

As a mother of three children, I watched the news of the Newtown shooting unfold with disbelief. The reality that a person within this community was so mentally ill that he intentionally took the lives of so many small children was horrifying. I could not, and still cannot, fathom the grief of the parents and families of those killed. The grief felt by the parents, the community and indeed the nation is accompanied by guilt, fear and a desire to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again.

Sadly, I do not believe that we can prevent all tragedies. Children are much more likely to drown in swimming pools than by gun violence yet we aren't criminalizing pools. I realize that so many are grasping at the notion that legislation to remove certain firearms from our society or make them more expensive through taxation will make us all safer. The harsh reality is that we live in a world in which there are people who desire to do harm to others. Gun legislation will not make these people disappear. Mental health improvements will not guarantee that the violent and insane are identified.

The problem with restrictive gun laws is that they are only effective to those who have a concern about the negative repercussions of breaking the law. We can all agree that homicidal and suicidal people are not deterred by a potential fine or prison sentence. Is a tax on ammunition or a pistol grip going to deter a murderer? Where there is a will, there is a way. Someone intent on killing will obtain an illegal gun. Or fly an airplane. Or build a bomb, which is what was used in the Bath school massacre of 1927 that killed 38 schoolchildren and 6 adults as well as the Oklahoma City bombings.

I have heard the words "nobody needs an assault weapon" repeatedly over the last month. Please consider what exactly the term "assault weapon" means and why certain firearms have been deemed so extreme. My responsibility as a parent is to protect my children from harm. I do not leave this task to the police - the reality is that in most cases, they cannot arrive in time to prevent a crime. In times of emergency, individuals may need to protect themselves, as was the case in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina when there was no law enforcement to be found. Much of the proposed firearms legislation will limit my ability to effectively protect my family. If the situation arises that I find myself under attack, regardless of whether or not the aggressor has a firearm, shooting at a moving target while under duress and attempting to shield others is not an easy task. One round in my gun may not be enough. I have the right to protect myself and my family to the fullest extent.

Passing gun control legislation would ease the communities conscience. People will feel that the children and teachers of Newtown did not die in vain. But it would be a false victory, as previous gun control legislation demonstrates. Restricting gun rights does not solve the problem. It does not make the evil that is mental illness go away. We as a society need to accept that people like this will always exist and protect our children from them rather than blame an object as a scapegoat and leave them more vulnerable than ever.

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