

Dear task force members,

I recently saw a documentary that covered the stigma and media coverage that impacts legislation leading to confiscation, bans, driving public opinion based on emotion and almost complete negligence of the facts. No I'm not talking about firearms, but Pit Bulls.

In the documentary, Cincinnati Ohio passed legislation banning pit bulls. The ban identified pit bull dogs if they had 5 specific characteristics and many time dogs that were not Pit Bulls were identified as meeting that criteria. Any dog in the city limits 30 days after the ban would be taken and euthanized. The stories told by the owners whose dogs were taken and put to death sound an awful lot like some of the recent firearm proposals that have been suggested. Many, if not all the dogs that were taken and put to death, never did anything wrong. Still the stigma created by media coverage and peoples fears were more important to the legislators than the facts.

Similar arguments against the AR-15s were being used to support banning Pit Bulls such as "Why do you need a Pit Bull?" for example. Other arguments like "they are inherently more dangerous or deadly". This terminology can be applied to anything as long as public opinion is pushed into this way of thinking. Just as the bans are being proposed to protect children from AR-15s and large capacity magazines, so had the bans for Pit Bulls been proposed as necessary to prevent harm to children. Unfortunately it was not just the one breed that was prone to attacking children. Nevertheless, this breed was selected as the one with the highest risk because of irresponsible owners.

There are even more examples of how the gun debate and the debate to ban dog breeds use the same lame arguments based on emotion and sound-bites as well as selective media biased coverage. In both cases though the base of the problem is not the gun or the dog. The problem is the owners. And until the owners are made the focus of legislation it will continue to be nothing more than discrimination. In this case with the AR-15s and magazines, it is an inanimate object completely incapable of moving on its own.

Thank you