

Better gun control (without taking away your guns) is possible

Pat Perriello | Jul. 27, 2012 NCR Today

After the tragic shootings in Aurora, Colo., we have heard a few voices raised advocating some forms of gun control. Unfortunately, it feels like an exercise in futility. Over the years, the gun lobby has controlled this topic and essentially made it taboo. No political party has it anywhere on its stated agenda.

What is amazing is that as dormant as this issue has been since the presidency of Bill Clinton, there remain parts of the public who still believe someone is going to take their guns away. There have been reports that a number of gun enthusiasts have been buying ammunition because they know that if President Barack Obama wins a second term, he is going to confiscate their weapons. The fact that Congress would have to approve any such legislation, and that both parties in Congress are beholden to the gun lobby, seems not to matter.

The end result has produced a country where weapons are available to everyone in large numbers. Some feel empowered to show up at any event brandishing a firearm. Guns are seen as appropriate for teachers to carry in schools and individuals to carry openly at campaign-style events. Some are already saying that if more people had carried guns into that theater in Aurora, things would have been better.

How many incidents like the one in Colorado will it take to move communities to demand change? You can hear the naysayers already: Guns don't kill people, people do. No legislation would have prevented the carnage at the theater. So does this mean we are powerless to act in the face of such senseless violence? Even with the Supreme Court's current interpretation of the Second Amendment, I refuse to believe there is nothing to be done.

Maybe this incident would not have been prevented, but others might be. There has to be an understanding of who has a legitimate need to possess guns and what kind of guns they would be. Assault weapons and other military-style weapons do not need to be, nor should they be, in the hands of the general public. The gun-show loophole should be closed immediately. All firearms should be registered like automobiles so law enforcement knows who has them and how many they have.

Nobody wants to take guns away from legitimate owners. As a West Virginian, I am well aware of the major role hunting plays in the lives of many law-abiding citizens. Those who feel the need for protection can also have access to a gun, but that does not mean they need an arsenal. We should not allow groups who fear the government to stockpile military arms and equipment for the day they decide they need to overthrow their government.

Citizens need to make their voices heard to put an end to the more extreme notions regarding the present love affair with guns in this country. It is also time for our church to raise its voice in support of changes to our gun laws that would promote a culture of life. Hopefully, more life need not be lost before the church recognizes gun control as a legitimate right-to-life issue.

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