

WEST METRO

# At Excelsior rally, a plea for more gun restrictions

Students say legislation is key to fighting violence committed with guns.

By Randy Furst (<http://www.startribune.com/andy-furst/10644886/>) Star Tribune |

OCTOBER 6, 2018 — 5:42PM

Upset that Minnesota legislators did not pass any new gun control legislation this year, about 125 people rallied in an Excelsior park on a chilly Saturday afternoon, vowing to support only candidates who will vote for more restrictions on gun ownership and urging others to do the same.

Many who attended the rally, sponsored by [Protect Minnesota \(https://protectmn.org/\)](https://protectmn.org/), were high school students who talked about being shaken by recent shootings and energized by the nationwide youth push for more gun restrictions. Their gathering was the latest of many held in Minnesota this year, both by advocates for more gun control and those who say that restricting gun ownership is a violation of personal freedoms and would do nothing to curtail gun violence.

Protect Minnesota stresses in its literature: "We are not anti-gun; we are anti-gun violence."

"There needs to be legislation to keep guns like the AR-15 out of the civilian market," said Daisy Forester, 15, a student at Southwest High School in Minneapolis.

Playing the guitar, she sang a song that included the refrain, "We're sick and tired of your B.S., we're sick of you playing the games, we're sick of you firing the bullets, us kids are going to make a change."

"People need to speak up," said Braden Johnson, 17, a student at Chanhassen High School and co-chair of Students Protect Minnesota, an offshoot of Protect Minnesota. "I'd like to see universal background checks."

Sydney Lewis, 16, of Eden Prairie High School, another co-chair of Students Protect Minnesota, drew cheers when she said, "I shouldn't be afraid to go to school." She urged people to vote for politicians who will "keep us safe."

Also speaking was state Sen. Steve Cwudzinski, DFL-Eden Prairie, a retired high school teacher. "I continue to be sick and tired of our young dying in the prime of our lives," he said. "The youth are again waking us adults out of our slumber."

The crowd also heard from Aalayah Eastmond, a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., who recounted how she huddled behind the body of a classmate who had been shot and killed when a gunman opened fire in her classroom in February. Later, she picked body parts out of her hair, she said.

"We lost 17 beautiful lives that day," she said, urging Minnesotans to continue to work against gun violence.

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GALLERY

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Attendees danced to the song "Stand by Me" during the event. Indi Mohamed, left, and Allison Rubin danced during the Westside Rally Against Gun Violence on Saturday afternoon.