

Issues and controversies



Position Paper Garrett Kaufmann ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES ON FILE

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225-233 I strongly believe that our right to keep and bear arms that was given to us as American citizens in the second amendment of the constitution should be upheld and gun control is not the answer to stoppinggun violence.

A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. – The Second Amendment. Our nations’ forefathers gave us this right when they signed the constitution of the United States of America September 17, 1787. Although there has been debate over the wording of the amendment and whether it actually means every individual person or only people who belong to a state-regulated militia.

I think it is obvious that they meant each individual person. In a December 1989 article in the Yale Law Journal, titled ‘ The Embarrassing second amendment’ by scholar Sanford Levinson, a liberal democrat who supports gun control said that “ The second amendment was clearly written to give all citizens, not merely trained soldiers belonging to a militia the right to keep firearms”. Other scholars agreed and noted that in 1792 congress actually passed a militia law to mandate every able-bodied man to arm himself with a musket.

The Brady Act is a controversial law which was signed by President Clinton in 1993 and that took effect in 1994 (named for President Reagan’s press secretary who was paralyzed when shot in a 1981 assassination attempt on the president) which requires prospective gun buyers to wait 5 days before

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they can buy a gun while local law enforcement officials do a background check to make sure anyone who is prohibited from owning a firearm such as convicted felons, minors, druggies or illegal immigrants can't buy a gun.

Although gun control advocates say that laws such as this one are responsible for a drop in gun fatalities and violent crime Tania Metaska , executive director for the National Rifle Association (NRA) rejects this claim and says violent crime began to decline before 1993 and that the background checks and waiting periods are “ Irrelevant to criminals since the vast majority of felons obtain firearms on the black market or through theft, not through dealers affected by the Brady law”.

The Supreme Court agreed that the Brady Bill wasn't the answer when they overturned major portions of the law in the 1997 case “ Printz vs US” when they said the law infringed on state sovereignty rights and it put an unfair burden on local officials. The NRA and other gun-rights groups contend that it is not the Brady law that has helped to spark a nationwide decline in crime but ‘ Right to Carry’ or the passing of concealed weapons laws in many states. Florida began the national trend towards more permissive concealed weapon laws in 1987 and since then 30 other states have followed.

Florida's “ Shall Issue” law requires law enforcement officials to immediately issue permits to any eligible applicant, eligible meaning that they don't have a criminal record or history of serious mental illness. Gun-right advocates say these types of laws are necessary because people need to be able to protect themselves from a high crime rate, a legal system that can't keep criminals in jail and the lack of resources or manpower of law enforcement to protect them.

In surveys of convicted felons, criminals admit that they target victims that they believe to be unarmed and avoid those who might have weapons. A study done between 1977 and 1994 by two researchers at the University of Chicago found much lower crime rates in Illinois counties that allowed concealed weapons, and that murder rates dropped 8.5%, rapes 5% and aggravated assaults by 7%. In May 1998 15 year old Kip Kinkle fatally shot both his parents then took 3 guns to Thurston High School in Springfield, OR. here he shot 24 students, killing 2 of them. One Month later in Jonesboro, Arkansas two boys were arrested for fatally shooting 5 people and wounding 10 others. Then of course there was the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary just this last December when 20 year old Adam Lanza shot his mom dead then went to the school and shot and killed 26 people, most of them little kids. School shootings are a horrible tragedy and they only give gun-control groups more 'ammunition' for their argument.

I guess I can see their point but I agree with the gun rights advocates when they say it is a mistake to blame guns for all the school shooting. I agree with the saying 'Guns don't kill people- people kill people'. I think the people that do these things are sick in the head and that they need mental help and would still probably find a way to hurt people even if they didn't have access to guns. I'm sure it's gone up some since this article was written but studies have shown that violence in our nations' schools is actually pretty rare.

A March 1998 White House study found only 10% of all schools reported serious violence. I don't really feel that I need to carry a gun to protect myself here where I live but if I did live in a big city I would definitely want to have the right to carry a gun to protect myself and my family. But I do love to

hunt and I own 5 guns for that purpose. My dad has taught me about gun safety since I was a little kid. I have been through required gun safety training which I think is a good thing.

The article states that in many rural areas of our country guns are not regarded by many as an evil, but simply as part of a way of life. In those regions, hunting is a popular sport and learning how to use a gun is often a rite of passage for many young boys and girls. Guns are treated with pride and respect and gun safety is a paramount concern. Because many young people in those regions are exposed to guns at an early age and trained to use them safely, they are much more likely to understand the risks of guns and treat them properly.