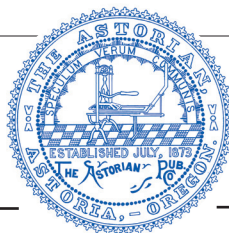


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

If you're serious about gun control, adopt NRA's tactics

The renewed national debate over gun control in the wake of the high school shooting last week in Parkland, Fla., has a different feel this time around.

The arguments for and against remain the same. But prominent GOP politicians and President Donald Trump are actually talking about some modest gun control proposals, such as raising the legal age to purchase a gun from 18 to 21 and limited strengthening of background check laws.

People also seem intent on holding their elected officials accountable in ways we haven't seen recently. In Florida, Republican Sen. Marco Rubio said he now is open to raising age limits for long-gun purchases — the day after he was confronted at a CNN town hall by Parkland students and parents over his pro-gun votes and support from the National Rifle Association, according to the Associated Press.

We remain skeptical that any substantive change will occur. Trump has no choice but to appear willing to listen, given the horrible optics of his weekend spent tweeting about the Russia investigation from his Mar-A-Lago resort,

only 40 miles away from the scene of the Parkland carnage. The Trump who stressed the importance of mental health and school safety improvements is the same Trump who signed a resolution last year blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people.

In fairness to Trump, he is only the latest in a long line of presidents who have failed to lead on this issue. He and the rest of the GOP will eventually acquiesce again to their overlords at the NRA, whose leader, Wayne LaPierre, said Thursday that gun control advocates "hate individual freedom."

Well, we don't believe "individual freedom" includes the right to mow down 17 students and teachers in their school, or to massacre 58 innocent concertgoers from a hotel window. For real change to occur, responsible gun owners who profess to love America will have to agree that not all Americans are capable of responsibly bearing arms.

We're not suggesting the repeal of the Second Amendment or taking guns away from law-abiding citizens. The Daily Astorian's editorial board includes gun owners — a lifelong NRA member,

a former Army captain and an ex-Marine. They are aghast at what the NRA has become over the years and its refusal to compromise on common-sense protections for our fellow citizens.

Much has been written over the past week about the \$30 million the NRA donated to the Trump campaign, and the hundreds of millions more pumped into the coffers of politicians on both sides of the aisle.

Less-often mentioned, though, is that candidates are required to kiss the NRA's ring when running for office. They are asked to fill out detailed questionnaires stating their positions on the NRA's platform. Should they fail the test or refuse to bend the knee, rest assured that the organization will underwrite their opponents' campaigns and mobilize an army of single-issue zealots to punish their heresy.

Politicians have everything to gain and nothing to lose by going along, as there isn't a comparable ruthlessness among the gun control lobby.

One prominent GOP donor who realizes this is Al Hoffman Jr., a Florida real estate developer who was a leading fundraiser for George W. Bush's cam-

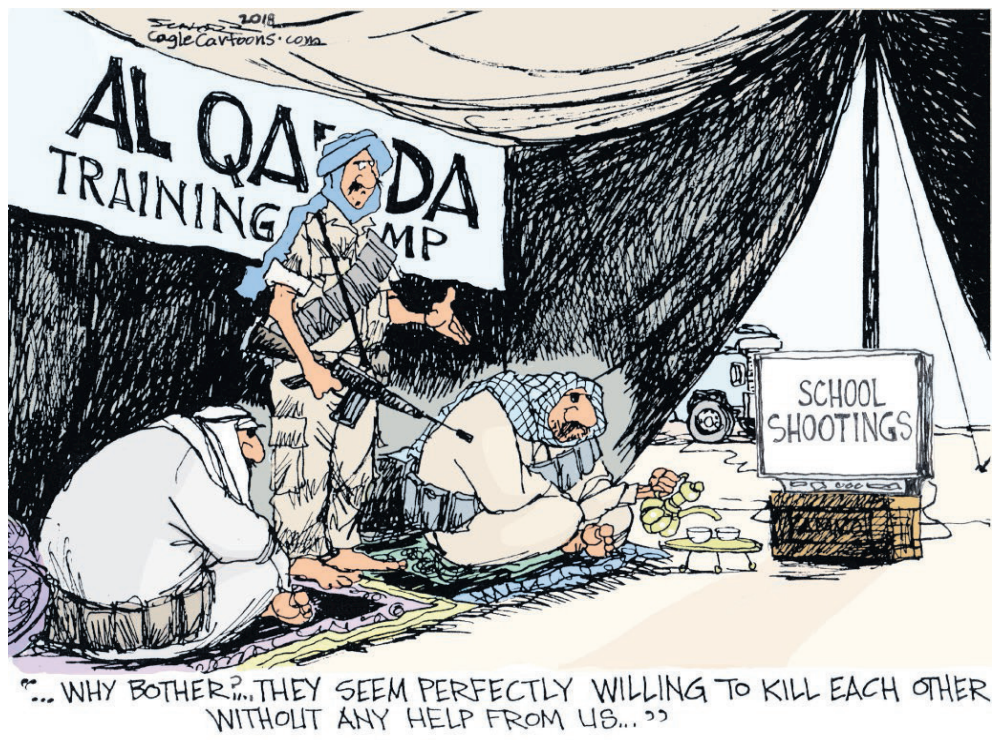
“For real change to occur, responsible gun owners who profess to love America will have to agree that **not all Americans are capable of responsibly bearing arms.**”

paings. He will seek to marshal support among other Republican political donors for a renewed assault weapons ban, according to the New York Times.

"I will not write another check unless they all support a ban on assault weapons," he wrote in an email to half a dozen Republican leaders, including Jeb Bush and Gov. Rick Scott of Florida. "Enough is enough!"

Voters who support gun control should take the same cue. Turn those coveted "A" and "B" grades from the NRA into an albatross around politicians' necks, and the "F" into a badge of honor. Register to vote and then actually cast a ballot. Low election turnouts historically favor well-organized single-issue constituencies, such as the NRA.

Whether you love or hate the NRA, it is extremely successful at what it does. No level of outrage will come to anything if it is allowed to continue its stranglehold on our democracy. Adopting its tactics would be good place to start.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't force Medicare on Postal Service retirees

As a member of the federal community who served our country for years, I am concerned with an attempt to force current Postal Service retirees onto Medicare Part B, after they previously declined this coverage.

While hailed as a way to improve USPS' finances, this is nothing more than balancing the books on the backs of seniors. Why should retirees, who spent their careers serving this nation, be forced to pay an additional \$134 per month, or more, for health coverage they previously deemed unnecessary?

Mandatory Medicare Part B coverage was never part of the agreement made upon employment, and it should not be forced on any postal retiree, especially retroactively.

Congress is currently attempting to fix the Postal Service's problems by shifting costs to Medicare.

I urge our legislators to reject the current postal reform bill, HR 756. Retired postal workers proudly served our community, and promises to them should be kept.

STEPHEN RAYMOND
Long Beach, Washington

Elect presidents by popular vote

One person. One vote. Every vote equal. Knowing that Russians strategically attacked our elections and targeted swing states, it is more important than ever that Oregon join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, which ensures that the winner of the popular vote nationwide be elected president.

The Oregon Senate is considering this legislation now. Contact Sen. Betsy Johnson today, and ask her to vote yes on a clean National Popular Vote bill. One person. One vote. Every vote equal.

BEBE MICHEL
Gearhart

When did life stop being so precious?

But for the gun, Officer Jason Goodding would still be patrolling Seaside. But for the gun, newspapers would not be printing the pictures of 17 beautiful kids who are no longer walking amongst us.

All my life I've wondered how people in the Middle East could tolerate so much death and destruction on a daily basis. Where are their leaders? Where are our leaders when there is so much carnage everyday in America?

Fifty-eight thousand soldiers died over a 10-year period in Vietnam for no reason. Thirty thousand Americans die in our country every year from guns. Who, and what, is the enemy? It's guns, it's always guns.

Our culture is becoming more toxic, and easy access to guns is madness. Until gun owners show they care, show they are willing to endure a few more inconveniences, and even strictly regulate weapons of war, nothing will change.

When did life stop being so precious? Do we really have a president who can't even articulate the most basic human empathy? Tears streamed down Obama's face. President Donald Trump smiles for the cameras. We have a long way to go, but we can fix this.

Those who don't care enough, please look at the 17 faces I saw in the paper today. Then tell me about your rights.

JIM SPURR
Cannon Beach

Spirits crushed by re-enactment's cancellation

I received some news yesterday that was devastating. I was informed that our annual Civil War re-enactment on Labor Day weekend will not be held at Fort Stevens this year. The reason given was that my re-enact-

ment club cannot meet the park's financial demands.

I was there for the first re-enactment my club held at Fort Stevens. That was way back in 1990, 28 years ago. I was 15 years old at the time. It was my first full event. I have attended every Fort Stevens re-enactment. It was my favorite event. I loved the location, the ambiance, the scenery, the journey to the event. It was the first re-enactment my wife and I ever attended together, back in 2009. Now it's gone.

I feel like a part of my soul, the re-enacting part, has had a huge piece torn away from it. I always looked forward to every re-enacting season, because I knew I would top out the year with Fort Stevens, our largest event. Not happening this year.

I am still undecided at this point, but this may be my last year in the hobby. My interest in the hobby was waning, and now with the removal of my favorite event ... the last nail in the coffin, as it were.

My spirits are crushed. I have feelings of sadness and anger at the same time. My favorite event, gone.

DARIN RICHARDSON
Eugene

Voters' pamphlets necessary for healthy democracy

Voters' pamphlets are necessary for a healthy democracy. I will not be voting for any county commissioner candidate who does not support the creation of a voters' pamphlet for local elections in odd-numbered years.

In Clatsop County, these elections typically have 120 positions to fill. Without a voters' pamphlet, the electorate has little information by which to compare candidates. This critical election includes candidates for school boards, transportation district boards, health district boards, and the Port of Astoria Commissioners.

Oregon Statute 251.365 states that county clerks "may apportion the cost of preparing, printing and distributing the county voters' pamphlet as a cost of the election." This does not preclude the county from paying for part or all the voters' pamphlet.

The mission statement of the Clatsop Elections Office includes "supporting the democratic processes." This means providing a voters' pamphlet, just as other counties do. Whatever the cost, it is a small price to pay if it results in the election of better candidates.

LARRY TAYLOR
Astoria

Time to replace the Sunset Empire board

On Tuesday, I attended the February board meeting of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District. During the public comment portion of the meeting, several pool patrons voiced a variety of complaints they have regarding Sunset Pool, and the deterioration of its operations over the last few years.

One patron who spoke referred to the changes made in the men's locker room as being more appropriate for a "gay men's bathroom." At the end of the public comment segment, one of the board members said that he had a problem with the reference to a "gay men's bathroom" and the rest of the board agreed. Really? That was the only thing they took away?

I find it disconcerting that not one of the board's members responded to any of the concerns that were mentioned by the others who spoke at that meeting. To say that the board is ineffective is an understatement. For starters, not even one of its members uses the pool on a regular basis. Perhaps it's time we looked into how to go about replacing the board.

MARTI WAJC
Seaside