

GUN CONTROL

By: Robert Graves

The Current Situation

Gun control has been a hot debate in the United States as of late. Politicians have pushed for many regulations including:

- background checks
- assault rifle bans
- implementation of a mandatory buyback program

The problem with most of these proposed solutions is the encroachment on American freedom. Gun violence might be an issue that America will have to put up with in order to keep the core principles of what makes the United States what it is.



The American public needs to realize that gun control is a political fantasy. Due to our constitution, gun control is essentially as strict as it can legally get. With the exception of the federal restriction of explosives and fully automatic firearms, gun control is primarily at the state level where there is no correlation between stricter gun control and gun related violent crime. In Maine, citizens 21 or older are not required by law to obtain a permit to open or conceal carry a handgun. Maine boasted the lowest violent crime rate at 123 per 100,000 people. In contrast, New Mexico has the 2nd highest violent crime rate at 702 per 100,000 people and a permit is required to carry a handgun. California is known for their strict gun control; however, California's violent gun crime surpasses Texas's, who is known for their relaxed gun laws (USA Today).

Buyback Programs

Thanks to the 5th amendment: “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation”, and the 2nd 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.”, lawmakers cannot further restrict the American public of their 2nd amendment rights.

A buy back program is when a nation's government “buys back” firearms from the public to remove them from the streets. Australia implemented a buy back program for assault-style firearms in 1996; It produced results. They paid \$100 per gun. Australia's homicide rate via assault rifles dropped, albeit not dramatically. Australia boasted taking 700,000 firearms out of the public hand. The problem for us: Statistics show that there are more firearms than citizens in the United States. The current U.S. population is over 300 million. Billions of dollars would be needed to fund such a project (Hepburn).

Due to the 5th amendment's stipulations that just compensation must be made to possess public property, that price tag would be much, much larger as the market price for guns can extend into 5 digit figures.

A firearm buyback would prove far too expensive for the government to implement. Thanks to the second amendment, America's citizens are afforded the right to protect themselves from the government. So, even if the government could afford to buy back all of the nation's firearms, it would be illegal to deprive U.S. citizens of their arms.

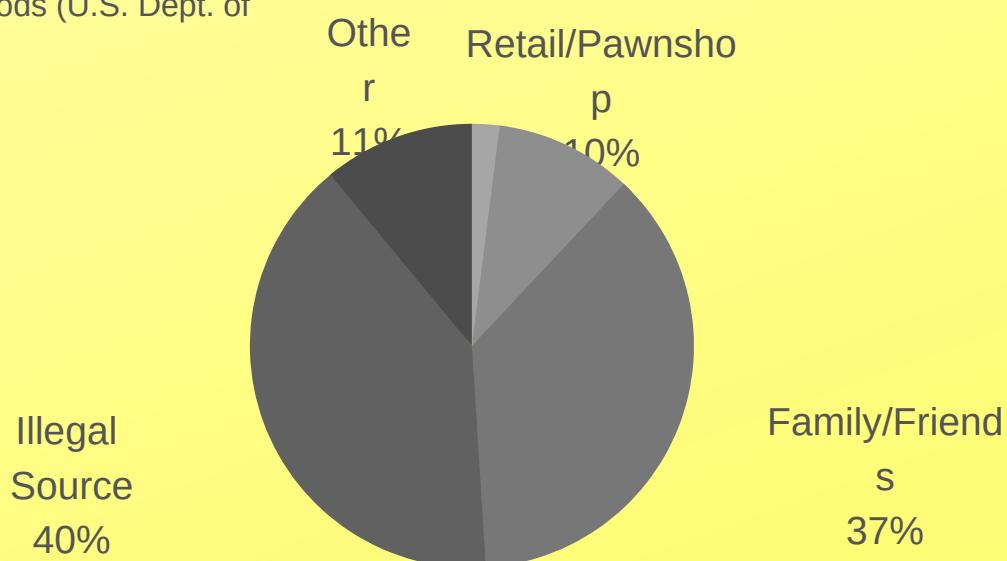
Why doesn't the government just buy back the assault rifles and leave citizens with shotguns and pistols? Well, one could make the case that the United States military's firepower already far surpasses its citizen's. Full auto firearms-which are already illegal without a permit- are not accessible to the average citizen. The purpose of the 2nd amendment is to allow the nation's citizens protection from their government. We currently wouldn't stand a fighting chance against the government if it decided to turn on its citizens. Semi-automatic firearms don't match up to tanks, drones, or high-tech rocket launchers. This was a problem our forefathers couldn't have foreseen.

Background Checks

To buy a new firearm, the buyer must pass a federal background check and purchase it through a licensed dealer. After the initial purchase, that firearm may pass through several hands through private transactions. Private transactions do not require background checks much like sales from gun shows. It wouldn't hurt to strengthen background checks, but this will likely affect law-abiding citizens rather than criminals: "In 2004, among state prison inmates who possessed a gun at the time of offense, fewer than 2% bought their firearm at a flea market or gun show, about 10% purchased it from a retail store or pawnshop, 37% obtained it from family or friends, and another 40% obtained it from an illegal source" From this study, 77% of inmates who committed crimes with firearms obtained them from sources other than legal methods (U.S. Dept. of Justice).

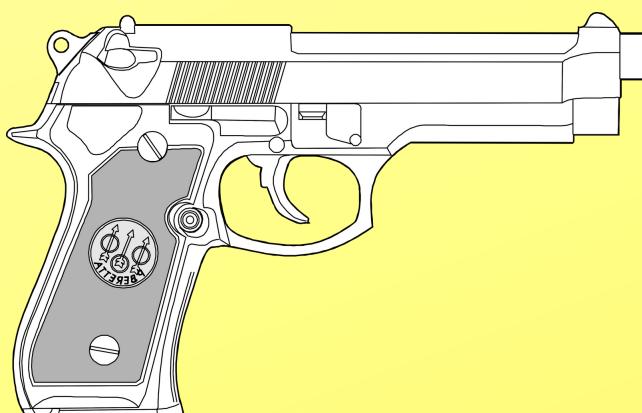
"In 2004, among state prison inmates who possessed a gun at the time of offense, less than 2% bought their firearm at a flea market or gun show and 40% obtained their firearm from an illegal source"

- U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics



Assault Rifle Bans

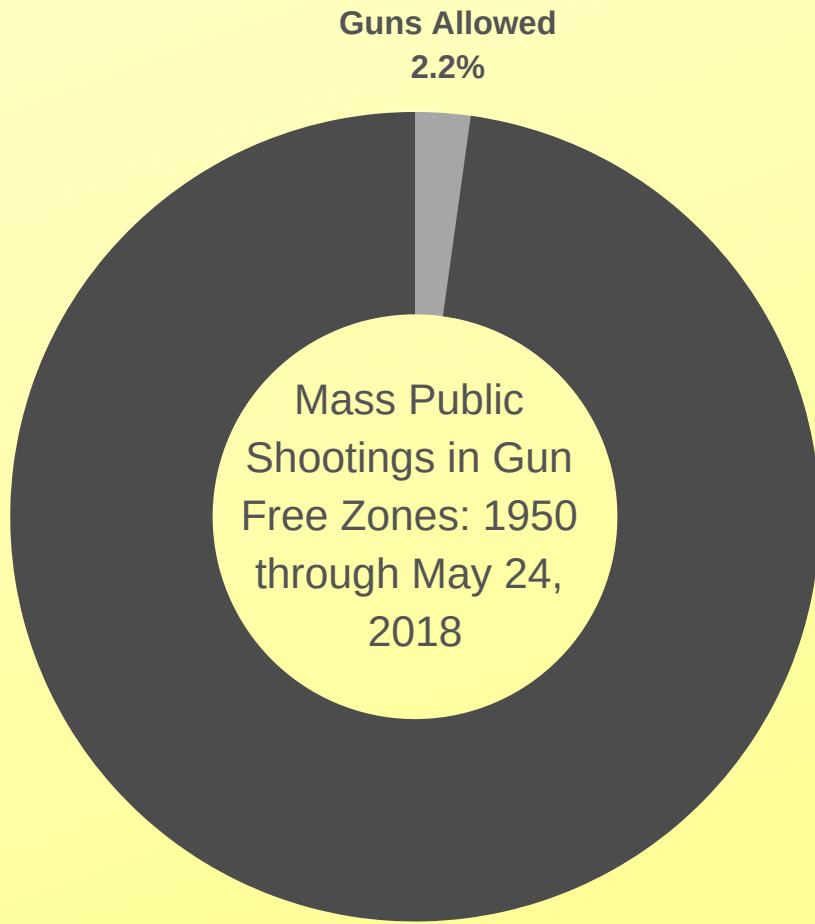
In 1994, the United States enacted a 10-year assault weapon ban. The ban had little effect on assault weapon-related crime as assault weapons only took up 2% of the gun crime. Also, existing assault weapons that were previously legal were grandfathered and weren't affected by the ban. The government's definition of an assault rifle varies widely. The main characteristics of an assault rifle are high capacity magazines, suppressor compatibility, pistol grips, etc. (Farley).



The idea behind an assault weapon ban isn't to reduce everyday gun deaths, but to do away with mass shootings, in which assault weapons are very popular.

Conclusion & Call to Action

The Constitution prevents current gun control from getting any stricter than it already is. Further debate is unnecessary. The fact is that law-abiding citizens are going to suffer under firearm restrictions and criminals are going to get their weapons no matter the laws. Afterall, 98% of the mass shootings between 1950 and 2014 occurred in gun free zones (Crime Prevention Research Center).



We're a nation forged through war and the tools used to wage it. From muskets to Peacemakers to today's assault rifles, the United States has maintained the world's largest fighting force through her guns and her citizens' willingness to wield them. With our military as our first line of defense, we stand at the ready to defend our country against enemies foreign and domestic with our firearms ensured to us through the second amendment of the constitution.

Reference List

U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice StatisticsBjs.gov. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fv9311.pdf> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

Crime Prevention Research Center. (2018). UPDATED: Mass Public Shootings keep occurring in Gun-Free Zones: 97.8% of attacks since 1950 - Crime Prevention Research Center. [online] Available at: <https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

Farley, R. (2018). Did the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban Work? - FactCheck.org. [online] FactCheck.org. Available at: <https://www.factcheck.org/2013/02/did-the-1994-assault-weapons-ban-work/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

Hepburn, L et al. "The US gun stock: results from the 2004 national firearms survey" Injury prevention : journal of the International Society for Child and Adolescent Injury Prevention vol. 13,1 (2007): 159.
[://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610545/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610545/)

Usatoday.com. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/21/states-most-and-least-gun-violence-see-where-your-state-stacks-up/359395002/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2018].

Photo Sources

All photos from <https://www.canva.com>