Opinion
Editorial



Messages hang on a fence as hundreds of students and parents arrive for campus orientation Feb. 25, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. (CNS/Reuters/Angel Valentin)

by NCR Editorial Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

March 2, 2018

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

One advantage youth have is the freedom to be single-minded. They know what they want and they ask for it, repeatedly and firmly. When it comes to finding solutions to the pandemic of gun violence that plagues our nation, high school students — in Florida, certainly, but in other parts of the country, too — are showing us the way. This time we must follow their lead. We've had enough talk about guns. Let's do something this time.

Gun advocates and their allies in state legislatures and in Congress are doing their best to divert attention and obscure the issue, but the single-mindedness of the students rebuffs their talking points every time.

Every interview, every news broadcast, every news article that features a lobbyist for the gun industry or a legislator beholden to the lobby begins the same way: "This is a complicated issue." By "this," they mean the slaughter of some 33,000 people a year because of gun violence. "No single piece of legislation will solve this problem," they say in a very reasoned tone.

Then begins the ritual handwringing and the long list of complicating factors: It has to do with mental health. Nothing can keep everyone totally safe from a lone evildoer or a wacko (they like to use that term). We should arm teachers and "harden" schools. More guns, not fewer, will make us safer. Assault-type weapons really don't kill all that many people. We want to do something, but not at the risk of sacrosanct Second Amendment rights.

You've heard this before, and the track record for the last 20 years is that the talking points work. People weary of the endless debate walk away.

But maybe not this time.

Advertisement

Emma González, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, has an answer for all who toss their hands in the air, bemoan how complicated this issue is and ultimately do nothing — do nothing except take more money from the gun lobby and tout the gun-lobby line. González said:

> The people in the government who were voted into power are lying to us. And us kids seem to be the only ones who notice and are prepared to call BS. … Politicians who sit in their gilded House and Senate seats funded by the NRA telling us nothing could have ever been done to prevent this, we call BS. They say that tougher guns laws do not decrease gun violence. We call BS. They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. We call BS. They say guns are just tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars. We call BS. They say no laws could have been able to prevent the hundreds of senseless tragedies that have occurred. We call BS. That us kids don't know what we're talking about, that we're too young to understand how the government works. We call BS.

In González's single-mindedness is this truth: There are things we can, that we should do. And now is the time to get them done.

The first thing we have to do is to oppose the gun lobby by getting as organized as it is. In an editorial in November 2017, just after the mass shootings at a music concert in Las Vegas and at a Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, NCR pledged "to use the resources of this publication to work toward finding a solution to gun violence in this country." Today, we renew that pledge.

That editorial presented a list of organizations working to solve the multiple issues around gun violence. We reiterate that recommendation. We also pledge to stay with this issue, to bring readers information and action plans for confronting this tragedy.

What should you do? González has the answer: "Register to vote. Contact your local congresspeople. Give them a piece of your mind."

We agree: Call them on their BS.

One piece of legislation needs immediate attention. In December, the House of Representatives passed HR 38, the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017, and it is now in the Senate (SB 446). This bill would enable individuals who are allowed to carry their guns in public in their home states to do the same anywhere else in the country, running roughshod over local, state and even other federal laws that would prohibit this.

Under this law, anyone with a concealed carry permit can carry a gun anywhere, even into schools. The bill says that an individual "is not subject to the federal prohibition on possessing a firearm in a school zone."

Call your senators and tell them to vote no on the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act. Let's make stopping this bill the first step toward bringing common sense to our gun laws.

Emma González's Feb. 17, 2018, speech about gun violence, presented from CNN's YouTube channel

This story appears in the **Gun Violence** feature series. View the full series.
A version of this story appeared in the **March 9-22, 2018** print issue.