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Support the Gun Reform Package

Wed, 03/13/2013 - 03:36 Arc of Justice Rally coalition to stop gun violence David Phan Gun Control Package Newtown tragedy Queer Suicide School Shootings Share Your Story whitehouse.gov

In my short story, "The Oak Tree at Court House Park," the hero of the story is a self-made vendor, Joaquin, who makes his living selling popsicles from a push-cart. This story was based upon my experience visiting vendors at Fresno Fulton Mall. They would fan out around town, visiting friendly neighborhoods where there might be children wanting to buy *paletas*.

When my story was first published in 2010, little did I realize that this vendor had already been murdered as he was selling popsicles in Southeast Fresno in July. Juan Luna, a 73-year-old man whose wife also worked as a vendor, was gunned down by a young African-American male suspect while selling popsicles at an apartment complex on the 4800 block of east Fillmore ("Fresno Ice Cream Man Shot").^[1]

This is just one example of how guns and senseless murder touch people's lives. There is absolutely no question that we live in a violent society, from the movies to the video games, from the mixed messages to oppressive work settings. The fact is that pathological people can reify into cold-blooded killers when they have ready access to guns.

This is why as the vote draws near, I have come around to voicing my support for the Gun Control Package first proposed by President Obama, and introduced by Vice-President Biden. There are many priorities in the country right now, as the State of the Union speech made clear, but opportunity does not wait around for second chances!

Here is what Ladd Everitt, Communications Director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV) stated in his speech on January 21, 2013, on how significant the proposal is:

The reform package on gun laws that our President announced is the most important effort that any American leader has ever made to de-escalate the gun violence in this country.^[2]

So what is the big deal about this gun bill? Initially I had to weigh my personal misgivings a bit, because there are many Chinatown business owners who probably still pack a gun underneath the cash register in case of the inevitable night-time robbery. What if false precautions prevent non-English speaking citizens from purchasing a gun for their own protection?

A visit to the "Now is the Time" webpage (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence#share>) convinced me of several things.^[3]

First of all, it is a timely package. No waiting around for six months for slow legislative decision-making under intermittent committees. After all, both the White House leaders are trained attorneys, so they understood the craft of writing legislative proposals.

Secondly, the list of mass shootings in the United States is frightful. There is one list at Mother Jones (<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data>), but it doesn't include gang-related, drive-by, sniper, homicides, robbery, hate crimes, familicides, accidental or other minor shootings. The list is also different from the one for school shootings, which is different from the one for rampage killers (listed at Wikipedia).

One thing is for sure, despite not being thrilled about the Gamania internet parlors in the Republic of China (Taiwan), I have to admit that the United States has a lot more physical gun violence.

Third, Gun Control legislation, according to a variety of advocates, will provide things like background checks, so that ex-cons will have reduced access to gun ownership. Fourth, by setting up a national database, state-wide detectives will have an easier time coordinating and tracing crime suspects. This is especially important where semi-automatic weapons are involved--and they often are in mass shootings--and in extremist kidnappings.

Everitt also stated there should be a renewed effort to renew the federal ban on assault weapons (semi-automatics) and high capacity ammunition magazines if only because "they show up in mass shooting after mass shooting."

Fifth, as any of you can stand to reason, any time there is a mass shooting or rampage, semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines almost have to be involved, since the assailants need to maximize their effectualness between the time when shooting starts to when they retreat and make their getaway.

Sixth, the Obama-Biden gun control package, would increase criminology research. Is violence or the love of violence not some kind of disease with addicts such as in pornography?

Seventh, the perpetrators themselves need safe outlets they can turn to in distress. Whether it was a James, or a Seung-hui, or a David, these students needed help, but they were afraid to seek it. Were these students victims of harassment or bullying by peers or administrators or even at home? In the case of David Phan, an in-depth investigative report prepared by Terry K. Park indicates that Phan may have been the victim of anti-gay bullying at his school, which sparked a questionable school suspension, then suicide ("David Phan's Suicide Sparks").^[4]

Under proposed federal guidelines, counselors and psychologists, school administrators and social workers would receive support and training to learn how to "use proven strategies to prevent violence and improve school climate by reducing bullying, drug abuse, violence, and other problem behaviors" ("Now is the Time"). There is nothing like more uniformity and consistency in improving a sense of fairness, such as the Common Core Standards in education.

Eighth, the Obama-Biden gun control package also includes a section on improving access to mental health, since often times, particularly for public health programs, mental health service is viewed as expendable, so there is often inadequate health insurance coverage.

The Obama Administration (including Mrs. Obama) has thrown its weight behind new Gun Control legislation, and it is clear from President Obama's State of the Union Speech that he intends to address many of the 99% of the

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Madhuri	1145
erinjerri	1119
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jenn	219

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- Users by points

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Check out our archives

- November 2013 (3)
- October 2013 (2)
- September 2013 (1)
- August 2013 (4)
- July 2013 (3)
- June 2013 (1)
- May 2013 (3)
- April 2013 (7)
- March 2013 (7)
- February 2013 (3)

1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 next last »

people's concerns. Unfortunately, it is also clear that the GOP may continue to try to filibuster the President's altruistic proposals if only due to the Boehner-led partisanship.

The newly re-elected President wants to hear our voices, so much so that the White House has set up several new social networking sites, Google+ White House, and Share Your Stories.

There are other credible websites where you can learn more about pending gun control legislation, and even sign gun control petitions.

- Visit **Coalition to Stop Gun Violence** (<http://www.csgv.org/new-to-the-issue>).
- Read about the bills at **Open Congress** and write a letter of support.
- Write a **Letter to Your Representatives** (<http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>).

In closing, I would like to include Ladd Everitt (CSGV)'s final remarks ^[5]:

Are these reforms perfect? No. But I would tell you that Dr. King more than anyone understood, you do not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. He understood that the fight for a more peaceful America would be incremental, and we would have to fight it in steps. This is a critical step. Please contact Congress when you're lobbying on whatever issue you are lobbying on. I know you're in the faces of Congress. Please, in there, put in a request, "I demand that you support the President's Gun Reform package. I demand that you support this."

Due to gun violence here at home, it is too late for Juan Luna, and for so many other passed away innocent victims whether at Virginia Tech, Oikos University, Binghamton, Newtown, and countless workplaces, but it is not too late for our children and our loved ones. Gun control legislations may not solve the problems in our society, but it is a step in the right direction, and this is why we should all try to help that process along.

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- [1] Norma Yuriar, "Fresno Ice Cream Man Shot," KMPH, <http://www.kmph.com/Global/story.asp?S=12914497>.
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- [3] "Now is the Time," The President's Plan to Reduce Gun Violence, The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence>.
- [4] Terry K. Park, "David Phan's Suicide Sparks Grief, Anger, and Call for Justice, Hyphen, <http://www.hyphenmagazine.com/blog/archive/2013/01/david-phans-suicide-sparks-grief-anger-and-call-justice>.
- [5] Ladd Everitt, *ibid*.

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