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Gun Control – Is It a Good Idea or Not?

The issue of gun control is a very heated topic in today's world, especially with the recent high-profile shootings. Gun control debates have been going on for many years but until recently, the public was apparently not paying attention. With the recent Aurora, Arizona, and Newtown shootings, the issue of gun control has been brought to the forefront of everyone's minds. Whether you believe in gun control or not, you likely have an opinion in the matter. In this paper, I intend to briefly explore both sides of the debate, and let you decide for yourself what side you are on.

People believe that the only way to keep America safer is by stricter gun control laws. One person that has personal experience with the matter is Jim Brady, who was the press secretary for President Ronald Reagan. He was shot in the attempted assassination of the President in the early 1980's. He suffered a serious head injury causing him to be partially paralyzed for the rest of his life. Jim and his wife, Sarah, joined an organization called Handgun Control, Inc in the late eighties. They have fought to have sensible gun laws that will help protect the community. In the year 2001, the H.G.I was renamed the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, to honor Jim and his wife's dedication to making America safer. Their web site has many statistics about gun control, most of which Americans would find shocking. "On average,

thirty-two Americans are murdered with guns each day and one hundred and forty are treated for gun assault wounds in an emergency room.” This is just one of the facts that are displayed on their web site. When America’s teenagers are asked if they have ever witnessed a shooting, shockingly, nearly one in four has. “This is a different world that we have raised our children in and something has to be done,” according to the Brady Campaign team. “Gun control is a necessary first step effort, to help make our kids and our communities a safer place” (Center).

Many people have been affected directly from gun violence. On the ‘Brady Campaign’ website there are peoples’ personal stories about loved ones being taken away from them because of gun violence. One story was about a young lady named Kirsten Hinkely. Her mother tells the story. “My youngest daughter and I went shopping 6 years ago this week, to go buy Valentines at a mall we love to shop at. A teenager with guns he illegally purchased through a pawn shop, was on a random shooting spree. He shot me three times, two of those were point blank permanently injuring me. My beautiful young daughter was shot twice, the second at point blank with the pistol grip shotgun, killing her instantly in front of my eyes. This crime could have been prevented had the gun dealers at the pawn shop cared about more than making a few bucks on this gun and refused to sell it to this teenager. The sale was illegal in many ways! It was senseless, and I will forever be maimed from the injuries and sick from the lead buckshot left in me. And my greatest heartbreaking loss is I will never see my child grow up, never hear another laugh, no grandchildren or walks down the aisle to receive a diploma, and the community lost a light and positive influence. She was, and would have been a very important person for good in our community and lives!” (Center 2013).

One of the solutions some gun control advocates have proposed is stricter background checks for gun purchases. Jim Cavanaugh has spent thirty-three years in the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, so he has been involved with this issue for many years and has a lot to say about this subject. In an article that he wrote for MSNBC, he says “Background checks aren’t gun control, they’re crime control.” The background checks that are mandatory now, will become more invasive. It will not make getting a gun harder for the average law abiding citizen, but will make it harder for criminals to obtain one. Cavanaugh used to tell detectives that were assigned to his division, “That gun trafficking ring you just broke up was about to be a series of murders.” or, “That armed felon you just arrested was a murder looking to happen.” In reading this article farther, Cavanaugh states his main reason as to why he believes that the background checks are actually crime control and not gun control. “If you’re in a cell block, you’re not out with your piece, preying on your neighborhood” (Cavanaugh).

In a recent speech given by President Obama, after the Gun Control bill was defeated in congress, he talked about how most Americans want this bill to be passed. “...it is well known that ninety percent of the American people support universal background checks that make it harder for a dangerous person to buy a gun.” Obama then proceeded to talk about how two senators who are both gun owning and second amendment supporters came together to write this bill, and how no one could obviously come out and say that this bill went against the second amendment. This bill extended the rule that all law enforcement agencies have to conduct background checks on people involved in gun sales made over the internet or at gun shows. The gun lobby and its allies saw this bill as a threat and “willfully lied” about it, according to the President. Obama explained, “They claimed that it would create a ‘Big Brother’ gun registry, when in reality it would do the opposite.” Obama stated that the congressmen and women need to not be bullied by the NRA, and do what is right for the American people and think more about their safety. In his closing remarks Obama states, “I believe we’re going to get this done. Sooner

or later, we are going to get this right. The memories of these children, (Newtown) demand it, and so does the American people” (Staff).

Not everyone believes that stricter gun control laws are a cure for all gun violence. In a personal interview that I conducted, I asked Detective Kent Cameron, of the Unified Police Department what his thoughts were about this issue, and he plainly stated, “I am against gun control. Our fore fathers put in place the second amendment for a reason, to protect us and our country. Guns don't kill people. People kill people. It is said that guns are blamed for the tragedies of late. If guns are taken away, people will find other ways to harm or kill people. It is the individuals committing these senseless crimes that need to be controlled” (Cameron). Detective Cameron’s thoughts go along perfectly with an article I found entitled "Gun Control: What Really Matters. ” This article was written by a man named Joe Klein and was published in TIME Magazine in April of 2013. Klein is pro gun control but he had some good thoughts about controlling people. “A few weeks ago court documents were released that recounted the infuriating struggle of the parents of Jared Loughner, the shooter of Sandy Hook Elementary, to control their mentally ill son. They took away his shotgun. They tried to prevent him from going out at night. They knew he was headed for something awful, but there was no way, no legal way, to control him.” He was in his late twenties so it wasn’t like his parents could just ground him. In the eyes of the law, he was an adult and he could do what he wanted. The article goes on to say that as long as mentally ill people could present themselves as sane and their violent episodes were rare then they had the right to control their own lives. Klein goes on to say that “maybe the testimony of parents, teachers and doctors should have a greater impact on the control of these extremely dangerous people than it now does” (Klein).

In the article entitled “Gun Control 2013: You Can’t Argue With the Facts,” written by Zach Fulkerson, a teaching assistant at Illinois State University pursuing a degree in Politics and Government, Mr. Fulkerson responded to another article written by man named Sean McElwee. Mr. McElwee has had many articles published in “The Day,” which is a paper in Connecticut. In Mr. Fulkerson’s article he mentions how Sean McElwee claims that “tons of other countries have reduced violence by reducing guns,” and then cites Australia as the example of this. Fulkerson then disproves this claim by saying, “According to the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA), the Australian Bureau of Criminology has openly acknowledged that this is not at all the case. In fact, according to the *DC Examiner*, Australia's highest year for gun murder was in 2006 — after the ban.” In reading this article further the author states some facts that “Australia’s Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, reported a forty six percent increase in assaults and a six percent increase in robberies after the firearm ban was implemented. Sexual assaults in Australia rose thirty percent and overall violent crime rose over forty two percent.” Fulkerson disproved McElwee’s claim that Australia was the shining example of what we should model our policies after. The NCPA data concluded: “While this doesn’t prove that more guns would impact crime rates, it does prove that gun control is a flawed policy” (Fulkerson).

As you can see the issue of Gun control produces a lot of passionate opinions. I for one am strongly against gun control. Being a Criminal Justice major has shown me that people who really want something are going to get it whether we like them to or not. If someone wants to get a gun to kill people, then they can just go ask their grandmother who could easily pass a background check to buy it for them as a present. It was obtained legally, but it still was used in committing a crime. People are strong willed and will do whatever it takes to do something they feel strongly about. People kill other people, guns just don’t randomly go off by themselves. It

takes the pull of that trigger by a person to kill another person. Just like food is not to totally to blame for the obesity in this country, guns are not to blame for the increase in violence our country seems to be experiencing. People who “decide” to eat fattening foods are more to blame than the food itself. Guns are inanimate objects that need humans to make them work. It is the person who decides to commit the crime that should be blamed, not the gun. We need to worry more about criminals, and the societal environment that produces them, and less about restricting legal gun sales to law abiding citizens.

Annotated Bibliography

Cameron K. (2013). Personal Interview

I interviewed Detective Kent Cameron from the Unified police department and asked him what his thoughts were about gun control. He gave a good insight from someone who works in law enforcement thought of the issue. I used going a statement he made "Gun's don't kill people. People kill people," in my paper and that helped to develop the anti-gun control side of my paper.

Cavanaugh, J. (2013). "Background Checks Aren't Gun Control, They're Crime Control." 2013, from tv.msnbc.com.

This article has some major credibility, because the person who wrote it was a former ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) agent so he knows a lot about firearms and the laws surrounding them. He mentions that background checks are not gun control, but they are to be used as a crime control resource. There are many people that don't have firearms now because of the strict background checks, even though the resources for that background check are only provided to law enforcement agencies. The author points out that even if we do get stricter laws that won't effect the illegal gun sales that go on in the street but they will have to overcome more obstacles. This article helped to develop the pro-gun control side of my paper.

Center, T. B. (2013). "Brady Campaign to prevent Gun Violence ". Retrieved July 21, 2013, 2013, from www.bradycampaign.org.

This whole web site is a wealth of information about gun violence and the steps people can take to help prevent it. The web page has a place where different articles or advances are talked about like how a new law in Kansas has been passed that a gun dealer can be held responsible for selling a gun that was used in a violent crime. It's no longer just the perpetrator's fault. The gun dealer can also be brought up for charges if he doesn't follow the letter of the law. This site also has stories that have been written by family members of some gun violence victims and how their personal tragedy affected their lives. I used a local story as an example in my paper.

Fulkerson, Z. (2013). "Gun Control Debate 2013: You Can't Argue With the Facts." from www.policymic.com.

This article mentions quite a few studies that show that there is no correlation between gun control and crime rates. The article talked a little bit about the affect on Austrailian society when they did their own gun control bill. The rate of violent crimes sky rocketed. He quotes Vice president Joe Biden when he said in a speech "that a homeowner should aimlessly fire a shotgun in their home if an intruder has entered." This article helped to develop the anti-gun control side of my paper.

Klein, J. (2013). "Gun Control: What Really Matters." TIME. Retrieved from swampland.time.com.

This article talks about how if the control bill passed, then there may be another lunatic that goes on a rampage and kills 25+ people and the gun lobby will be able to say "see, we passed gun control and it didn't work." It mainly suggests that maybe the problem isn't exactly guns but the people that handle them. It referenced a time back in the 1970's where institutions would drug the mentally ill people and they could be released to be around the public but always in a zombie like state. In court rooms today if the person on trial can appear to be sane in front of the judge, then they are considered as such, but this article says that maybe we should let the testimonies of the parents, doctors and teachers of these mentally ill people carry more weight in the courts then they do now. That would make it more difficult for mentally ill people to legally purchase guns. I used this article to develop the anti-gun control part of my paper.

Staff, T. (2013). "President Obama's Speech On Gun Control Bill Defeat (Transcript)." TIME Magazine from swampland.time.com.

In the transcript of the President's speech after the gun control bill was shot down by Congress, the President talks about how Congress failed America, and how 90% of Americans are okay with the stricter gun laws and background checks. He mentioned how Congress was being bullied by the National Rifle Association, to get an A grade by the gun lobby. He talked quite a bit about the efforts that families affected by the Auroa, Chicago, and Newtown shootings have had to go through in order to have their voices heard. I used this article to develop the pro-gun control side.

