

# A change in the way you understood my country usa essay examples

[Law](#), [Gun Control](#)



Change in Understanding of the U. S.

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When I was younger I used to have a fairly simplistic understanding of how public opinion and laws in the United States worked. I believed that if a majority of voters thought something should be illegal, then laws would be passed making that thing illegal. Similarly, I believed that if a majority of voters thought an activity should be legal or unregulated, then laws would either not be established, or if laws previously existed about this activity, the law would be changed or removed. However, my observations of two major political issues during the 2012 presidential election and the months after it have changed my understanding of how the U. S. works. As a result of my observations, I now understand that in the U. S., a small but vocal group can intimidate and influence lawmakers, but at the same time, when a political issue attains sufficient widespread support among the public, politicians will grudgingly surrender to public opinion.

The first issue that I followed was gun violence and gun control. In the aftermath of the theater shooting in Colorado and the school shooting in Connecticut, much discussion has taken place both pre- and post-election in the U. S. about whether there is a need for more gun control. I had assumed, initially, that the U. S. response would follow the response that Finland had after school shootings there in 2007 and 2008; Finland was also a country with a large percentage of gun owners and gun laws that were very loose (Kantola, Norocel & Repo, 2011). Following these school shootings, however, public outcry resulted in Finland placing additional restrictions on gun ownership (ibid). In the U. S., there has also been public outcry; one only has

to view news websites or watch news on television to observe impassioned pleas from victims' families, concerned citizens, and gun owners. Public support certainly seems to be in favor of gun control. In a recent story by CNN (2013), data from three different surveys showed at least 51% of Americans favor some form of gun control.

I thought after the two shootings and given the public opinion polls, politicians would by and large support gun control, or at least not oppose it as adamantly as in the past. For example, given the increase in approval for same-sex marriage, noted by Becker (2012) to be at 53% in late 2011, many politicians and political commentators have voiced a pragmatic acceptance of same-sex marriage becoming legal in more states. When very conservative political figures such as Newt Gingrich and commentators such as George Will tell their constituents and readers to accept the reality of this issue, then it stands to reason that all but the most extreme social conservatives have realized public opinion supports this issue, and so laws will change in accordance to this shift in approval. However, on the issue of gun control, I had not taken into sufficient account the influence of the National Rifle Association. It has been disheartening, to put it mildly, to read on credible websites accounts of how the NRA has targeted politicians in the past who were not strong enough gun proponents in the view of the NRA, and to read the NRA's suggestions and comments about what they perceive as the absolute right to own guns.

While following this issue, I have been horrified by the comments I read online of voters who oppose any gun restrictions whatsoever. Their argument is based on what to me appears to be flawed logic, that the 2nd

amendment to the U. S. constitution gives them an unlimited right to own any sort of gun. When considering their argument, I have to respond with two points. First, nowhere in the 2nd amendment does it specifically say “ guns”; it spells out the right to bear “ arms.” Second, the argument that because of the 2nd amendment, any attempt to control or regulate gun ownership is unconstitutional seems ridiculous. If the 2nd amendment guarantees the unlimited right to bear “ arms,” which would include not just guns but any weapon, then U. S. citizens should be able to walk into their neighborhood Walmart and buy a nuclear warhead. Would any sane, rational person interpret the 2nd amendment that way? Then why do people claiming to be sane and rational assert that the 2nd amendment gives them the absolute right to own any type of gun? The logic does not follow. Similarly, another argument being made is that people need more advanced guns, such as the semi-assault weapons, not because they want to hunt with them or for sport, but because they need them to stage a revolution in case of government tyranny. Again, one has to ask, do people really think their AR-15 rifles are going to help them overthrow the U. S. government, which has tanks, smart weapons, and infinitely more firepower?

As a result of reading all these comments from some gun rights advocates and seeing the waffling that so many politicians are doing on this issue, my understanding of the U. S. has changed. I thought the U. S. public and legislature were capable of responding with common sense to a highly charged political issue. I thought laws were based primarily on what the majority of the voters wanted. Because I have observed so much paranoia on the part of some voters and caving in to a special interest group by many

politicians, my previous understanding now seems remarkably naïve. My understanding of public opinion and the creation of laws in the U. S. now is this: if a group pours enough money into supporting politicians and then exerts undue influence over their votes, then what the majority of voters want no longer matters. The politicians will accede to the demands of the special interest group that paid them.

## **Works Cited**

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