

If you don't recommend strict enforcement and prosecution of our existing laws, any other recommendations you make will be no more than "feel good legislation" and will fail.

Bill Schoner, West Suffield, CT

*Cities aren't gun-free without politicians willing to take the heat to make them so.*

• By HOLMAN W. JENKINS, JR.



Gun enthusiasts tend to be well-informed about guns and gun laws, so listening might be a good idea even if you aren't a gun enthusiast.

Gun magazines are metal boxes containing springs and are easy to manufacture at a basement work bench. Regulating magazine capacity, then, may have little effect in the real world. Assault rifles are semiautomatic weapons that function like any other semiautomatic weapon, including millions of semiautomatic pistols in the hands of Americans. Yet Congress wants to ban the rifle-looking versions, though most murders, including most mass shootings, are committed with the pistol-shaped versions.

Yes, one could hypothesize, as [Joe Biden](#) does, a shooter, forced to reload after seven shots rather than 13, being tackled by a bystander. One could equally hypothesize a citizen with a seven-round clip running out of ammunition before stopping a mass shooter. This is why Congress, for good reason, usually prefers to pass laws in response to systematic evidence rather than hypothetical anecdotes.



Associated Press

Al Sharpton helps lead a protest against New York City's 'stop-and-frisk' policing tactic, June 17, 2012.

The Sandy Hook problem is the suicidal, disturbed young male looking for a large number of defenseless civilians to mow down.

The Chicago problem is crime-ridden neighborhoods in which gangs murder each other and anybody who gets in their way.

These aren't the same problem, and possibly gun control offers no practical handle on either. But if you accept the unlikelihood of ridding America of its guns, as the gun-control movement now says it does, then one systematic proposition links the two.

That proposition can be stated as a question: In an America where at least 43 states now let a law-abiding citizen carry a concealed weapon, how should we protect ourselves in the fewer and fewer places where we are required to be unarmed?

New York City, like Chicago, has restrictive gun laws. Disproving the Rahm Emanuel theory of the problem, guns purchased elsewhere can enter New York as easily as they do Chicago. Then why is New York's rate of gun-related assaults and homicides so much lower than Chicago's?

The answer is the logical corollary of laws that make it hard for citizens to defend themselves—namely, a need for police to take active, relentless, effective measures to disarm criminals.

Such has been the function of the stop-and-frisk activities of the New York Police Department, originally under its famed Street Crimes Unit, which developed an uncanny expertise at identifying those likely to be carrying illegal weapons. The value of stop-and-frisk wasn't just the arrests made and guns seized, but the incentive to New York's criminal population to leave its guns at home.

Liberals criticize stop-and-frisk because those stopped and frisked and sent to jail under New York's draconian gun enforcement are disproportionately black and Hispanic. Never mind that those who commit murders and those who are victims of murders are disproportionately black and Hispanic.

The thing to notice here is that stop-and-frisk can liberate us from the prevailing political unrealism of the gun-control debate.

Jurisdictions can be free to choose their own gun laws (as they will anyway). Mayor Emanuel can dispense with his hopeless, escapist insistence that other jurisdictions, where murders aren't frequent, must solve Chicago's murder problem. In a densely packed metropolis like New York or Chicago, where voters wish everyone to be unarmed, illegal gun users can be kept in reasonable check by aggressive enforcement. That is, if politicians are willing: The alleged murderer of 15-year-old Chicago resident Hadiya Pendleton, whose killing has been adopted as a symbol by the Obama administration, turns out to have been arrested three times recently while on probation on a weapons charge.

Not without controversy, New York City locks up people who violate its gun laws and throws away the key. Is Chicago prepared to do the same?

No law perhaps can stop somebody with no criminal record and no public history of mental illness from acquiring a gun to carry out a mass shooting. We're not quite ready to give up on the Adam Lanza problem, but the Chicago problem is solved in principle, requiring only a willingness to inflict on certain communities the indignity of stop-and-frisk along with very high incarceration rates for illegal weapon possession (including people, let's face it, who have good reason to fear for their lives and to carry a gun for self-protection).

By dispensing with the idea that national gun control is the solution, we might notice something else. Chicago was home of the Gautreaux housing settlement in the 1970s, a social experiment on the value of breaking up dysfunctional neighborhoods and dispersing inhabitants to communities with intact families, intact schools, intact employment opportunities. There is every reason to believe that the perpetrators and victims of Chicago's next gang murders would, in a different environment, become prosperous, upstanding, long-lived citizens. Not that politicians are even close to willing to deal with the implications of this fact.

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