

Brady Music: [00:09](#) \*\*\*music plays\*\*\*

JJ: [00:09](#) This is the legal disclaimer, where we tell you that the views, thoughts, and opinion shared on this podcast belongs solely to us, the people who are talking to you right now and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note that this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay cause we find it disturbing too.

Brady Music: [00:44](#) \*\*\*music plays\*\*\*

JJ: [00:45](#) All right, welcome back everybody to red to blue and Brady, the podcast, all about gun violence but more importantly gun violence prevention. And today I am really excited. It is a really good day because, one, I have JP back in studio.

JP: [01:00](#) Thank you. I'm excited to be here.

JJ: [01:02](#) My cohost is back! And I have Christian, the man who at one point was gonna steal JP's spot with me too.

Christian: [01:10](#) I still am!

JP: [01:10](#) I'm still trying to find a way to escape Christian.

JJ: [01:13](#) Oh, things got dark.

Christian: [01:15](#) He can't even make eye contact.

JP: [01:17](#) I know this is, this is going to be a rough, like why I'm so happy in addition to having these two fine gentlemen with me today is that we are talking about a happy thing and this minisode. TADA! As of midnight last night but the first time in really decades. So we're like the first time in a generation we have a gun violence prevention majority in Virginia.

JP: [01:40](#) So exciting.

Christian: [01:41](#) the Commonwealth did it,!

JP: [01:42](#) Which is, I mean, if you listen to our Chris Hurst episode, if you listened to our Andy Parker episode, you hear about why that's so important. But we're going to go right into it. I am still a newbie to Virginia whereas JP and Christian are both in it to win it for the state. So I'm going to turn it over to you and you can tell all of our listeners about how now Virginia is for gun violence prevention lovers.

Christian: [02:03](#) Yeah, I gotta say, I mean, you know, obviously we've gone over it in the previous podcast and was really excited to be able to sit down with you and Chris Hurst and really dive in on just the importance of this. But you know, it didn't happen overnight. Right. And I think Virginia is just such a remarkable story for the country to pay attention to because if we can do it here, we can do it anywhere. And I really believe that, you know, when I first got in this movement, especially when I moved to DC in 2010 Virginia was just a different place. You hear these stories of legislators on both sides of the party, literally running away from survivors, literally running away from the issue. And now to see the entire politics in Virginia change, I'm in no small part to the way that gun violence prevention has, has shaped politics in Virginia.

Christian: [02:48](#) It's, it's a remarkable thing. And you know, we'd be remiss to say, you know, obviously I've, I've been working in this field for a little while. I've really just been able to ride the coattails of some pretty amazing, powerful people. People like Josh Horwitz and Lori Hs over at the coalition to stop gun violence. Andy Goddard, you know whose son Collin was, was shot at Virginia Tech is a guy that has just been pounding the pavement for years, having the terrible job of having to scour through hundreds of gun bills every cycle just to see them either pass really bad stuff or, or see a lot of good bills perish really quickly. Jim Saulo, who's been doing this work for for decades and Martina Lines, so many people that I'm leaving off on that list. This is a huge day for all of them, and they've been at this for a really long time, so I just want to make it very clear. This didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of really concerted efforts, but gosh, we're just so excited to get to work and to save some lives.

JP: [03:40](#) Yeah, and for me, Virginia politics was what actually got me into the gun violence prevention movement in the first place because I was a field organizer in Virginia's 10th congressional district for Dan Helmer back in 2018 and when I was there w it what I started with the campaign, it was just when the Parkland shooting had happened and we had seen all this energy from young people all over the district and it was, it's really what inspired me to want to get out there and work on this issue and to now see my former boss and so many good candidates who cared about the issue of gun violence prevention, win and flip both the state Senate and the house of delegates. It's incredible to see how much growth has been happening, but I can't say enough how much I admire respect the Brady, Virginia grassroots folks that I've been working with over the last 12 months because they've been doing it so much longer than

many of us here and they've had to play defense for so long that it's great to see the faces. Last night I was in Richmond with some of our team and actually some of my fellow campaign friends who I'd worked with in the past and to see everybody's face and how happy they were because now they have a chance to pass this legislation that they've so long been dying for. And we were down there with with Lori Haas and she was in Richmond last night and she was to see the look on her face and now she was able to go out there and pass some of the legislation she's been working for on for since 2007 is incredible to see and it's makes all of our hearts grow a couple sizes.

JP: [05:18](#) Along those lines, now that there is this gun violence prevention majority in the house, what does this mean for the future of not only Virginia, but about the direction our country is going in?

Christian: [05:30](#) Well, and just to take one step back, I think like the focus on Virginia to why it's so important is like, let's be really clear. This was an election about guns and gun violence. You know that the, the Washington post had published a, just how, you know, an overview of, of what voters were were gearing up for as they were going out to vote and guns and gun violence where the top issue, the Republican leadership last cycle, you know, during Ralph Northam is attempt to call a special session. The wake of those Virginia Beach shootings, them stymieing that only meeting for 90 minutes. Gaveling in gaveling out doing nothing meaningful, not even having a conversation, which is wild. Smeets and I even pay lip service, not even to fake it. They didn't even, they didn't even do us the courtesy of putting window dressing up. Right. I think it really, it pissed people off and rightfully so.

Christian: [06:18](#) It pissed us off and, and I think, you know, we say it a lot and this is a pure example of, you know, if, if we can't count on our legislators to change our laws, then we need to change our legislators. And, and that's what the Commonwealth did here. And it's been, it's been well written about. The NRA was very much outspent in this election. Um, they were out organized, they were outmatched and, and it's, it's the backyard of the NRA, right? They are housed in Fairfax, which now you know, is represented by JPS boy. Right. And Dan Helmer, uh, who, where he got his start a, you know, a combat vet who ran now twice on gun violence prevention. So, you know, taking out delegate Hugo who has been a staunch opposition to the progress that we need to see. So I just think that there's a lot of great storylines and not to get too bogged down, but even if you just look at the people who are there, you know, Kathleen Murphy, who was, was reelected, you know, she's a survivor.

Christian:

[07:13](#)

Her brother was killed in a really terrible act of gun violence. Chris Hurst, who's story we're very familiar with, you know, a survivor of gun violence, elected to public office. Again, in a tough district, you look at prey deeds, who's somebody that we endorsed and supported to, who very recently had an, had an awful story with his own son. You know, there's a lot of people in the state legislature that have been directly impacted by gun violence. So, you know, I just wanna I just want to go back and, and give it its right full sort of place. And the reason why this election is so important is because this was an election about guns and it, it speaks to the way that American politics is moving not only in Virginia but across the country. And there's a reason why so many of these candidates are caring about prioritizing this issue in their top three issues. Part of us, because almost everyone has been affected by it as, as you mentioned Christian, we were knocking on doors in Richmond for Ghazala Hashmi who just flipped one of the state Senate seats there and super exciting, the first Muslim woman to be in the Virginia state Senate, which is so exciting. And, and she and candidates like Holly Jala in Prince William County have been directly impacted by gun violence, whether it's Halas father was shot because all the Hashmi had a childhood friend who was killed by an unintentional shooting. So because the issue is impacting so many different people at every level of society all over the country, I think we can see it really picking up steam. And one of the things that we were so excited to see was having so many of those presidential candidates, whether they be Cory Booker, vice president, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, all of them came to Virginia. And the biggest issue that they were talking about on the campaign trail with these local candidates was gun violence. And that says something a lot about how the issue is changing in Virginia, but also the, the narratives changing across the country.

Christian:

[09:13](#)

Right. And, and even in the legislators themselves, right? Cause if it's not that they've been directly impacted by gun violence themselves, they've seen enough. Right. Guys like John Edwards who, um, you know, represents Roanoke has been along, even though he's a Democrat, has been a long time entrenched opposition against our issue. He's been a solid vote for the NRA, even as a Democrat. And, and this year after the Virginia Beach shooting, he said he can't do it anymore. And that it's time for him to, to do what's right on guns. You look at the leadership of somebody like Dick Saslaw who you know, long ago was not necessarily somebody who would be our go to guy on this issue. And now he's one of our staunchest leaders, right? And he's the one who's paving the way for us and leadership. So you know, Virginia does create this, this roadmap by thinking in a story

that is an important one that you know, with time, energy and with, you know, the ability to consistently show up and, and to maintain this conversation. You can win on guns.

- JJ: [10:07](#) What a change too from what Greg Jackson talked about when when you and I got to talk to him Christian, cause again, JP was off, you know, just trying to win elections and things. So when he was off doing grassroots organizing, Christian, I got to talk to Greg and Greg talked about, you know, the fight to even get a question asked at a forum for a presidential candidate that dealt with gun violence. You know, I want to be really clear what we're talking a lot about. Virginia is sort of flipping to like a democratic majority that also happens to be a gun violence prevention majority. We did see Democrats and Republicans running on a platform of, of preventing gun violence. We did see a lot of bipartisan sort of work for this. And so where, why do you think that that came up? Just because that's something that the voters demand?
- Christian: [10:50](#) Well, look, I mean, people have been talking about it for a long time. I think that there's been a wild amount of education that's happened. Virginia tech was a real turning point for the Commonwealth of Virginia and, and I think slowly but surely, I, we have to recognize that those families have had a, a dramatic influence on the state. We've talked about Lori a couple of times whose daughter was shot and survived the Virginia tech shooting. Andy Goddard, who is a, a chapter president of ours, who's, who's been relentless in his work in the legislature. Joe som aha, who does incredible work in his own right. Peter Reed, uh, Houma along Nathan. Uh, the list goes on on a, of a lot of people who had just one of the most horrific things that you can imagine happen and happen all the world to see. And um, many of them reacted by, um, turning, turning that pain to action and over time, uh, not letting people forget about it.
- Christian: [11:46](#) And it inspired an entire generation of people. Even like, like Catherine Strong out in, in, in the Roanoke area, I would, is largely responsible for John Edwards headaches that led him to changing his, his opinion. And we, and we have to recognize that or, or even, um, to give the ability for somebody like Chris Harris to win that in Blacksburg. So I just think that it's not by luck. JJ, I guess is the law is the long, the long answer to your question, and I'm actually interested in JP and what it was like canvassing for leaving after this, right? Like how are people reacting? Yeah.
- JP: [12:20](#) Well, it was almost everybody that I spoke to knew about the election because there was so, there are so many ads across the

state of Virginia. I think it was the most expensive non governor year election in the history of Virginia and almost everybody knew that there was an election happening. And what was incredible to see is that on the doors when I talked about why I was knocking on the door on their door, they'd say, what are you doing here? I'm tired of hearing from all of you. I said, I'm here because I care about the issue of gun violence prevention. And then they would almost an automatically say, Oh, is that what happened with the special session earlier this summer? And almost everyone knew that former speaker, and it's good to say, it's nice to say former speaker, Curt Cox and Senate leader, Tommy Norman, shutdown that special session in 90 minutes. And because of the grassroots force that the gun violence prevention movement was able to put out there because of the resources that the gun violence prevention movement put into Virginia, almost every voter that I spoke to knew about what had happened on July 9th and that speaks to the growing power of this movement and the diminishing power of the gun lobby.

Christian:

[13:37](#)

If we can't win you over because it's morally the right thing to do. Right. And we've talked about how many people have just been elected because of their personal connection to gun violence. We're going to also change the politics and the narrative to make it make the political high ground our issue, you know, that we had, we had Republican leaders who had spent years preventing these bills from hitting the floor who then, you know, we're running campaign ads saying that they were champions of gun violence prevention. Right? Like we have, we have, if we're not going to win you over in your heart, we're going to win you over in your mind or in your, in your head. Right. And I think that's, that's the new calculus and, and the direction that we're going in. And it's a, it's a really exciting time to be doing what we're doing.

Christian:

[14:20](#)

Yeah, I do still love that Sarah Brady. Yeah. Right. Their mind change their seats. Well as Sarah Brady, one of the best things I ever heard her say, and she, she would say this in front of a lot of events, is that when they were trying to get people onto the Brady bill in the 90s, they had a wall of people who were not cosponsored on their bill. And they broke people down in, in three categories. They either had no heart, no brain or no courage. And so I think that what we have done is, is figured out a way to make an appeal to each one of people. Um, if, if we can't win you with statistics and you're in your mind, then we're going to win you over on the moral, uh, you know, responsibility that you have as legislator. And if we can't do that, we're gonna make it so that politically it's untenable for you to be on the

wrong side of this. And, and that's the direction this movement's gone in and why we're seeing the success we are.

JP: [15:09](#) So I wanted to hear a little bit about what you think is possible legislative wise in Virginia, but also how this leadership change will impact the different, um, the, the way that the legislative process works in Virginia so that some of these bills can be passed.

Christian: [15:28](#) Right. Well let's just talk about how, you know, elections have consequences, right? And, and, and how monumental this one is. What are we going to do? Gosh, we are excited to get to work because the governor has been like talking about a package of, of bills for awhile now. Bills that were discussed and debated, not so much debated in the special session, but talked about a lot at length on leading up to, and we know that people are fired up and ready to go. Those bills include things like extreme risk protection orders, which is a way to sort of temporarily remove guns from individuals at a heightened risk of violent behavior. That temporary removal is, is based on behavioral risk factors with, with all the leading, you know, research, you could have to make sure that you're identifying the people most at risk of violent behavior.

Christian: [16:16](#) We're talking about things like universal background checks, which is a, you know, as we know something that a majority of Americans, a large majority of Americans universally support and, and it'll be really exciting to see. We'll be able to re-install things like one hand gun a month purchases, which have a huge impact on limiting and straw purchasing throughout the state. Something that had been repealed awhile ago, which was really, really frustrating by the Virginia legislature even. We are talking about an assault weapons ban. Something that is so important, you know, that is that we know that um, assault weapons don't necessarily make up, um, the majority of gun deaths that we see in America. But gosh, they make these, these shootings so much more lethal. When we see these mass casualty shootings, this administration has been very clear that they want to take a real tangible approach at everyday gun violence.

Christian: [17:03](#) And so it's not only a matter of some of these policies that we're discussing here that deal directly with the supply side of, of guns. Um, but how do we make sure that we're breaking the cycles of violence by investing in communities rather than just having the answer be how do we, how do we police communities that are already so distraught by the daily toll of gun violence? Um, so they are going to be funding some things as well that will almost certainly have a huge impact, um, in

communities that are, that are impacted by gun violence every day. So really, really exciting stuff.

- JP: [17:35](#) We can see that this issue is an issue that will turn people out to vote and fire them up. They haven't released the final turnout numbers, but almost everywhere I saw online said that this election was the highest forever for a state Senate and house of delegates race that wasn't during a governor's year and Virginia. And they have released the early voting numbers to give people a little bit of an understanding of how high these numbers are. I have a breakdown by age. So for early voting for 18 and 29 year olds,
- JJ: [18:08](#) and he is saying early voting. So people who are real into stats, don't tweet us with your complaints and clear, please just tweet at JJ Christian, you're off the podcast.
- JP: [18:22](#) So for those early votes in comparison to 2015 which was the last year without a governor's race for state elections in Virginia, 18 to 29 year olds, there was a plus 300% margin from 2015 for 30 to 39 year olds, a plus 270% margin for 40 to 49 year olds, a 227% plus margin for 50 to 64 year olds, almost a 200% increase and 65 plus year olds, a 205% increase. So those numbers are for all those election nerds. Listening are kind of hard to believe.
- JJ: [19:01](#) No, I think even if you're not election nerd, there are 300 percents.
- Christian: [19:05](#) Just as just as a reminder to what was the number one thing people were voting on this election cycle. Gun violence.
- JJ: [19:10](#) Hey,
- Christian: [19:12](#) I mean like, but that's what we're talking about, right? If you're, if you go back to what Sarah Brady is talking about and the question is that every candidate is looking for how do I get people to get to the polls and vote for me and what those numbers imply. If this is the number one issue and we had the results that we had and you have that kind of turnout, it goes to show that this issue will get people motivated to go to the polls and vote with their conscience, their heart, and to do the right thing to save lives. Yeah.
- JJ: [19:40](#) I think it used to be the politicians were worried, if I come out for gun violence prevention, I'm gonna make an a, an enemy of the gun lobby. And now I think the message is if I come out for

gun violence prevention, I'm going to make a friend of the voter,.

Christian: [19:53](#) what should other States take away? It's that you can change the politics in your state if you do this right and no matter where you are, even in the NRAS backyard.

JJ: [20:01](#) And we want to see those changes across the U S so thank you so much, JP. Thank you so much, Christian. Thank you so much to our listeners and especially thank you to everyone who went out there and voted

Brady Music: [20:12](#) \*\*\*music plays\*\*\*.

JP: [20:14](#) Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's lifesaving work in Congress. The courts and communities across the country is made possible. Thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast. Get in touch with us@bradyunited.org or on social at Brady buzz. Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

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