

Columbusite Who Maxed Out Trump Contribution Committed a Murder-Suicide

A [Columbusite](#) who maxed out his individual contribution to President Donald Trump's 2020 primary campaign also committed [a murder-suicide](#) by gun in Columbus, Ohio, in April 2019.

Ronald E. Payne (no relation to the reporter) was 74 when he took his own life less than an hour after shooting and killing thirty-year-old David E. Sellars II. It was reported that Payne's motive for murdering Sellars was a "[long-standing dispute](#)" possibly over Sellars's "[use of a motorbike](#)." However, shortly before dying, Payne told police that Sellars had "[taken money out of Payne's bank account](#)," but how is not clear. The two men lived near one another on Niles Drive in the Fairlane Mobile Home Park on the South Side of Columbus.

According to Federal Election Commission filings that track contributions to US political campaigns, Payne gave [\\$4,000 to the Trump Make America Great Again Committee](#), which is a joint-fundraising committee (JFC). The donation was reported as having been received on Tuesday, April 23rd, the next business day after Payne's murder-suicide. Both men were pronounced dead close to 5:00 PM on Monday, April 22nd. It is unclear if Payne made his donation the day of the murder-suicide and the JFC indicated receipt of the donation at the start of the next business day, or if Payne mailed in his contribution earlier, in a possible sign of premeditation, and the check arrived on the 23rd.

The \$4,000 Payne gave to the Trump Make America Great Again Committee was divided and transferred according to the JFC's [standard allocation formula](#) of 25% to the Republican National Committee and 75% to Donald Trump's primary and general election campaigns. The breakdown for Payne's contribution was [\\$1,000 to the Republican National Committee](#), [\\$200 to Donald J. Trump For President, Inc.](#) for Trump's 2020 general election fund, and the individual maximum contribution of [\\$2,800 to Donald J. Trump For President, Inc.](#) for Trump's 2020 primary fund.

At the date of this writing, March 27th, 2020, only [four Columbusites](#), including Payne, have maxed out their personal contributions to Trump's campaign.

Payne's victim, David Sellars, was the thirtieth death by homicide and the twenty-eighth gun death in Columbus in 2019. The total number of gun deaths in Columbus in 2019, according to the [Gun Violence Archive](#), was 94. To put that in perspective, Japan, a country of almost [127 million people](#) suffered a total of only [13 gun deaths in 2013](#). Japan averages about ten gun deaths a year. Columbus, a city of 900,000 people, lost approximately as many of its citizens to gun deaths in 2019 as Japan does in a decade. And the number of 2020 gun deaths as of March 27th in Columbus is [24](#)—on track to surpass last year's total.

Not that Ohio has an especially high rate of gun deaths among US states. Ohio has an [average rate](#) of gun deaths for a US state: 4.60 deaths per 100,000 people per year. It is just that the US has such a high rate of gun deaths per capita that it outpaces even the countries the US military is actively waging war on. There is a higher rate of violent gun deaths in the US than there is in either [Afghanistan](#) or [Iraq](#). Even [Yemen](#), where a deadly civil war has raged for years, had a lower rate of deaths from gun violence in 2017 than the US.

This rate of gun violence in Ohio shows no sign of abating as guns are becoming omnipresent in the state. Over 500,000 Ohioans—[1 in every 20](#)—now have concealed carry permits, a number which rises each year. These permits were not available until 2004 and the registry listing those who hold these permits is [not a public record](#). Those with permits can even legally carry in bars. Not that Ohioans need a concealed carry permit to legally carry lethal arms in public: Ohio is an [open-carry state](#)—unless you are [John Crawford](#) or [Tamir Rice](#).

We all know the answer to Columbus's gun death epidemic. It can be found in the only public response to the Columbus Police Department's [April 22nd, 2019, tweet](#) that announced Payne's murder-suicide:

[@brittanysux: "this is why Ohio needs stricter gun laws and background checks to aide in preventing this from happening."](#)

But in a state with a Republican legislature, in a country with a Republican president whose donors shoot someone over a motorcycle, what incentive is there for the government to, as Governor Mike DeWine put it, "[do something](#)"?

Now (March, 2020), seven months after the deadly shooting in Dayton, the Republican-controlled Ohio General Assembly still refuses to pass DeWine's "[Strong Ohio](#)" bill of mild gun reforms. Our state senators and representatives dither and dally in a Statehouse that's just a five minute drive from the trailer park where Ronald E. Payne and David E. Sellars once lived.

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