

Maine Legislature
House Democratic Office
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Democratic radio address text
March 1, 2018

**Gideon Remarks at Maine Gun Safety
Coalition Event**

Good morning. Thank you for being here. And thank you for allowing me to be here with you. I am Sara Gideon and it is my honor and privilege to serve as the Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives. I live in Freeport with my husband, Ben, and our three amazing children – Julian, Alek and Josie.

On Wednesday, February 14, an alarm was pulled. And the lives of the students and teachers and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland were changed forever. As we gather here today, I want to take a moment to reflect on the 17 people who lost their lives.

I, as I think many of us have in the past two weeks, can't stop thinking about them. I am haunted by their faces, their names, their parents stories of who they were, what they dreamed of, and how they died. And as a mother, I don't just imagine "if they were my kids". Instead, I feel – they are my kids. They are all our kids.

At the same time that I think this senseless tragedy has awoken a nation, I want every one of us to remember all of the thousands of people in Maine and across the country that have lost their lives to gun violence.

And I want to recognize that so many of you have been educating and advocating and fighting this fight for gun safety for years – and I am so deeply grateful. And I am here to stand with you and carry this banner with you.

For me, something deep and unalterable shifted two weeks ago after those 17 people were murdered. And it was the moment when my son Julian said to me, "Come on mom, you know it will just keep happening. What is there to stop it?"

My son. My high schooler. Simply accepting that there was nothing that could be done to put an end to dangerous weapons of war entering our schools.

And putting the responsibility squarely and unquestionably in my hands and in the hands of every adult who has the power to change that. I will tell you, those words broke my heart.

Because I might not be President or a Member of Congress, but I am the Speaker of the Maine House. I am an elected official. I am a parent. And I go to Augusta every day and if I wasn't doing more to stop it, I'm just as guilty as everyone else who says "It's too hard. It's not worth it."

For me, that work has started. I am determined to do everything possible to bring Democrats and Republicans and Independents together to work on gun safety and gun violence prevention. We have no chance of preventing such death and devastation unless we can agree on policies that will matter.

Our inaction to date has led to our kids having lockdown drills in their school. Instead of closing loopholes, we force teachers to make 6 year olds practice being quiet and tell them to hide under their desks.

Instead of restricting high capacity magazines, we install cameras and self-locking doors.

Instead of keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of those that shouldn't have them, this country is actually having a serious conversation about arming our teachers. It is infuriating.

Whether we realize it or not, this is affecting our children for the rest of their lives. Instead of being the safe and welcoming environment that our schools should be, we are slowly turning them into something that more resembles a prison.

We have to ask ourselves why we are making our kids suffer for the lack of responsibility of our government.

We have to ask ourselves why our kids are braver when they go into school than we are when we cast our votes.

But, make no mistake, the alarm is going off in their head, too. They know what's going on and they are going to be the ones to force us to do something.

I am so inspired by their resiliency and their energy and their activism. Their voices matter and it is time that we all listen.

I'm inspired by 17 year old Lucy Wing, from Freeport, who I have known since she was newborn Lucy Wing. She is strong and smart and fearless. She's a junior and while she should be concerned with college visits and SAT prep, she's worried about the glass walls at our High School and what that means for her safety.

Lucy believes that we need a better combination of gun control, mental health services and school security measures. And you know what, she's absolutely right. That's absolutely what I'm going to fight for every day I come to work in Augusta and in every corner of this state.

For those of you have been sounding the alarm since Sandy Hook or Columbine or Aurora or Arizona or Las Vegas, thank you.

For those of you who worked on the referendum for responsible background checks, thank you.

For those of you who are planning walkouts from your schools, thank you.

For those of you testifying, thank you.

Whether this is your 100th visit to the State House or your first – thank you.

Because it is going to take all of us working together, side by side, day by day, to keep our children safe.

Thank you for being here. Today we'll be hearing from the people who live every day for the safety of our children.

Our teachers, our principals, our parents and, most importantly – our