Gun Control Laws Will Not Save Lives

When trying to solve the serious problem of violence in America, anti-gun groups continually focus on gun ownership and reiterate old arguments that studies have proven to be false. For example, gun control advocates claim that if individuals are allowed to carry concealed firearms, more gun fights will occur. The fact is, however, that law-abiding citizens are already permitted to carry concealed guns in forty states, and no increase in shoot-outs has resulted. Furthermore, thousands of citizens have been able to save their own lives with firearms because a gun was available to them.

So when faced with the most complex and serious issue in America, our culture of violence, why do anti-gun groups continue to restate old arguments that have been disproven so many times? Why do they continue to expend their efforts to fight battles that restrict a constitutional right but do nothing to make our society safer? Is it not also common sense that it is what is in the heart, not the hand, of a person that makes them a murderer?...

Here are oft heard anti-gun group "common sense gun laws" supported by nothing but emotional rhetoric and still promoted no matter how many times they're disproven.

Handgun Purchases Should Not Be Limited

*Emotional Rhetoric:* One Handgun per month—a law limiting people to a single handgun purchase per month will reduce trafficking in guns to criminals. The theory is that handguns are frequently purchased legally in bulk and resold on the "black market."

*Fact:* While there have been prosecuted cases of people buying multiple handguns and reselling them to criminals, the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] already requires a report from an FFL [federal firearms license] of anyone who buys two or more handguns within a 6-day period. Which means multiple purchases by gun smugglers are rare and are, or should be, always investigated. Most handguns used in crimes are stolen and passed frequently from criminal to criminal or purchased not by mass gun buyers but by a friend or relation—which would not be affected by "one handgun a month."

*Real Common Sense:* The impact of a one handgun a month law would affect only a tiny percentage of the illegal gun market. And in the illegal gun market, like all unregulated markets (i.e. drugs), money will always find a supply. If one of the numerous sources of guns to criminals dries up others will take up the slack. And while it's true that 1 gun per month/12 guns per year would satisfy most shooters, why write a new law and create more bureaucracy unless it actually helps? If it won't save any lives but restricts honest gun collectors, is it a good law?

Large Capacity Magazines Should Not Be Banned
Emotional Rhetoric: Large capacity firearms magazines enable murderers to kill large numbers of victims. The basic argument that having 15 bullets in a single magazine instead of 10 makes a gun more lethal.

It is what is in the heart of a mass murderer, not what is in their hand, that determines their lethality.

Fact: During the [April 1999] Columbine massacre (where many victims were killed with a normal pump shotgun) [Eric] Harris had only 10-round magazines for his 9mm, as did [Seung-Hui] Cho at the Virginia Tech massacre [April 2007] for one of his pistols. It takes 2 seconds or less to change the magazine in a weapon, which is simply not an impediment for an armed man shooting unarmed victims. And in any case most criminal activities, including the murders of police officers, involve very few shots fired (on average 3-4). The number of rounds a magazine can hold is simply not important and does not affect the lethality of a weapon.

Real Common Sense: Which is most frightening: A deranged killer intent on mass murder walking into your child's school with a pistol with 10-round magazines, a pistol with 15-round magazines, a pump shotgun, or a revolver? The fact is all are equally frightening visualizations. It does not take a specific type of weapon or a certain number of rounds to commit a mass murder; it takes a madman and a contained group of victims with no ability to defend themselves. Charles Whitman, for decades the mass murderer shooter with the greatest body count, had NO weapons capable of holding more than 10 rounds. And in any case, the deadliest mass murders do not involve firearms at all. Twist statistics any way you want, but it is what is in the heart of a mass murderer, not what is in their hand, that determines their lethality. Or in the simplest terms, where there is madness there is a way.

Concealed Guns Should Be Allowed

Emotional Rhetoric: Concealed carry of guns by normal citizens will end up with blood in the streets! The OK corral! People having gun fights over parking spaces! It will be the Wild West all over again! Basically, "normal" people can't be trusted with weapons to defend themselves or their families, and it is best if they endure whatever assault is made against them until real police arrive to fill out a report and issue a warrant for the attackers.

Fact: "Shall Issue" concealed carry laws, which allow ANY law abiding citizen to carry a concealed pistol, have spread to 40 states across the US since 1987. Millions of "average" Americans exercise this right, and there have been no explosions of crime, shootouts over parking spots, or road rage gunfights.

There are numerous verifiable cases of civilians using firearms for effective self-defense every day.

Real Common Sense: A normal citizen doesn't suddenly become a murderer because s/he has access to a firearm. There is a gigantic leap between the emotions that cause a person to make an obscene gesture, shout angry words, or even throw a punch and the murderous rage that makes someone draw a handgun and kill a fellow human in other than self defense—an act which not only ends a life but also puts the shooter in jail. Average citizens don't go to this level no matter how mad they get, and those so deranged are already carrying weapons and already dangerous (which is all the more reason the rest of us need this option).
Guns Are Not Used Against the Owner

*Emotional Rhetoric:* People who try to protect their homes with guns will have them taken away and get shot with their own gun.

*Fact:* This never happens. There are numerous verifiable cases of civilians using firearms for effective self-defense every day, and virtually none of burglars taking away guns and shooting the homeowner or his family. Just try to find one.

*Real Common Sense:* A burglar intending to steal a stereo doesn't find a gun and decide to commit murder. If confronted by a homeowner, particularly an armed homeowner, he is most likely going to flee to find an easier mark. If he is breaking in to commit a violent act he already has sufficient weapons to do what he intends, which is all the more reason the homeowner needs to be empowered to fight back.

More Guns Do Not Result in More Accidental Shootings

*Emotional Rhetoric:* More guns means more gun accidents.

*Fact:* While it is true that if there were NO guns there would be NO gun accidents, a magically gun-free nation is impossible to achieve. But it is a fact that fatal gun accidents have reduced in number much faster than gun ownership has increased. And in every household there are dangerous items—household cleaners, swimming pools, and other items that cause many more accidental deaths than guns....

*Real Common Sense:* Guns don't go off unless someone pulls the trigger. By properly handling a weapon there is no chance of an accidental discharge that will harm anyone. By keeping the gun properly secured there is no chance of a small child finding it and hurting himself or someone else.

Anti-Gun Groups Misconstrue the Facts

So why do anti-gun groups continue to define "common sense" in such a proven irrational manner and not put their resources into real solutions to America's culture of violence?

The emotional "common sense" belief of anti-gun groups is simple:

- America suffers from an outrageously disproportionate number of murders, mostly involving firearms, because of "lax" gun laws vs. countries with gun bans.
- The 2nd Amendment concept of civilian-owned firearms as a balance of power to a centralized government is outdated and no longer true.
- We are all safer if we take guns out of society—with perhaps the begrudging exception of very limited and highly tracked hunting rifles.
Fact: America does have a wildly disproportionate number of murders vs. other western countries.

- But two Western countries often used for comparison by anti-gun groups, Australia and the United Kingdom, had dramatically lower murder rates than the US before they instituted draconian anti-gun measures, and they still have lower rates afterwards.
- In fact, there was virtually NO effect on the overall murder rate in either nation, with homicide rates and even gun crime continuing to increase after their gun bans took effect....
- Given that we know from experience that a large percentage of gun crimes continue in countries after total gun bans, and a percentage of murders transfer to non-gun murders after a gun ban, it would appear that a total gun ban in the US would have the same effect as elsewhere—none whatsoever on the overall murder rate.

America has a problem with violence culture, not a gun culture.

Real Common Sense:

- A person doesn't commit murder or a robbery because they have a weapon available, they choose to commit murder or a robbery and then find the means to do it.
- In the US depending on whom you want to believe tens of thousands or even millions of citizens defend their lives with firearms every year....
- America has a problem with violence culture, not a gun culture. Guns are used by violent people too frequently in this country, but guns are not responsible for creating violent people, they created themselves. We have real issues in this country, but they are social issues and are reasons to promote, not restrict, civilian gun ownership until we find a social solution that works.
- Self defense and gun ownership are long and cherished traditions in the US, and surrendering them would NOT make us safer; quite the contrary, both as individuals and as a nation we would be much, much more endangered.
- For better or worse, America is a nation of individualists who are not afraid to fight back and take take charge of their own security (with the possible exception of a few large metropolitan populations on the east and west coasts). We need to deal with our problems of violence, but banning guns will weaken us and make our lives more dangerous, not less.

And as long as this post has been (is anyone really still reading—oh, I guess you are) how could I end it without my favorite quote from Benjamin Franklin, "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Further Readings

Books
- Brian Doherty Gun Control on Trial: Inside the Supreme Court Battle Over the Second Amendment. Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2008.


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