

Example of the necessity for strong gun control laws in the united states today a...

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ABSTRACT

Mass shootings by mentally ill persons have become so common in the United States that the public have become numb to them. In the recent wave of massacres, though, including at an elementary school in the U. S. the real causes of crime and gun violence are social and economic, including an elementary school in Connecticut, the issue of gun control is back on the political agenda for the first time in decades. Although groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) insist that the Second Amendment guarantees individuals the right to own firearms and the Supreme Court has upheld this, in reality the Constitution should be amended if necessary to permit strong gun control laws. This is very likely to occur, of course, and the mass shootings will no doubt continue as usual. It is hardly an accident that the highest levels of violent crime occur in inner-city ghettos or on Indian reservations and other areas where people have been marginalized. As long as conditions of segregation and extreme poverty continue in parts of the U. S., no one should be surprised that the rate of violent crime is out of control there. Certainly allowing more guns into places like these is hardly a rational solution to the problem.

Considering the recent string of violent attacks on our children and other innocent victims in this country, are these acts of violence enough to have the Constitution of the United States amended. Gun control has been a controversial topic of discussion in the United States ever since it was initially introduced in the 1920s. The mass shooting in Arizona of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and eighteen others has highlighted the relevancy of the issue of gun control. There have been many incidents like these in recent

years, such as the shooting at Virginia Tech, Columbine High School, the theater in Aurora, Colorado, and an elementary school in New Town, Connecticut. The wide and easy availability of guns, even to mentally deranged persons, is responsible for this type of violence and they need to be regulated more stringently to prevent further harm. On the other hand, gun rights advocates like the National Rifle Agency and Gun Owners of America insist that the increased prevalence of guns actually helps to deter criminal activity. They always claim that gun violence is a result of the actions of specific criminals, and that the punishing of those criminals and the use of guns as a deterrent from illicit activity should supersede the prioritization of gun control. Restriction of access to guns by law-abiding citizens and stricter regulations regarding their sale and monitoring of their buyers violates Constitutional rights as guaranteed by the Second Amendment. In reality, the highest levels of gun violence in the U. S. occur in the poorest areas, such as segregated inner-city ghettos and Indian reservations, and the last thing these places need is access to even more firearms. Most violent crime in the country is really caused by extreme poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity in these areas, and like drugs should be considered a social and economic problem. Simply arming the population even more is hardly a rational 'cure' for violent crime. At no time has the Obama administration made gun control a major issue over the last four years, nor will it be able to pass any new legislation on this issue in Congress given Republican control of the House after the 2010 and 2012 elections. He supported a renewed ban on assault rifles when he was a candidate in 2008, but never mentioned this again after the election. As

usual, he treads a careful middle path, stating that he favors the individual right to own firearms while also supporting measures to reduce gun violence (Berger 2011). Once the media flurry over the Giffords and Aurora shootings died down so did any discussion of control, at least until the next such incident like this. No new legislation of any kind is likely to pass the current Congress due to the influence of the gun lobby. Larry Pratt, director of Gun Owners of America, was worried about a minor regulation that required gun dealers in New Mexico, Arizona, California and Texas which required them to report “ multiple sales to the same person of certain kinds of rifles”, which was designed to curb illegal sales of weapons to the Mexican drug cartels (Berger 2011). A bill to ban the sale of high-capacity magazines has 107 cosponsors in Congress, but has been stalled and will not pass. Mayors against Illegal Guns has launched a campaign for stronger background checks, especially at gun shows, and requiring that the names of those prohibited from buying guns be placed in the national database. As always, and punishment of gun criminals alone will reduce crime and violence. It also lashed out at Obama, the ATF and the Justice Department for a failed sting operation that placed thousands of weapons in the hands of Mexican drug gangs (Berger 2011).

John R. Lott asserted that gun ownership has a positive side, particularly for purposes of self-defense and prevention of crime that is almost never covered by the liberal mass media that favors gun control laws. Instead, “ we are inundated with bad news about guns are rarely hear about the benefits”, and even those self-defense cases that are reported only get attention when the potential victim shoots the criminal dead (Lott 16). Most of the print and

broadcast media prefer to give attention to mass shootings such as public schools in Jonesboro, Arkansas and Littleton, Colorado, with large numbers of victims, following the usual prescription of ‘ if it bleeds, it leads’. Every year, though, guns are used to prevent crimes 1. 5 to 3. 4 million times, and Lott has a long list of cases in which victims used firearms to prevent robbery, sexual assault or murder. In all of these incidents, guns made it “ easier for people to defend themselves where few other alternatives are available” (Lott 22). Use of guns prevents the crime from even occurring 95% of the time, while only one in 1, 000 perpetrators is actually killed in self-defense cases (Lott 24).

Joe Sheley, dean of the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies at the California State University in Sacramento, finds that most of the debate about gun control is merely partisan rhetoric that fails to deal with the substance of the problem. As he put it in his book *In the Line of Fire*, which examined teenage gun violence, gun control is “ more and more about symbolism and less about substance” (Sheley 2001). On the one hand, the NRA and other gun rights groups almost always have enough power and money to block any major control legislation in Congress. Like the Wall Street banks, they hardly ever lose, although the Brady Bill was one glaring exception, which put them in heated conflict with the Clinton administration in the 1990s. Even so, this law was more of a symbolic than a real victory for the supporters of gun control, while the NRA simply keeps repeating that “ guns are not a problem—bad guys using guns are the problem” (Sheley 2001). Even if the U. S. had very strict gun control laws like Britain and Japan, this would do nothing about the tens of millions of firearms already in

circulation or brought into the country illegally and sold under the table.

More use of prisons and prosecutions to stamp out illegal gun violence would “ require an almost military occupation of the country, and grant police much more power” (Sheley 2001). For Sheley, there will never be any real answer to illegal gun violence unless government took serious steps to correct the urban “ environmental and social settings” where most violent crime takes place. Not since the 1960s has the federal government even attempted to address these serious urban problems, which have only worsened greatly in the last thirty years.

In response to the recent waves of mass shootings by mentally ill gunmen, the issue of gun control was back on the table briefly, but in reality very little changed because of it. There has been so much carnage because of the widespread availability of guns that the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution should be amended, but course this is extremely unlikely to happen. Gun control becomes a hot topic temporarily after assassinations and mass shootings like these, but almost always the NRA and other pro-gun lobbyists have the strength to block it in Congress. There should be far stricter measures of gun control, including the banning of high-capacity magazines, the banning of assault weapons, background checks for the sale of all guns (even at gun shows), heavier punishments for states who fail to enter the names of those prohibited from buying guns into a national registry, restrictions on shotguns and the reporting of multiple sales of certain guns in certain states to the ATF. In reality, though, the only way the U. S. will ever reduce crime and gun violence in the long run is to deal with the social and

economic problems in the poorest areas of the country, where most of the violent crime really takes place.

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