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Gun Control, Protection? Or Problem?

The Second Amendment-

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

The second amendment states that we have the right to bear arms but to what extent? Should our right to bear arms have no limitations because it is our right? Or is the bearing of arms more of a privilege enacted upon those citizens who respect that right? What the second amendment should really say is you are privileged to bear arms as long as you do not kill or injure people with your firearm. But even if this was stated the problems that surface with gun ownership are anything but few. The United States has tried to combat this problem with new laws and stricter background checks on the purchase of guns, but is it enough? Is there more we can do to help protect citizens from gun violence or should the right to bear arms be eliminated altogether?

The history of gun control has been a heated struggle between gun owners and the courts. The first law enacted against gun ownership was in 1837 where the state of Georgia passed a law that banned all handguns; this was soon deemed unconstitutional and thrown out. Then in 1871 the National Rifle Association or the NRA was organized to improve civilian

marksmanship. There had not been any big gun ownership laws until 1938 when The Federal Firearms Act was put into place. This act set limitations on selling and purchasing firearms followed by the Gun Control act of 1968 which kept firearms out of the hands of those who were not of age. A big year for gun control was in 1998 when many suits against gun manufactures and sellers lead to the National Instant Criminal Background Check which required a background check on all purchases of guns. Since then there have been little laws and regulations enacted promoting gun control leading right up to the recent shooting at a theater in Colorado.

Many believe that the implication of new stricter gun control laws would create a safer public area for U.S. citizens. Back in 2011 a new law enacted in California prohibited the public display of handguns. This new law was put into place because California allowed public display of weapons as long as they were not loaded. Many officers complained that this greatly panicked people and they would receive many calls on this which would take their focus away from more important factors. Sam Parades who is the executive director of the Advocacy group of Gun owners of California is concerned that this will have a more negative affect than good. He states "The probable outcome is you will have far more people carrying concealed loaded guns as opposed to openly carrying unloaded guns." (McGreevy) But as few people oppose this law there are many more who believe that this law has created a safer environment. Governor Jerry Brown who signed this law into place feels that creating and updating new laws is the best way to keep its citizens safe. He quotes "Over the last few years, California is the only state where gun control laws are being enacted on a frequent basis." (McGreevy) He continues to push for laws that restrict even the safest safe of gun owners.

A recent article states that Utah is one of the few states that allow students to carry guns on campus and that there is a big push to also pass a law banning all firearms on campus. In light of the recent raping and assaults on campuses the author believes that throwing a gun into the mix will greatly increase the death toll. "Young adults in heated arguments tend to act rashly. College kids routinely drink to excess. And suicide is already at extraordinary levels on many campuses. If we throw guns into this mix, the results will be lethal." (Smith) But are stricter laws really going to make a bigger impact? In a 1998 to 2004 study over 60% of citizens were in favor of more strict laws. To say the least there is increasing support for stricter gun laws.

At the same time many gun owning citizens believe that with the increase of stricter gun laws it infringes on the second amendments right to bear arms. On March 2nd 2012 the U.S. District court of Maryland had officially declared that the state's recent handgun regulation which would deprive citizens of the right to carry handguns outside of their homes violated the second amendment. It was only a few months ago that a Justice who overruled the regulation was robbed at the hands of a machete, he thinks that if one of them had a handgun, he thinks it would have dissuaded the robbers actions.

This same year in Colorado the Concealed Carry Act was put into place which allowed state residents 21 years and older to carry a concealed firearms onto a school campus. The students also have to meet a handful of criteria and receive training to carry a concealed weapon. James Manley, who represents the students who filed the lawsuit, calls it a victory saying, "Today's ruling is a victory for gun rights and a victory for civil rights, too. It shows that the University isn't above the law." Many who oppose this law base all of their criteria on the

Virginia Tech incident which killed 32 people including the shooters. Spokesman Ken McConnellogue says this to those who oppose students carry concealed on campuses, "There are 6,000 universities and colleges in the U.S., and we're basing a lot of this on one or two incidents." What many people do not understand is that when you register for a concealed carry permit you have to go to a course, pass a test and then register to get a permit. It is a worthwhile process but it is not instant. So those who have a Concealed Carry permit respect the second amendment and are responsible with their firearms.

A common misconception about guns is that people think that more guns will result in more accidental shootings. But it is a fact that fatal gun accidents have reduced in number much faster now that gun ownership has increased. If citizens are properly trained in the use of firearms and have had safety training then it will make it safer for everyone. In a recent study conducted in the United Kingdom and Australia which both had anti gun laws, before these laws were instituted they had lower murder rates than the U.S. and after the laws were instituted they had that same exact murder rate. It is not a problem with gun violence that any nation has it is a problem with violence. In saying that if America were to have stronger anti gun laws it might experience the same effect as the United Kingdom and Australia.

For those who push for stricter gun control laws and for those who push that more stricter laws violates the rights granted by the second amendment are constantly battling for equal footing. When one passes a law that restricts the rights of the gun owners, the other side deems this new law unconstitutional and soon this new law is voided. As with when a leaner gun law allowing gun control on school campuses or libraries, the stricter gun control group feels fear and there fear of gun violence override the new law. Peter Hamm who is a

spokesman admits that "The two sides in this debate behave like spoiled children who won't sit at the table together and play nice." (Graves) If the gun control and non gun control sides would find equal footing on middle ground it would not be ignored and both sides could agree. People can oppose the ownership of .50 caliber rifles but still support owning guns for self defense, or use of guns for hunting. If both sides can come to a consensus then gun control will become a less heated debate.

Current gun control laws that are in place are registrations of guns, background checks on those who are looking to purchase guns, concealed carry permits required to bring concealed guns inside of buildings and to certain venues. Gun registration is the law that requires new and old gun owners on the purchase of firearm new or used to register the serial number of the gun to their name. This also applies to a gun owner who sells their gun to another. Background checks happen in gun shops when a person comes to buy a firearm their criminal background will be checked for any felonies, crimes involving guns and anything which would hinder the purchase of a new firearm. As stated before concealed carry permits require classes, recertification and licensing. These restrictions have made gun ownership safer to citizens because it is more difficult to acquire guns and it is easier to track guns to their owners, and with all the gun safety classes that are offered it helps to make the gun owners more responsible on how they use their guns.

New restrictions that should be placed upon gun owners could be general required classes not just for Concealed Carry permits but for all general gun owners. To update background checks to decrease loopholes, and for Physiological tests which would be required if someone has had a previous history or if related to someone with a mental illness. General

gun ownership required classes should be put into place because they will teach new and old gun owners how to shoot, safety training, proper gun care and how to properly disarm an assailant. These classes would help prevent more gun accidents each year because of the required safety training.

There are many loopholes with the background check, some gun retailers are unlicensed where there is no paperwork and no questions are asked. This is how the Columbine teenagers acquired their guns. Some people are not in the system when they should have been therefore a background check was useless as in the Virginia Tech shooter. Ways that we can fix these loopholes is require that all sales of guns have a background check, and register all gun owners into the system and update the system regularly. Physiological tests would be a mental illness test to the degree in which the gun owner is diagnosed. This would make gun ownership safer because those with a severe mental illness would not be allowed to get a gun. This could help protect citizens from outbursts that would include gun violence.

These new restrictions on gun ownership would affect those who are not registered into the system and those with severe mental illnesses. These new restrictions could very well prevent guns from getting into the hands of many individuals that might have ill intents, as those in the Columbine High School massacre and the shooter in the Virginia tech massacre. There would also be costs and penalties included in these new restrictions. The gun owner would have to pay for the classes and it would be the gun shop owner's responsibility to enter new gun owners into the Background check system. But the benefits would outweigh the costs because it would make gun ownership safer and more effective

With the increasing support of gun ownership it's no wonder why we as U.S. citizens are so concerned with public safety. Guns offer self defense, they offer protection in public and at home. Gun ownership has many benefits, but all these benefits could be lost if those who own the guns are irresponsible. It is the right of the gun owner to uphold the rights given to us by the second amendment; if we do not respect those rights and treat them as a privilege we could lose the right to bear arms forever. It takes a responsible person to act responsibly.

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