



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2018 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Winner

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“The time has now come that we must adopt stringent gun control legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country in the world.”

The Late Senator Thomas Dodd, June 11, 1968

And here we are - 650,000 gun related homicides; more than twice that many wounded; 130,000 children and teen lives lost (1) within that 50 year time span - yet, the quote is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago. It is, without hesitation, a disgrace. They are places that we know all too well and for all of the wrong reasons. They are synonymous with the devastation that gun violence brings...Las Vegas, Pulse Nightclub, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Columbine, Sutherland Springs, and now Marjory Stoneman Douglass (2). Since 1966, there have been 150 mass shootings that occurred in the United States (3).

Thus, it continues to be glaringly apparent how big of an issue and how important common-sense gun control laws are, and how the lack of gun laws impacts the United States. It seems that every week there is another mass shooting involving night clubs, concerts, churches, sporting events, or schools. After each shooting, there are “thoughts and prayers” and an aggressive debate on the interpretation of the Second Amendment, but nothing more. No substantial legislative changes ever seem to come from the tragedy.

The United States is a flourishing, first-world country that is seen as one of the most powerful and successful countries in the world. Since the U.S. is viewed in such a strong way, we should lead by example, especially when it comes to political matters. However, the US has failed when it comes to gun control and has few restrictions on gun purchases and has one of the highest rates of gun violence in the world (4). In fact, it is harder for someone to obtain a driver's license than it is to obtain a gun.

In December 2001 when a man tried to conceal a bomb in his shoe, the airports immediately made it mandatory for people to take their shoes off and have them screened. One incident caused TSA to create laws that

would prevent similar incidents from occurring, so logically the same approach should be taken with gun laws and gun safety to prevent future mass shootings.

One country that did learn from past incidents and created new laws to prevent future incidents was Australia. In 1996 Australia passed the National Firearms Agreement following a mass shooting that occurred in Tasmania which left 35 people dead and 18 wounded by a 28 year-old who possessed a semi-automatic rifle. Under the National Firearms Agreement, semi-automatic rifles and self-loading and pump action shotguns were all banned. Stricter gun laws were also imposed, and background checks and stricter gun licensing was put into law as well. Since 1996, the number of mass shooting that have occurred in Australia has been zero (5).

People who deal with addiction say that they need to hit rock bottom in order to understand that they need to change. The question is, what is the rock bottom to have the US address their gun addiction?

References

- (1) <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-by-the-numbers/>
- (2) <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/us/20-deadliest-mass-shootings-in-u-s-history-fast-facts/index.html>
- (3) https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/mass-shootings-in-america/?utm_term=.989c1aeb4954
- (4) <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/11/06/562323131/gun-violence-comparing-the-u-s-with-other-countries>
- (5) <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/10/gun-control-australia-updated/>