

Reasonable U. S. gun control rules truly ethical approach

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On Wednesday, armed attackers opened fire on a banquet at a social services centre for the disabled in San Bernardino, California killing 14 people and wounding 21 others.

Five days earlier a gunman stormed the Planned Parenthood health clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, killing three people and wounding nine.

A few politicians, including U. S. President Barack Obama, think it is time to regulate the sale and possession of fire firearms, but the National Rifle Association strongly defends the right of American citizens to bear arms according to the second amendment of their constitution.

As usual, in many occurrences of gun violence in United States, most citizens are at loss to explain the motives of the murderers or to know how to defend themselves from such terrible massacres in the future.

If guns were sold to young children it would be clear to Americans that this would be a very unethical practice. Most mature people agree that children would not have the intelligence or understanding of how dangerous guns can be in the hands of people who do not yet have sufficient judgement to use lethal weapons wisely or safely. It is also an indication that there are some adults who, like young children, do not have the judgement and understanding to be in possession of guns. It is evidence that it would be equally unethical to sell guns to those adults who seem incapable of owning or using guns properly and safely.

Some American statistics claim a daily average of 25 murders caused by guns in United States. This is a number in excess of 9000 people per year although in 2012 gun deaths actually tripled that number. Depending on population density, annual gun deaths range from 3.4 to 4.7 per 100,000 citizens.

Politicians have an ethical obligation to create legislation that controls the sale of guns to citizens of any age who do not possess the mental or physical capability to use guns with care and safety. In United States the second amendment is not a sufficient reason to allow every citizen the right to bear arms regardless of their individual limitations. For example, totally blind people or violently insane people should not be allowed to purchase guns. Yet in many states there are no State laws required to purchase guns. There are, however, Federal laws which do limit the misuse of guns and uphold punishments after a crime is committed.

A problem arises in assessing the various degrees of physical or mental disability of those who want to own guns. For this reason a wise and ethical approach would be to have each person who wants to own guns, carefully assessed prior to purchasing a gun. This procedure is not as cumbersome as it may first appear. Often when people are individually assessed for their suitability for being hired for a job they are required to have a police check to determine if they have a criminal record. Many jobs also require health records that indicate the likelihood of mental or physical stability or lack of it.

Signs of severe depression, aggression, abuse of illegal drugs, theft, extreme anxiety, physical altercations, or sex abuse, may well be available from medical or criminal records. As Dr. Phil McGraw of television fame has said, "The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior".

Of course, there are degrees of mental illnesses or criminal activity or physical disabilities which may not in themselves indicate gun owners are any more dangerous than other citizens. It is for this reason that those in charge of assessing suitability for gun ownership should rely on professional health records and criminal records and exercise care in doing so.

The National Rifle Association is a large politically powerful group. There must surely be enough wisdom and intelligence within their group that they can be persuaded a truly ethical approach would be to establish reasonable gun control regulations in advance of ownership in order to protect American citizens while still upholding the second amendment.