

Could opinions on gun control change in the future?

Pat Perriello | Jul. 31, 2012 NCR Today

I feel we have started something here at *NCR* with [our discussion](#) [1] on gun control. Clearly, it is a subject that engenders strong feelings on all sides of the issue. I just finished reading Joe Klein's article in *Time*, "[How the Gun Won.](#)" [2] I would recommend it to those interested in this topic.

Based on the Supreme Court's decision, NRA lobbying, and the apparent changes in the views of average citizens, it would seem that gun control will be going nowhere for the foreseeable future. One respondent to my earlier blog suggested approaching the issue from the point of view of power and its abuse rather than gun control. It may be a good suggestion.

It reminds me, however, of the attitude toward capital punishment over the last few decades. No successful politician could be seen as being against the use of the death penalty. One may remember Michael Dukakis, who essentially was no longer seen as a credible candidate for the presidency when he failed to support the imposition of the death penalty. When President Bill Clinton was running for the presidency in 1992, he left the campaign trail to go back to Arkansas and preside over an execution to demonstrate how tough he was on law and order issues.

Yet there has been a dramatic shift in opinion on this topic in recent years. The possibility that we may have been executing innocent individuals has given people pause. DNA testing has demonstrated that witnesses are often incorrect in what they believe they saw, and some states have chosen to introduce a moratorium on the exercise of the death penalty. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church has stepped forward and consistently included the abolition of the death penalty as part of its culture of life agenda.

All of these factors indicate it is possible to turn public opinion around on a major issue. A change in the way we view gun ownership is also likely to occur over time. Unfortunately, one possible reason may be an increase in violent incidents like the one in Aurora, Colo., or at Virginia Tech in 2007. There will come a point when people say it makes no sense for individuals or groups to have their homes full of every lethal weapon imaginable, and steps will be taken. Just the other day, a Maryland resident was found with a house full of weapons and ammunition after he threatened people at his place of employment.

Finally, the other factor that might make a difference in our views on gun violence could be an active role on the part of the church in highlighting the insanity of making our country an armed camp. Church support for meaningful changes in gun laws that would limit gun access without depriving citizens of legitimate gun ownership could be a powerful force. If the church visibly recognizes and includes sensible gun laws in their right-to-life agenda, it could accelerate a change in attitudes and a change in laws. Hopefully we will be able to make meaningful changes to our gun laws before additional horrific incidents occur.

Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/node/31487>

[2] <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2120498,00.html>