

To the Chairmen and Members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group

I understand that you are under great pressure to do something to prevent gun violence. However, before you act it is essential to understand the real issues, and to know the difference between what has been tried and failed, and what might actually work.

This country already has more than 20,000 gun control laws at the federal, state, and local levels. It is irrational to think that enacting new ones will be useful. If laws prevented crime, we wouldn't need "gun laws"--the existing laws against assault and murder should be enough.

Possession of firearms by criminals and the deranged is already illegal, but determined criminals and mass murderers still get and use them in violent attacks. Anyone who thinks additional sales restrictions and tougher laws against straw purchases will work hasn't heard about illegal drugs or under age drinking and smoking. Even the National Academy of Sciences review found no evidence that US gun laws reduced the crime rate or firearms violence.

The Clinton gun ban, which also limited magazine capacity, proved that bans and magazine limits don't work. Violent crime and shootings didn't drop when that law came into effect, and they didn't go up when it expired. Before and after comparisons in countries that instituted gun bans haven't shown any decrease of violent crime. Even the National Academy of Sciences review of US gun laws found no evidence that they reduced crime rates or firearms violence.

Limiting magazine capacity is one of the more dangerous and ineffective forms of gun control, because it only interferes with self-defense by law-abiding citizens. Criminals will still get whatever they want on the black market. Mass murderers don't even need big magazines--and many didn't use them!--because they have all the time they need to reload while their defenseless victims cower in closets and under desks. But law-abiding citizens will be at a potentially fatal disadvantage. Police statistics show that defenders need an average of 6 to 9 shots to stop an attacker (2-3 hits, but only 1/3 of shots hit). That's why they use magazines that hold 15 or more rounds. The average citizen, with less training, may need 10 or more shots to stop an attacker. What if there are multiple assailants, as happens in home invasions and street violence? The few seconds it takes to change a magazine may cost an innocent person's life.

The most cruelly deceptive and dangerous form of gun control is the "gun free zone," which only ensures that law-abiding citizens are disarmed.

This gives potential mass murderers a free fire zone in which they can execute innocents at will until someone else with a gun comes along to stop them.

The second amendment has nothing to do with the use of firearms in sports or hunting. It is an affirmation of the inherent personal right of law abiding citizens to defend ourselves from criminals, deranged murderers, and tyrants. Firearms are used in 2-3 million acts of self defense each year in this country.

Unfortunately, most gun control proposals that are currently being considered at the national, state, and local level, infringe on our civil right to self defense. Some are just feel-good measures that will do nothing to prevent gun crime or reduce violence, but many are liable to hurt those who are at greatest risk and least able to defend themselves from violent criminals and deranged murderers: women, children, minorities, the elderly, and the poor. Indeed, the first gun bans in this country were enacted

after the Civil War in the former Confederate states so that black citizens couldn't protect themselves against racist mobs.

So here is a rational strategy that could actually prevent mass shootings, while posing no risk to law abiding citizens. Eliminate gun free zones. Discourage copycat mass murders by denying those evil lunatics the publicity they crave--ask the media to not publish their names. Post armed guards at schools, or follow the successful Israeli example: train and arm volunteers drawn from school faculty and staff, so they can protect innocents from murderers. That would be the most effective way to honor the heroes who died trying to stop the Sandy Hook shooter, and prevent future mass murders at our schools.

I am very interested in your reply, especially your specific response to any or all of these points.

Ted Carnevale