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The struggle for new gun laws

Pat Perriello | Jan. 28, 2013 NCR Today

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein has introduced [1] new assault weapons legislation in Congress. The president and vice president are both campaigning hard for movement on a variety of gun legislation. Yet we are already being told that such legislation is unlikely to pass. At most, Congress may move only in the area of universal background checks.

Why are we already being forced to accept the reality of failure in achieving an assault weapons ban, even in limiting large capacity magazines? Apparently the powers that be who decide these things have decided to let President Barack Obama have his universal background checks but are shutting the door on any further movement. Republicans and far too many Democrats do not want to buck the National Rifle Association. Actually, the NRA is not really interested in protecting gun owners, but rather, gun manufacturers. It turns out that, as with most things, it is all about money.

As we learn more about the way our government works, we find that all too often it is about special interests, power and money. Does it not matter that a majority of Americans favor a ban on assault weapons? Does it not matter that the victims and families of these horrendous crimes are pleading for meaningful change in gun laws? Must the voices of the people take a back seat to those who wield power in Washington?

A new Gallup Poll shows [2] the American people support significant changes in our gun laws. The poll shows that Americans approve changes in all nine of the categories the president included when he laid out his gun agenda. This includes 91 percent who support universal background checks; 60 percent who support a ban on assault weapons; as well as 75 percent who support stronger penalties for those who purchase guns for others who are not eligible to buy or own guns.

We now have an opportunity to find out what power the people have in our democracy. I believe we can prevail on these issues if we assert our beliefs and demand action on the part of our legislators. The gun lobby should not be allowed to decide what the government does or does not do. It should not be allowed to override the outrage and pain so many have experienced in the wake of the numerous incidents of gun violence, including the tragedy in Newtown, Conn. People from all parts of the country and all faith communities need to continue to speak out and not waver in insisting that change occur. We need to prove the pundits wrong in this case. We need to give politicians the courage to vote the will of the people and not fall in line with the gun lobby. We need to prove that we do have a government of all the people and not just of the few and powerful.

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[1] http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2013/0124/Senate-Democrats-unveil-assault-weapons-ban.-Can-it-win-any-GOP-support?nav=618865-csm_blog_post-leftColRelated
[2] http://www.gallup.com/poll/160085/americans-back-obama-proposals-address-gun-violence.aspx