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We must organize to challenge the gun lobby

by Pat Perriello

NCR Today

The Baltimore Sun has an excellent editorial on the current state of gun violence in our country.

The editorial looks at President Barack Obama's comments at the memorial for those who lost their lives in the most recent mass shooting at the U.S. Navy Yard in Washington. President Obama made clear nothing will change in this country unless the American people insist the enactment of common-sense laws. The *Sun's* editorial makes clear we cannot give up; we cannot become resigned to the ever more frequent shootings.

It is difficult to feel optimistic about the immediate future for sensible gun laws to reduce the ongoing carnage we continue to see. We know the drill only too well. Another mass shooting occurs. We express outrage. We hold candlelight vigils. We conduct memorials with speeches, song and prayer. We have learned to comfort the grieving families very well.

Both sides in the gun debate then roll out the usual arguments. Initial enthusiasm is generated for making sensible changes to gun safety laws that will prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands. An overwhelming majority of citizens, including gun owners, support reasonable changes.

Soon, however, the gun lobby is able to turn the conversation around. Anyone who wants to make even a modest change in gun laws is made to seem not only foolish, but anti-American. We become convinced of the counterintuitive proposition that the ever-increasing accessibility of guns is totally irrelevant to the increasing gun violence we are witnessing.

Ultimately, nothing is done to prevent future shootings. The only thing we can be certain of is that there will be another mass shooting, and these incidents will occur ever closer together.

Can it be different this time? Yes, it can. There must, however, be a determination to challenge the gun lobby rhetoric and its frequent illogical assertions. In line with the president's speech, we need the majority of Americans who recognize the need to demand action. Parents, co-workers, friends and family members who have suffered from senseless gun violence across the country need to become energized. The churches need to be at the forefront of this effort to organize and overcome the money and the distorted rhetoric of the gun lobby. This is inherently a pro-life issue.

It will not be easy, but it can be done. The gun lobby represents only a small fraction of Americans. The rest of us need to stand up and be counted in the struggle to enact reasonable regulations to help make our country safer.

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