
Solutions to America's Gun Violence Epidemic

There are millions of guns throughout the United States. People obviously have different views on how one should properly use and gun and why. Unfortunately, it seems that these guns very often fall into the wrong hands and tragedies start to get bigger and bigger each year. For our country to be safe, there need to be stricter gun laws. It may not be a saving grace, but an attempt must be made in the right direction in order to see lees heartbreak caused by weapons that should not be legal in the first place.

Written by Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, “ Gun violence touches every segment of our society. It increases the probability of deaths and incidents of domestic violence, raises the likelihood of fatalities by those who intend to injure others and among those who attempt suicide, places children and young people at special risk and disproportionately affects communities of color.”There are three distinctive types of guns. The handgun, a rifle and a shotgun and from there, they are divided into semi-automatic guns and fully-automatic guns.

Semi-automatic guns are guns that shoot only one bullet every time the trigger is pulled, ejects the shell of said bullet and automatically loads the next bullet. For a fully-automatic gun, at the single pull of the trigger, multiple rounds are shot at a continuous rate (Agresti, Smith & Guerra, 2017). One extremely important aspect of better gun control is a mass shooting. There is no clear definition of a mass shooting since it varies from person to person but it is often classified by the number of deaths and injuries. Depending on the number of people killed, it could be a regular shooting, a mass shooting, a mass killing, or a massacre. According to the Washington Post, a person is considered a mass murderer if they killed four or more and one event. In 2013, federal statutes define a mass killing as three or more being killed (Ingraham, 2015).

The amount of mass shootings this country has experienced in the last 10 years is sickening. Every other year or to someone comes into possession of a gun they should never have been able to get. Then whether or not that person is in their right mind or not, they decide to not only harm others but to deprive them of their lives. About four months ago, on October 2, 2017, the deadliest shooting and massacre in modern U.S history occurred. Stephen Paddock legally obtained 23 semi-automatic guns and over 1000 rounds of ammunition. He had about six different types of rifles that he then modified to become fully automatic-rifles with bump stocks. Paddock then took those weapons to an outdoor music festival in Las Vegas, Nevada. There he proceeded to shoot out of his room window on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel, into a crowd of over 22,000 people. In over a span of 10 to 15 minutes, Paddock killed over 58 and injured over 500 others (National Post, 2017).

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On November 15, 2017, a month after the Vegas shooting, Devon Patrick Kelly gunned down 26 people and wounded 20 others as they attended a church service in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Kelly was in the Air Force until 2014 when he was discharged for bad conduct. He received bad conduct because, in 2012, he was charged with assault by his wife and child. From there, he was jailed for the year and had his rank reduced. Despite having a past conviction, Kelly was able to legally obtain an AR-15 rifle due to the Air Force failing to enter his charges into the federal database. When he entered that church, Kelly killed 25 people ages 5 to 72 and one unborn child (Abdelkader, Williams, & McCausland, 2017). The second deadliest mass shooting in US history occurred on January 6, 2016 (CNN, 2017). At a nightclub in Orlando, Florida, Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others. Mateen was interviewed by the FBI in 2013 and 2014 but due to insignificant information being found, he was let go. From there he was able to legally obtain an AR-15 assault rifle and a Glock pistol (Fantz, Karimi, & McLaughlin, 2016).

On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, who was mentally ill, killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Adam Lanza forced his way into an elementary school with over 700 students present and killed 20 children ages six through seven and 7 teachers. Lanza brought three guns with him, an AR-15, a 10 mm Glock pistol and a 9mm pistol. He had over 30 rounds of ammunition and reportedly left the fourth gun in the car. It was also later revealed that Lanza shot his mother multiple times in the head before arriving at the school (CBS News, 2017). On April 2, 2017, there was a mass shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Virginia. Gunman Seung Hui Cho killed 32 students.

On December 13, 2005, Cho was ordered to seek outpatient care by a judge due to suicidal remarks to fellow students. This should have prevented him from purchasing weapons but it did not. Between the months of February and March, Cho purchased a P-22 pistol online from an out-of-state dealer, which is illegal, and a 9mm Glock with 50 rounds of ammunition from a firearms shop (CNN, 2017). All of these precious lives were lost for no reason at all. These people, these murderers, should not have been able to purchase guns. Many people who own guns believe that gun control will not help. They believe that creating stricter laws will not stop anyone from killing, and it won't. That is not the point of creating these laws, it is known that if one wants to kill they will, but if we are able to prevent guns getting into the hands of people that should never be near them, possibly saving millions of lives, then it is worth it. "I absolutely think we should ban assault weapons.

There is no reason to have assault weapons on the market. Those people are killers; they are not meant to go hunting" (Abdullah & Brennan, 2012). One of the biggest anti-gun control arguments is that they will take away the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms. I do not want to take away your constitutional right, but if there are people that are abusing that right to do harm, then it creates a problem that must be solved. Noted by Abdullah & Brennan, other

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arguments are that the law exploits massacre and tragedies as a way to pass laws and “the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun”

First, as bad as it sounds, it is true. The government uses mass killings as examples when trying to pass stronger gun laws. But I don't see the issue with that because with this real-life example of what we are trying to prevent, passing the bill would have no basis or cause.

Second, this way of thinking gets people killed. Almost every person in the world has heard the phrase “do not fight fire with fire”, and that is because it's true. No matter how great and heroic a person thinks it sounds, having this mentality just gets more people killed and that is what we are trying to prevent. The amount of guns in this country alone is downright mind-boggling considering certain guns are prohibited in certain states. Stephen Paddock, Omar Mateen, and James Holmes, the gunman in Aurora movie theater shooting, all used a Colt AR-15 rifle in their shootings (Nelson, 2016). These rifles are one of the most popular rifles in the country and they were actually banned at one point. In 1994 they were covered under the Federal Assault Weapons Ban but it expired in 2004 and since then, they have been labeled and become “a mass murderer's best friend.” Nelson noted one tremendous problem in trying to ban this gun, is that the greatest percentage of gun homicides are by handguns. This poses the argument that since the gun does not kill as many people as handguns, it should not be banned.

Once researched, the statistics about guns are extremely shocking and should be enough to convince any anti-gun control person that these laws are needed but that's wishful thinking. According to the CDC National Vital Statistics Report, suicide by a gun makes up almost 2/3 of all gun-related deaths in the U.S (SafeHome, n.p). Furthering this report a study in California by handgun purchasers found that in the first year after the purchase of a handgun suicide was the leading cause of death among those purchasers (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, n.p). Another issue with guns in the house is that children are usually also present in that house and those guns are not in a lock box. A federal government study of unintentional shootings found that 80% of those shootings resulted from shots fired by children under the age of six (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, n.p).

Another report shows that 73% of kids ages nine and under know the location of their parent's firearms and 3% admitted that they handled them without their parent's knowledge. This proves how much bigger the issue is, that it affects children but it also proves that children are always aware (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, n.p). One of the biggest issues with trying to pass stricter and better gun control laws is that each state has their own laws and their own jurisdiction. Nevada law does not require gun owners to have a permit to purchase or carry rifles and shotguns. They are also not required to lyse those said weapons and can also buy guns from a dealer or website (ThinkProgress. N.p). In the state of Texas, Texans are not required to have a permit to purchase, registration of the purchased gun or a licensing (NRA-ILA, 2014).

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Just Recently, Texas governor Dan Patrick is allowed Texans, once licensed, to carry loaded handguns, open or concealed, in church.

“Allowing guns into the church can make the right person a hero,” said Patrick (Varathan, 2017). This is a month following the Sutherland Springs Church shooting. States like New York prohibit long guns, such as rifles, while Arizona and Wyoming do not prohibit any type of gun whereas Illinois and the District of Columbia prohibit all types of guns. Reported by In 2012, in the state of Colorado, the Supreme Court allowed students and faculty to carry concealed guns on college campuses after overturning the gun ban at Colorado University (Cage & Dance, 2013). There are also many loopholes where people purchase guns. Reported by Cage & Dance, a person can no longer be eligible to own a gun but because there is no waiting period or reference checks between the issuance of the permit or license and sale, they can walk away with a gun they rightfully shouldn't have. There has been a constant fight for the passing a gun control laws, especially after shootings. In late 2017, the family members and parents of the victims of Sandy Hook argued that the companies that manufactured and sold the military-style assault rifle should be held responsible for the attack. They are claimed that Remington, a gun manufacturer, made a mistake by permitting untrained civilians access to a military style weapon and that it is advertising to troubled young men who are likely to commit violent crimes.

The only problem with this is that in 2005, Congress passed the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. This blocks lawsuits by providing industry-wide immunity from blame when a gun company's product is used in a crime. Unfortunately, when the case went to state court, it was dismissed but the families are not losing hope and appealed for a trial with a jury (Altimari & Owens).“That one man can legally obtain enough firepower to kill at least 58 and worn more than 500 people in 10 minutes clearly indicates that are laws I seriously flawed or lacking” (Ingraham, 2015). To ensure better gun control laws, we need more mental health screenings, thorough background checks and longer, more secure waiting period before getting a gun. And during that waiting period, a prospective gun owner must take gun safety courses and be able to pass. I also think to limit the sales of guns at shows and increasing the use of trigger locks and lock boxes with be extremely beneficial.

Despite everything written in this essay if someone has enough intent and determination to kill they will be able to find a gun if needed but despite that awareness, we must at least try to decrease the possibilities of more gun violence. We as a country can not continue to let lives be taken because of inhuman and senseless acts.

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