

# KeizerOpinion

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## Apocalyptic thinking and guns

By MICHAEL GERSON

It is one of the dirty habits of our political discourse that so many people use thermonuclear rhetorical weapons as a first resort. It is not enough for defenders of gun rights to be wrong; they must be complicit in murder. It is not enough for gun-control advocates to be mistaken; they must be jack-booted thugs laying the groundwork for tyranny.

These competing apocalypses, paradoxically, make politics appear smaller — the realm of unbalanced partisans and professional hyperventilators. But more destructively, this type of argument makes incremental change—the kind that our system of government encourages—more difficult.

This is a particular shame on the issue of gun violence. The maximal solutions—broad restrictions on gun ownership or fixing the mental-health system—are so difficult or unlikely that they have become obstacles to action.

But on guns, there is hope in focus. While overall gun violence in America has gone down dramatically in the last few decades, the use of guns in suicides (constituting about two-thirds of gun-related deaths) and in mass killings have spiked. Gun use in domestic violence and gang-related activity present particular challenges. No single policy will solve all these problems. But in each discrete area, good policy would make a difference.

When it comes to mass killings, we know what the perpetrators generally look like: Disappointed loners, motivated by grudges, seeking fame and planning their violence carefully. So here is an answerable public-policy question: What can we do to identify these dangerous malcontents and keep military-grade weaponry out of their hands? We should be considering: special police task forces that actively identify and track prospective killers instead of passively responding to warnings. Higher age restrictions on gun access. Broader application of gun-violence protective orders that forbid gun ownership to people exhibiting warning signs. Better education on those warning signs among adults who deal with young men. Media norms against using the names of mass killers, which only encourages their deadly performance art.

Surely there are other focused, proactive responses as well. Yet on the left, such ideas are sometimes dismissed as unambitious. And on the right, these proposals reveal a

durable division.

When it comes to American gun culture, the issue of motivation matters a great deal. If you defend access to guns for sport and self-defense, there is no logical reason to reject reasonable restrictions on firepower and access. Some compromise—focused on keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous and unstable people—is within the realm of possibility. But if you view the ultimate purpose of gun ownership as resistance to a future (or present) tyrannical government, then restrictions on firepower and access are exactly the things a tyrannical government would want. Since the goal of an oppressive state is to have a monopoly on sophisticated weaponry, any incremental movement toward that goal is unacceptable.

This argument—summarized by David French as “the concept of an armed citizenry as a final, emergency bulwark against tyranny”—is perhaps understandable in a country born of revolutionary violence. But more than two centuries removed from the revolution, the concept seems, well, frightening.

When I look at many of the people holding the guns, I don't really view them as legitimate protectors of my rights, or as qualified to make choices about the employment of violence in politics. I don't view America as halfway to tyranny. And I am grateful that Americans such as Martin Luther King Jr.—who suffered actual oppression by government—made a principled commitment to nonviolent political change.

It is one thing when Thomas Jefferson said “the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.” It is another thing entirely when your well-armed neighbor says the same.

I have no idea how much this attitude infects the right. But the fever can be measured in talk of a “deep state” coup against the president, in sympathy for Cliven Bundy in his armed standoff with federal agents, in support of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott when he ordered the State Guard to monitor the Jade Helm Navy SEAL/Green Beret joint training exercise. All destructive madness.

It is not just apocalyptic language but apocalyptic thinking that paralyzes our political system on gun violence. And it is difficult to see how incremental progress can be made unless that mindset is marginalized.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

guest  
opinion

## School security

To the Editor:

After 25 years in state law enforcement and several years in security management, I would like to offer suggestions for school security.

A security picture for any facility requires several layers of security. I would not recommend arming teachers and administrators who do not have professional experience with tactical weapons response. No teacher should be expected to shoot over the heads of their students at an active shooter.

The main security effort for schools should be to prevent an active shooter from entering the facility. A security picture for schools should include the following layers:

- Facility access control. Facility entry at the main entry only for students, staff can enter other locations with card access only—uniformed armed security present at main entry.
- Building exterior signage “Premises protected by armed security and 24-hour video surveillance.”
- Plain clothes armed security professionals fulltime or on a random basis weekly for each community school.
- Local, county and state law en-

forcement welcomed to walk through any school daily on a random basis.

- Exterior, parking lot and entry points all with video surveillance.

- All classrooms must have lockdown ability as well as any meeting area with safety training.

- Outside recreation and sporting events must have armed security uniformed—with radio communications to local law enforcement.

- School resource officers from local law enforcement agencies can be assigned on a random basis to community schools in addition to the above security measures.

In Oregon, a concealed handgun license simply requires a 4-hour class and a background investigation. No hands-on weapon and shooting experience is required. It takes years of training and shooting experience to get proficient for a tactical shooting situation. Anyone armed in a school must have that training and experience.

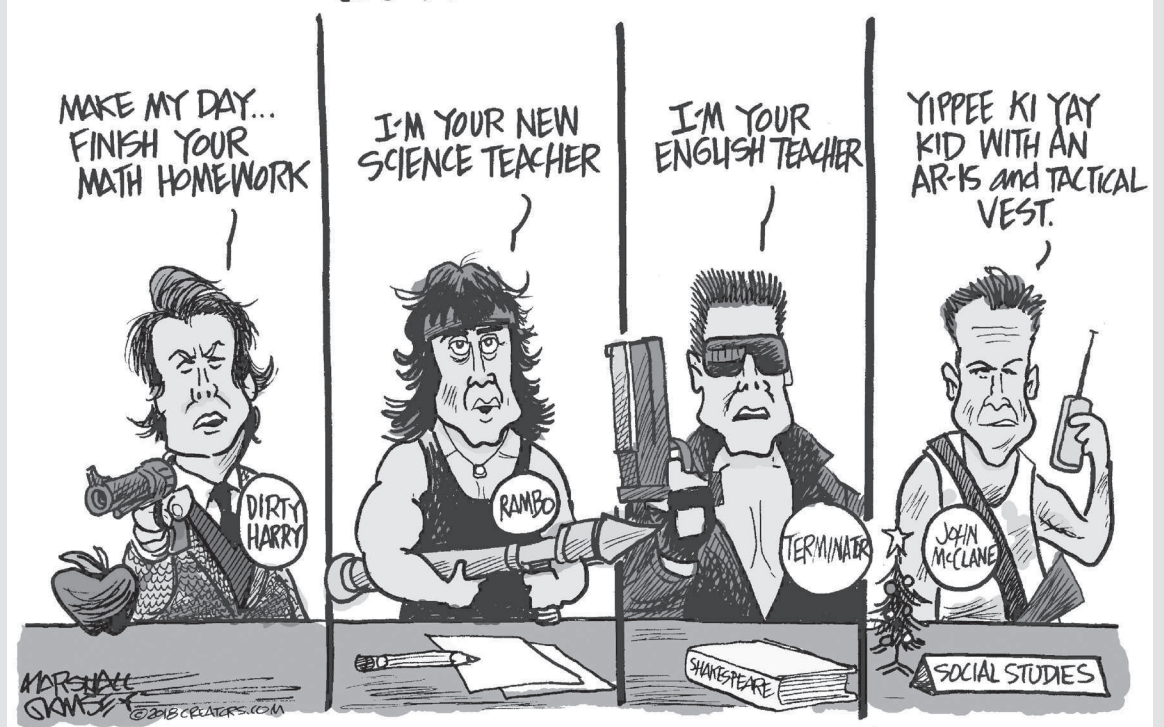
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letters

## HOW ARMING TEACHERS COULD ACTUALLY WORK...



## CPAC: What a difference a year makes

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

One year ago, when the Conservative Political Action Conference convened for its annual gathering, participants were positive about Donald Trump's 2016 election victory, gleeful that Hillary Clinton did not win, but unsure about what the future would bring. So they danced around their new leader's ascent gingerly.

(There was also the issue of CPAC's failure to endorse Trump as wholeheartedly as his base. In 2016, Trump ended up cancelling his planned speech at CPAC under threat of a walkout, and he came in third in CPAC's presidential straw poll.)

Matt Schlapp, whose American Conservative Union puts on the event, noticed the change this year from 2017.

“Last year I think people were a little bit still in a state of shock. You know, did this really happen?” Schlapp told the *Review Journal*. “This year I think there's more of a feeling of, it's working. For conservatives the agenda that the president's put out there is just working so well.”

Trump was aware of the group's misgivings. At the start of his 75-minute address Friday, he said, “Remember when I first started running? Because I wasn't a politician, fortunately. But do you remember I started running and people would say, ‘Are you sure he's a conservative?’ I think now we've proved that I'm a conservative, right?”

A year ago, White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus sat with Chief Strategist Steve Bannon at a session designed to defuse stories about a feud between the two. Bannon famously announced that the Trump administration was committed to

“the deconstruction of the administrative state.”

Trump later fired both aides. The important thing is “the president is still deconstructing the administrative state,” David Bossie, long-time Trump adviser and head of the conservative group Citizens United, asserted after Trump's CPAC address.

John Cox, a businessman who is running for California governor as a Republican, said he didn't think that Trump, a former Democrat whose positions

often varied from GOP doctrine, was truly conservative. “I didn't vote for him,” said Cox, who has attended CPAC conferences for years.

Would he vote for Trump in 2020? “Absolutely, with bells on,” Cox answered, who is thrilled with Trump's judicial picks and the effective U.S. assault on ISIS.

Trump still grates on Cox, who acknowledged that for all the policy pluses, “the trouble is the personality.” Cox described Trump as the opposite of President Barack Obama, who is highly likable as a human being, but whose policies offended Cox.

As a candidate in a very blue state (with no Republicans in statewide office), Cox is aware of the difficulties Trump could present for his campaign. And it's not just because of Trump. Cox also blames the media for “unrelentingly negative” coverage.

Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson thinks Trump's tenure in the White House will make it impossible for a Republican to win statewide in another blue state, New Mexico.

“If you're running,” he explained, “you'd be expected to defend him.”

As for Nevada's governor's race, Johnson predicted a Democratic win

—then posited that his 2016 election loss suggests he is no expert.

It says something about CPAC that Johnson met well-wishers and selfie-seekers wherever he walked at the conference—even though he ran against Trump as a Libertarian candidate for president in 2016.

While most attendees seemed happy to embrace Trump as a fellow conservative, Johnson was not so sure. Yes, he said, Trump is conservative “in some ways. He reduced taxes—but he didn't reduce spending and I think that's part of the conservative equation.”

Johnson presented a view on Trump that runs contrary to what others say. He thinks Trump doesn't rate as a conservative because he does not communicate well.

“I don't know his thought process,” said Johnson. “Part of the art of governing is to communicate why you do things. I think he's done a really poor job of that.”

As an example, Johnson said, he doesn't understand Trump on Afghanistan. “What's your information on Afghanistan that you're doubling down on Afghanistan, instead of getting out, which is what you said during the campaign?” (Presidents can change their mind, Johnson stressed, he just wants to know what factors led to the change.)

Other CPAC attendees confided their misgivings on an off-the-record basis, but they wanted to stay on the Trump train.

Schlapp, whose wife, Mercedes, a high-profile defender of conservative causes in her own right, joined the White House communications team in September, said, “The room itself with the president, we've never had that many people in that room. And he had a lot of fun in the speech. He connects with these people.”

(Creators Syndicate)

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## Children should not be a political issue

We Americans are well known for our support of sports programs and military engagements but, in far too few instances, for looking after the welfare of all our children. It was therefore an uplifting news item to learn through the media this past week that Gov. Kate Brown seeks action from the Oregon Legislative for \$14.5 million to hire more employees, a total of 185 more, in the state Department of Human Services' child welfare program.

At first blush, this would seem an easy proposal to accomplish. After all, whenever the latest report of child abuse is announced in the media, the opposition party jumps all over it, declaring the majority party's governor, and that governor's executives, managers and workers, incompetent and deserving of immediate job terminations. So, maybe with this latest gubernatorial fix-it plan, the partisan crowd will surrender their votes to a good idea whose time has obviously come throughout the state of Oregon.

Gov. Brown has been quoted to say in support of her plan of action: “We rely on dedicated professionals on the frontlines to ensure children's well-being, and we need to do our utmost right now to support those caseworkers who are there, day in and day out, working in our communities and making an impact one child at a time.” Amen! The governor's ad-

ditional work force would include 75 social workers, 75 caseworkers, 25 office support staff and 10 managers.

Brown wants our legislators to act now during the current session to make certain more children here can look forward to a brighter future. She references a recent audit by the Oregon Secretary of State's office that points out chronic problems in the program, noting also that there are program-diminishing numbers of staff in turnover losses and difficulty in replacing them. Conditions there suggest the work is not only highly stressful but absent, as now constituted, improvement prospects.

The governor's design would focus on “frontline support in field visits along with office personnel looking after administrative tasks so caseworkers can focus their time and effort on children and families.” We're told by Brown's spokesperson that a number of legislators share the governor's enthusiasm and the additional state investment required to help the state's children into safer and healthier living conditions.

Never to remain quiet regarding any plan from the opposition, the governor has been criticized for not mentioning the foster care issue in her State of the State address. The opposition's voice to run for governor in 2018 says he would request about \$35 million more to pay for a “rapid-

improvement team” although the specifics on how this team would be designed for greater effectiveness are not available. Meanwhile, the crisis persists and the demand for action immediate and should not reside in limbo for at least another legislative session.

The foster care issue is already hot and, if not addressed now due to party foot-dragging, will be among those hot button issues later this year as we draw ever-closer to the November election. Meanwhile, there are so many young Oregonians who are suffering due to their dire living situations that this writer hopes the Brown proposal comes to a successful vote in the legislature so that a chance for early-on help can be set in motion for the kids under threat and can proceed without further delay.

All politics aside, this matter should not be among the partisan variety, as literally hundreds of Oregon youth in the balance are the victims of foster care gone wrong. And there are more impacts to their lives than what's happening to them now. Although not their exclusive domain, too often these young persons, later adults, are those who join gangs, commit crimes, get involved with illicit drugs, open schools and communities, and otherwise lead desperate lives. That's why we should not wait until Kate Brown gets re-elected or Knute Buehler replaces her.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

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