

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

December 13, 2013 at 6:00am

Editorial: The year since Sandy Hook has not been squandered

by NCR Editorial Staff

Editorial

Five times President Barack Obama has spoken at services to memorialize victims of mass shootings: Fort Hood, Texas; Tucson, Ariz.; Aurora, Colo.; Newtown, Conn.; and the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. That in itself should be a sign of the epidemic of violence that has engulfed this nation. One would think that five national memorial services in four years would have galvanized a nation to act to end gun violence. Sadly, it has not.

At his last memorial service for the 12 people gunned down at the Navy Yard, Obama acknowledged this: "After the round-of-clock coverage on cable news, after the heartbreaking interviews with families, after all the speeches and all the punditry and all the commentary, nothing happens. ... Alongside the accumulated outrage so many of us feel, sometimes I fear there's a creeping resignation. ... That this is somehow the new normal."

NCR has editorialized on this topic four times in the last 16 months, since the theater shooting in Aurora, using headlines like: "We are victims of out-of-control gun culture" and "Sensible gun control is still possible." Weeks after the shootings in the Sandy Hook Elementary School, we addressed it as a pro-life issue. We supported Obama's two dozen executive orders and his legislative agenda to reduce gun violence. We asked the Supreme Court to review its ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, which said the Second Amendment gives "a general right to bear arms." That faulty interpretation of the Constitution emboldened an already overly aggressive, powerful gun lobby that continually thwarts even the most reasonable restraints on sales of weapons and ammunition, and hampers the ability of federal authorities to track gun sales. We called Catholic lawmakers -- Republicans and Democrats alike -- who have "A" ratings from the National Rifle Association to stand up to the gun lobby. Seemingly, all to no avail.

Is this the new normal? Have we succumbed to creeping resignation?

Happily, we can say no to both questions. In the 12 months since the Sandy Hook shootings, grassroots activists have been busy and successful. When our reporter Colleen Dunne began to research our Page 1 story, she and we believed it would be a long list of defeats for those who want gun violence put under control. Thanks to the passion and hard work of people like Shannon Watts of Moms Demand Action and Vincent DeMarco of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, and thousands of others, the year since Sandy Hook has not been squandered. We have not achieved our goals for reducing gun violence and protecting the innocent in this country, but significant gains have been made.

We affirm what Obama confirmed in his Navy Yard address: "The change we need will not come from Washington. ? Change will come the only way it has come and that's from the American people."

"Clearly we care," Obama said. "The question is do we care enough to keep standing up for the country that we know is possible even though it's hard and even if it's politically uncomfortable?"

Watts and DeMarco have stood up when it's hard and uncomfortable. We will make our stand with them.

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