

Episcopal Church presses gun manufacturer to study lethality

by [David Paulsen](#) in the [June 29, 2022](#) issue

The Episcopal Church on June 1 was part of a successful push by shareholders of gun manufacturer Sturm, Ruger & Co. to pressure the company to study the lethality of its products and include the findings in a human rights impact report.

The Episcopal Church has invested in Ruger since late 2018 as part of its broader participation in shareholder advocacy campaigns on issues ranging from human trafficking to climate change.

After the shareholder vote, Western Massachusetts bishop Douglas Fisher, who chairs the denomination's Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, said in an interview that the resolution was important because gun violence is a "public health crisis in our country."

"We need to approach this crisis from many angles, and one of them is inviting manufacturers to be part of the solution."

The denomination's investment in gun manufacturers has not been without controversy. While some critics of the plan questioned whether the church should put its money behind companies whose products can be used to kill, proponents said it would give the church a seat at the table in gun safety discussions with the companies.

Starting in November 2018, the Episcopal Church's finance office began purchasing shares in three publicly

traded companies: Ruger; American Outdoor Brands, which owns Smith & Wesson; and Olin Corporation, owner of Winchester Ammunition. Just \$2,000 of stock is required to be eligible to submit shareholder resolutions.

The denomination's Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility has relied on a document known as the Mosbacher-Bennett Principles for Investors in the Gun Industry, which was developed by the anti-gun violence group Do Not Stand Idly By. It recommends pressuring gun manufacturers to ensure responsible gun sales,

improve gun safety, support crime-reduction activities, and minimize the secondary gun market.

Three years ago, Ruger opposed a shareholder resolution calling for a human rights impact report, a measure initially proposed by a Chicago-based nonprofit health system. The resolution accused Ruger of failing to implement “meaningful solutions to address gun violence,” including the misuse of its products.

This second, successful resolution came a little more than a week after 19 students and two teachers were killed by a gunman at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. The rifle reportedly used by the 18-year-old shooter was made by a company called Daniel Defense.

The Episcopal Church is backing a similar shareholder resolution that likely will be up for a vote by Smith & Wesson investors at the company’s annual meeting in September. —Episcopal News Service