

There are two aspects of the gun violence debate which trouble me. The first is the vociferous argument being made that more guns bring more safety. The second is that the right to own guns takes precedent over the right to life.

More guns do not make us safer; and certainly not semi automatic or automatic guns. There were fewer mass shooting casualties during the time our country had an assault weapons ban (1994-2004) than there have been since the ban expired. There were 56 people killed in mass shooting casualties during those ten years; whereas, in the past eight years since the ban expired there have been 147 deaths due to mass shootings.\* Any rational thinking person knows that guns are dangerous. More guns only increase the danger resulting in an increased likelihood of more deaths.

Even well trained police officers in the line of duty only hit their targets 34% of the time. Officers are trained and required to maintain their skills on practice ranges and still their statistics are alarming. So what percentage can one expect ordinary citizens to shoot when threatened? And what is the percentage of collateral damage at these mass shootings? The shooting this fall outside the Empire State Building by counterterrorism trained police officers in the line of duty trying to kill a suspect injured nine innocent bystanders.

The concept of allowing for the proliferation of automatic and semiautomatic weapons jeopardizes every citizen's right to life. Therefore, it is imperative that all semi automatic and automatic weapons be removed from private hands, all high capacity magazines be banned and universal background checks be required for the sale of all guns.

The second and more important tenet is that which our founding fathers gave us in our Declaration of Independence of 1775 - the unalienable right to life. The Second Amendment passed in 1790 which gives one the right to bear arms was never intended to supersede the right to life. With over 300 million guns in private hands there is no security for anyone's life. Where does this proliferation of gun ownership end? What will it lead to? Are we going to let the number of guns in private hands grow to such a number that it will be too big a number to recall? And then who will be in control?

One's right to gun ownership does not trump one's right to life!

\* Mark Follman, More Guns, More Mass Shootings. Dec.15, 2012