

**PINELLAS HAS TWO U.S. REPRESENTATIVES UP FOR
RE-ELECTION IN 2020.
HOW DO THEY VOTE ON GUN SAFETY?**

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE GUS BILIRAKIS - REPUBLICAN - District 12
Elected in 2006 (His father, Michael Bilirakis, held the seat for 24 years
before him.)

1. In 2019, Rep. Bilirakis voted AGAINST the following common sense gun
legislation:

HR 8 - Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 - Provides for
universal background checks.

HR 1112 - Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2019 - Lengthens
the time the FBI has to conduct background checks from three to ten
days.

HR 1585 - Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019
Funds programs to prevent violence against women. (The NRA
pushed House members to vote against the bill because of a new
provision in the bill which closes the “boyfriend loophole” by
preventing dating partners convicted of abuse and stalking from
owning firearms.¹)

These bills passed in the Democratically controlled House, but the Senate
Majority Leader, Republican Mitch McConnell, has refused to bring them up
for a vote in the Senate.

2. In 2017, Rep. Bilirakis co-sponsored the Concealed Carry Reciprocity
Act of 2017. This legislation would weaken gun control that is already in
place.² It passed the House and was referred to committee in the Senate.

¹ <https://www.vox.com/2019/4/4/18294057/violence-against-women-act-house-democrats-national-rifle-association>

² “[T]he bill would allow residents from the 12 states where there are no requirements whatsoever for legal gun owners to carry concealed firearms to carry concealed guns in the other 38 states that normally require permits.” <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/365543-gun-owners-and-republicans-dont-really-want-concealed-carry>

3. Rep. Bilirakis does not support banning assault weapons or restricting the capacity of magazines.
4. In 2018, Rep. Bilirakis received a 93% rating from the NRA.
5. When asked by Vote Smart as part of their 2018 Political Courage Test, “Do you generally support gun-control legislation?” Bilirakis’ official answer was “No.”
6. Rep. Bilirakis voted against the Bipartisan Background Check Act, (referenced above), despite the fact that approximately 90% of Americans want universal background checks and after he stated in a 2018 election survey from the League of Women Voters that he supported background checks.
7. After deadly mass shootings in El Paso, TX and Dayton, OH, Rep. Bilirakis wrote in his August 11, 2019 E-newsletter that,

“Most importantly, I believe we have to tackle the root causes of violence, which means fixing our broken mental health system so people who demonstrate problematic behavior can be proactively identified and receive access to treatment.”

Sadly, like many Republicans, he is willing to scapegoat people with mental illness in an attempt to distract from the need for gun control. According to the President of the American Psychological Association, however, “[t]he rates of mental illness are roughly the same around the world, yet other countries are not experiencing these traumatic events as often as we face them. One critical factor is access to, and the lethality of, the weapons that are being used in these crimes. Adding racism, intolerance and bigotry to the mix is a recipe for disaster.”³

We must also remember that, in 2017, Bilirakis voted for a Republican health care bill, the AHCA, which, if it had become law, would have repealed the Affordable Care Act and let insurance companies charge more to people with pre-existing conditions. Mental health disorders have been considered preexisting conditions.

³ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2019/08/statement-shootings>

In addition, the Republican AHCA would have “strip[ped] over \$800 billion from Medicaid in the next 10 years, which [would have caused] vital mental health services to be slashed.”⁴

The American Psychological Association specifically, “call[ed] on the Senate to reject the [AHCA] due to its projected adverse impact on the well-being of our nation, particularly on individuals with mental health, behavioral and substance use disorders.”⁵

This year, Rep. Bilirakis voted against HR 986, the Protecting Americans with Preexisting Conditions Act of 2019, while continuing to support a repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

8. Rep. Bilirakis has also voted for bills to make it easier for some individuals with a mental health condition to obtain a gun.⁶

9. In his August 11, 2019 E-newsletter, Rep. Bilirakis included Republican “talking points on gun violence that falsely described the El Paso massacre and other mass shootings as ‘violence from the left.’”⁷

For additional information regarding Rep. Bilirakis’ voting record, go to <https://bilirakis.house.gov/about/votes-and-legislation>

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE CRIST - DEMOCRAT

District 13 - Rep. Crist has been a State Senator, Commissioner of Education, Attorney General, Florida’s 44th Governor, and was elected to the House of Representatives in 2016.

1. Rep. Crist voted for common sense gun reform by voting the opposite of Rep. Bilirakis on the bills referenced above, HR 8 - Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, HR 1112 - Enhanced Background

⁴ <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2017/What-Does-The-American-Health-Care-Act-Do-To-Menta>; For a list of “50 Health Issues That Count as a Pre-existing Condition,” go to <http://money.com/money/4763609/pre-existing-conditions-ahca/>

⁵ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/05/ahca-disappointment>

⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1181/all-info> and H.J.Res. 40, See <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/10/trump-nixed-gun-control-rule/>

⁷ <https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2019/08/16/memo-reveals-a-house-republican-strategy-on-shootings-downplay-white-nationalism-blame-left/>

Checks Act of 2019, and HR-1585 - Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019.

2. Rep. Crist co-sponsored the Assault Weapons Ban of 2019 - HR 1296 which also bans large capacity ammunition feeding devices. (Referred to committee in the House.)
3. In 2018, he received a 7% rating from the NRA.
4. He voted against the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017.
5. In 2017, he also voted against the AHCA, the Republican health care bill, thereby preventing insurance companies from charging more to people with preexisting conditions, including those with mental health conditions. Then in 2019, he voted for HR 986, the Protecting Americans with Preexisting Conditions Act of 2019.
6. In the past, Rep. Crist was a strong supporter of pro-gun policies, but over the years he has become an advocate for sensible gun restrictions as evidenced by his voting record and the ire he has drawn from the NRA.

For additional information regarding Rep. Crist's voting record, go to <https://crist.house.gov/voterecord/>

***NOTE - NEITHER OF FLORIDA'S U.S. SENATORS ARE UP FOR REELECTION IN 2020**

DID YOU KNOW?

Right to Carry Laws: "A study published earlier this year from Stanford economist John Donohue and colleagues found that violent crime rates increased with each additional year a right-to-carry law was in place, presumably as more people were carrying guns on their person and in their vehicles. By years seven through 10 following the adoption of a RTC law, violent crime rates were 11 percent to 14 percent higher than predicted had such laws not been in place. Weaker concealed carry laws were associated with a 10 percent higher murder rate 10 years following the adoption of RTC laws. A separate study by Boston University researchers also found that state laws greatly expanding legal gun carrying were linked to increased homicides with handguns." <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/365543-gun-owners-and-republicans-dont-really-want-concealed-carry>

"Half as Many U.S. Children Die from Firearm Injuries Where Gun Laws are Strictest" https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Half-as-many-U-S-Children-Die-from-Firearm-Injuries-Where-Gun-Laws-are-Strictest.aspx?fbclid=IwAR2FFj3mroprK3n8Eg67R_piuBdqrYrUankxBnr0RMndfDEwdfKhnrV6fA

“When compared with other high-income countries, the United States has the highest rate of gun ownership, the weakest gun laws, and the highest rate of firearm-related deaths in children.”
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20183283#xref-ref-9-1>

“Americans of high-school age are 82 times more likely to die from a gun homicide than 15- to 19-year-olds in the rest of the developed world.”
<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/05/its-the-guns/560771/?fbclid=IwAR1cxX1y1gw5edhc8YVblyICG4ocAW1LvKVQygRyBaxL48uqypLUujCMlw8>

“US firearm homicide rates were 25 times higher and overall homicide rates were 7.5 times higher than rates in the other high-income countries (2015).”
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/>

“The US has had 57 times as many school shootings as the other major industrialized nations combined.” <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/us/school-shooting-us-versus-world-trnd/index.html>

“For skeptics who think that gun laws don’t make a difference, consider what happened in two states, Missouri and Connecticut. In 1995, Connecticut tightened licensing laws, while in 2007 Missouri eased gun laws. The upshot? After tightening gun laws, firearm homicide rates dropped 40 percent in Connecticut. And after Missouri eased gun laws, gun homicide rates rose 25 percent.” <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html>

In 2017, in the U.S., “2,462 school-age children were killed by firearms[.]”
<https://www.newsweek.com/kids-and-guns-alarming-rise-firearm-deaths-among-american-children-1370866>

“5 countries that have taken radical steps to eliminate firearm deaths — and what the US can learn from them” <https://www.businessinsider.com/gun-deaths-nearly-eliminated-in-countries-what-us-can-learn-2017-11?fbclid=IwAR1I7QHAYFOX349U5pINa1DJgQ2DROMz9aqDwZLiqdsdGkKq6C9TdyUoNNQ>

“In an average month, 52 American women are shot to death by an intimate partner.”
<https://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandAction/photos/a.300767940041133/2144683868982855/?type=3&theater>

In a typical year, 75 preschoolers are shot dead in America.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html>

Over 2000 mass shootings have occurred since Sandy Hook. <https://www.vox.com/a/mass-shootings-america-sandy-hook-gun-violence>

Videos

Devastating statistics about gun deaths in the US, including the fact that US gun deaths are 25 times the average of other developed countries. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izhncGacDIg>

Video of an active shooter drill in a school. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ska0nG8U_Jc