but very unlikely to do any good.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Kaufman, M.D.  
Burlington, VT

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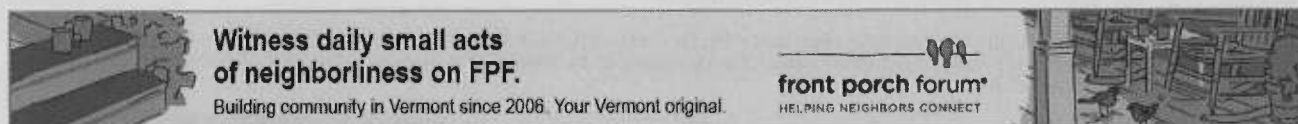


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CRIME AND JUSTICE

## Parents calling for gun waiting period say efforts won't end with obituary

By Alan J. Keays

Dec 21 2018 | no reader footnotes



Rob and Alyssa Black standing in front of a poster commemorating 2004 Red Sox World Series championship team. The team was a favorite of their son Andrew Black. Photo by Bob LoCicero/VT Digger

**E**SSEX JUNCTION — Growing up in Essex, Andrew Black was a second-baseman, pitcher, and for a short time a catcher on the baseball diamond. He skated as a center on hockey teams, and his favorite class in school was chemistry. He rooted for the Boston Red Sox and Montreal Canadiens.

"He was very funny, always smiling," Alyssa Black said this week of her son Andrew. "Once he had an interest in something, he threw himself into it."

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More recently, the 23-year-old man had taken up collecting and listening to music on vinyl, just secured a lease for an apartment, and was putting his love of chemistry to use in pursuit of a career as a craft beer brewer.

That all changed earlier this month.

On Dec. 6, his parents said, he went into a Chittenden County gun store then traveled back to the Essex home where he lived with his parents and fatally shot himself.

Alyssa and Rob Black included in their son's obituary a plea for people to contact their lawmakers to establish a waiting, or "cooling off," period for gun purchases, saying they believe such a requirement would have saved their son's life.

The obituary that featured the parents' plea made state and national headlines.

The Blacks said this week their work in advocating for a new law calling for a waiting period before gun purchases didn't stop when they put that line in their son's obituary. They say they intend to do whatever it takes, from testifying in the Statehouse to speaking out in the media, until a waiting period for gun purchases in Vermont is established.



Andrew Black. Photo supplied

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"We easily could have just kind of faded away after this was in the paper and the initial interviews," said Rob Black, Andrew's father. "But, if we don't continue to do something to make a change in our state, then all of this was for nothing, Andrew's life was for nothing."

"So yes, we will do whatever we need to do to make sure this law is passed," he added.

"We didn't intend to start this," said Alyssa Black, Andrew's mother, "but it's started and we're going to finish it."

Vermont has a higher suicide rate than the national average, and about two-thirds of the suicides in the state are carried out with firearms, according to the [Vermont Gun Shop Project](#).

Both parents said they realize that the talk of gun legislation is a thorny and polarizing subject in Vermont.

The state has had some of the nation's most permissive firearms laws until earlier this year when a [package of gun control measures](#) were approved, in large part as a response to an alleged plot by an 18-year-old man to shoot up his former high school in Fair Haven.

One lawmaker, Sen. Phil Baruth, D-Chittenden, has already said he will be [proposing new gun safety measures](#), including a 48-hour waiting period for purchases, this legislative session, which is set to start next month.

Also, he has said, the bill will include a tighter gun storage requirements, and banning 3D printed firearms.

If a mandatory waiting period were approved, Vermont would join five other states and District of Columbia with such provisions, ranging from 24 to 48 hours, according to the Giffords Law Center.

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Gun rights advocates have voiced opposition to establishing a waiting period in Vermont, questioning how effective it would be and saying it could prevent people in immediate need of a firearm for self-defense the ability to obtain one.



Sen. Phil Baruth listens to debate on S.55. Photo by Mike Dougherty/VTDigger

News said this week they have no interest in pursuing any piece of legislation other than establishing a 24- to 48-hour waiting period for gun purchases.

"If this is part of a standalone bill, we will be there and talk to anybody," Rob Black said. "If they are going to tack this onto a larger gun bill, then they don't even need to call us."

Alyssa Black said she didn't want to "muddy the waters" by including a waiting period proposal with any other gun control measures that lawmakers may be pushing.

"I just want to reach that mother who is sitting there and just looks at it and says, 'OK, what's the problem with waiting 24 hours, that seems like a simple thing,'" Alyssa Black said.

"We're just trying to reach the reasonable gun owners and non-gun owners and say a little inconvenience would be worth this," she added, "and I think there are so many people out there who feel that way."

Both parents say they support the Second Amendment. Rob Black, a military veteran of Desert Storm, said he keeps the guns he owns secured inside his home.

"That is the reason he had to go to get one, he couldn't get to mine," the father said of son.

It was on the late morning of Dec. 6 that Andrew Black went into a gun store, the parents said, declining to name the store.

"We don't fault the gun shop at all," Rob Black said. "They did nothing wrong."

At 11:02 a.m. the background check process started, the parents said, and before 11:30 a.m. Andrew Black was out of the store after making the purchase of a 9mm handgun, his parents said.

By 4 p.m., they said, their son had killed himself at home.

The parents said their son left no note, adding they believe they know what prompted his action but did not want to talk about it.

"I will say it was spontaneous," Alyssa Black said.

The father added, "This was a situation that happened that day, and his mind went somewhere where he thought his only out was to buy a gun and kill himself."

The parents said their son had worked at Essex Discount Beverage, starting at the age of 15. In September, fueled by his desire to become a craft brewer, Andrew Black took a job at Lawson's Finest Liquids, a brewery in Waitsfield.

"When he was 16 the only class was really interested in was chemistry," Alyssa Black recalled.

The parents said they bought their son a home brew kit for beer soon after. They said their son wasn't into the drinking as much as the mixing and concocting that went into making a good brew.

"He had notebooks and notebooks full of recipes that he tried that worked and didn't work," Rob Black said. "It was about the craft of making it."

Their son had only recently been hired at Lawson's, working in the taproom, and had hopes of learning more about brewing beer and making it his life's work, they said.

It was earlier on the morning of Dec. 6, the day he took his life, that Andrew Black received word that an apartment he had been saving up for in Waterbury, closer to his job, would be his, and he could move in at the beginning of the year, the parents said.

They said he also talked of other plans. He had talked of next summer hiking the entire length of 273 mile-long Long Trail, Alyssa Black said of her son.

Both parents said they agreed about the need to advocate for a waiting period before writing their son's obituary.

"We wanted to be honest about how our son died," Alyssa Black said.

"What we didn't want to do was to just write, 'he died unexpectedly at home,' because that leaves so much room for interpretation on how he died," Rob Black added. "We didn't want any question on how he actually killed himself."

And they said they wanted to involve others in helping create change, and contact their lawmakers.

"Andrew had a lot of friends, young people," Alyssa Black said. "We just thought, if you felt as though you wanted to do something to honor Andrew and you agreed with this then this would be a simple thing for people to do."

That line in the obituary read, "In honor of Andrew R. Black, we ask that you work for legislation that imposes a reasonable waiting period between firearm purchase and possession to provide a cooling off period to guard against impulsive acts of violence."



Andrew Black at a bar with a friend. Supplied photo



The parents say they are hopeful an Andrew Black Law establishing a waiting period can pass next year, and if not, they will keep pushing. Andrew Black with his family's dog. Photo supplied by the family.

"I would never have thought about a waiting period," Rob Black said this week. "But, when you lose a child that a waiting period could have saved, that's when it's time for us to do something in Andrew's honor."

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## About Alan

Alan J. Keays is the former longtime news editor of the Rutland Herald. He reports on criminal justice issues for VTDigger.

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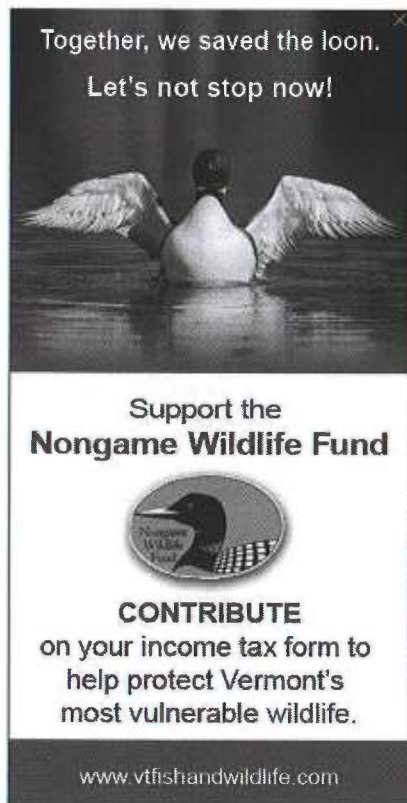
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