Rhode Island has weak laws to restrict access to firearms by domestic abusers. Few abusers are barred from possessing firearms under state law; more can be done to prevent access to guns by convicted stalkers and domestic violence misdemeanants.

State gun and domestic violence overview

**Rhode Island is home to a significant amount of gun violence.**
- From 2002 to 2011, 436 people were killed with guns in Rhode Island.¹
- Somebody is killed with a gun in Rhode Island every 11 days: In 2011 alone, there were 33 gun deaths in the state.²

**Domestic violence fatalities are prevalent in Rhode Island, and they are frequently a result of gun crime.**
- According to the FBI, there were 30 domestic violence homicides in Rhode Island from 2003 to 2012, which includes both male and female victims.
- Of those homicides, almost one-quarter of the victims—23.3 percent—were killed with guns.³

**Women are far more at risk to be victims of fatal domestic violence, and guns play a significant role in that violence.**
- Of the 67 female homicide victims in Rhode Island from 2003 to 2012, 27 were the result of a domestic violence incident.⁴

Overview of Rhode Island laws to protect women from abusers and stalkers

**Rhode Island law currently prevents some domestic abusers from possessing guns.**
- Rhode Island law authorizes courts to prohibit subjects of a protective order from possessing firearms.⁵ This differs from federal law, which automatically prohibits firearm possession by certain protective order respondents, even if the order does not specifically contain such a prohibition.
- Rhode Island courts that issue protective orders are authorized, but not required, to direct the subjects of the orders to surrender any firearms they owns or possesses.⁶
- Rhode Island also requires universal background checks for all firearm purchases, including sales from unlicensed sellers.⁷
However, the state still has many loopholes that can let some abusers have easy access to guns.

- Rhode Island does not prohibit domestic violence misdemeanants from purchasing or possessing firearms.
- Rhode Island law does not prohibit misdemeanor stalkers from possessing firearms.

**Case study**

We need universal background checks and other important measures to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous abusers.

- In July 2013, Evelyn Burgos applied for a temporary restraining order against her ex-boyfriend, Daniel Rodriguez, a previously-convicted felon who was charged with first-degree murder in 2004 and with kidnapping an ex-girlfriend in 2007. Evelyn was afraid that he was going to murder her; two weeks after she submitted her application for a restraining order she was found dead, shot by Rodriguez in her apartment in Rhode Island. Rodriguez also shot and killed her 25-year-old daughter, all in the presence of Burgos’ small sons, ages 2 and 8, and 3-year-old granddaughter. Rodriguez is now serving two consecutive life terms, plus 50 years, in prison.8
Endnotes

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.