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OPINION

Guns are not Sacred, Children are

Past time to repeal the Second Amendment

BY TOM H. HASTINGS



It is now long long past time to repeal the Second Amendment. It serves evil, not good, violence, not peace, hatred, not love.

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is a relic of a time when the citizens accepted their general powerlessness and seemed to live without imagination, just fear.

Still, it will likely take independent-minded gun owners to lead the overdue effort to rid our society of this curse. We need gun owners with conscience to finally, at long last, face morality, face the truth,

face the irrefutable terrible facts on the ground, in the ground, that perfectly innocent children are victims again and again and again to the lack of backbone of gun owners.

I'm a peace person, as are my friends. I am striving to be nonviolent and have tried to learn nonviolence for years. I can point to alternatives to guns, I can argue against them, and that's about it.

What we need, what would dramatically change our national discourse on this, is for gun owners to stand up and tell the rest of us, "We no longer want our possessions to be regarded under our Constitution as sacred and above the law. We reject

the kneejerk response from the NRA and the gun industry every time there is a tragedy. Not once—never, ever one single time have they admitted that guns can ever be a problem and are just things that should be subjected to laws like anything else."

When I worked on high-rise construction projects in my 20s and 30s I was very glad for OSHA. They inspected just often enough to help us stay relatively safe, even 300+ feet off the ground in the Minnesota winter. We didn't have company owners lobbying to declare scaffolding or tie-ropes or other safety devices somehow related to near sacralization.

The OSHA inspectors would pick

up a faulty extension cord, pull out their wire snips, and cut it into short, unusable pieces, and would then write up a fine. Did that cost our companies? Only once, then they told the foremen to be careful to keep it all legal.

We regulate cars, motorcycles, boats, and much much more. Some things are simply outlawed. People cannot have a marijuana brownie but they can have a handgun?

The lives of children are sacred; guns are just objects. We choose guns over children every day that we do not get rid of that long-antiquated Second Amendment.

Am I suggesting ridding ourselves of the Second Amendment would solve everything? Obviously not; guns haven't solved much ei-

ther. We need to learn new ways.

Learn nonviolence. Work to end poverty. Share. Support candidates who will reduce military expenditures and increase subsidies to all the many new ways to manage conflict that do not involve violence and the threat of violence.

Learn about Gandhi. Learn about mediation. Learn about de-escalation. These are how we negate the "need" for guns. Are they foolproof? Nothing is. But the Second Amendment is not serving us well, not at all. Time for change.

Tom H. Hastings is from Portland and directs PeaceVoice, a program of the Oregon Peace Institute, and is on the Governing Council of the International Peace Research Association.

Our Health Care System is Still Sick

The health industry is about making money, not healing

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS



It's great living here in our rich country, as long as you're rich yourself. Take our health care system.

Unlike other wealthy countries, our nation's medical apparatus allows those at the top to receive top-notch care, while the working class has to scrounge to survive.

If you're lucky enough to obtain coverage in the first place, you're then confronted with a tangle of red tape. Doctors, clinics, hospitals,

nursing homes and drug companies vie for our business with inadequate oversight. But what if your coverage expires or the cost of your care exceeds policy limits? Tough luck.

Meanwhile, the lucky among us continue to live longer and add to the national health tab, increasing Medicare costs.

In this era of corporate obsession with efficiency, the health care system is a paragon of waste. Instead of a streamlined system, every insurance company oper-

ates according to its own prerogative.

Doctors' offices are now filled with more clerks than white coats. In 2011, American doctors spent \$27 billion more on bureaucratic paperwork than our Canadian neighbors operating under a single-payer system. Canadians, like most everyone else in rich countries, appreciate their universal care and scratch their heads in disbelief at our nation's medical free-for-all.

Another of our mind-boggling ineptitudes is that we pay medical providers according to how often they see us and the procedures they perform. They should earn more for keeping us healthy than simply treating our ever-rising number of ailments and administering increasingly pricey tests.

With no incentive to get the job done right the first time around, savvy docs set up their own clinics to refer us to, while hospitals load up on snazzy equipment to test us excessively.

Many of the CEOs of our nation's top hospitals rake in salaries well over the million-dollar mark. The health industry is about making money, not healing. And it's a big business.

And let's not forget the drugmakers. Their wares are keeping us alive longer too, if we can afford them. But keep in mind that their industry spends more on marketing than it does on research.

One study found that for every \$19 Big Pharma spends on advertising and marketing, only \$1 goes to funding basic research. And our rigid patent system favors these medical moneymakers by granting

drug developers patents for 20 years. This allows companies to jack up drug prices and prevents low-income patients from accessing cheaper alternatives to drugs they depend on.

The FDA also makes it illegal for individuals to purchase prescription drugs abroad at much lower prices.

But one thing the medical mob can't yet keep you from doing is seeking treatment and procedures in other countries. Asia and South America have become hotbeds of American medical tourism. And if we are allowed to travel to close-by Cuba and use its state-run health care system in the future, you can bet we'll flood that country too.

As always, those at the bottom of the economic ladder are hit the hardest by the health industry's incompetency. If you're poor, maybe you qualify for Medicaid, or maybe you don't. Maybe there's a neighborhood clinic near you, or maybe not. Maybe you're fortunate enough to be healthy, or maybe you inherited a gene that triggered a costly chronic illness.

President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act is already helping people obtain or maintain health insurance and by Jan. 1, 2015 it's supposed to be fully implemented. But don't get too excited — an estimated 26 million Americans will remain uninsured by 2020, according to the Congressional Budget Office's calculations.

OtherWords columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.

Letter to the Editor

Let's Get Real

There is one solution to the recent tragedy in Newtown, Conn. that I have not seen addressed in any venue. However, it has been used for decades in this country. It's called a "pre-text stop" or "stop and frisk."

Ask black and Hispanic young males how many times they have been "detained" by the police, all in the name of stopping gangs and drugs, as they try to go about their business-to school, work, a social life- even church.

But, in this case, since the profile of recent mass shootings has been white male youth, the police would be targeting a different population. Young white males. Stopped by the cops- "Oh, you didn't signal." "You didn't make a complete stop." "Where are you going?" "Why are you in this neighborhood?" "Let me see what is in your trunk", only this time it would be the population of white young men being targeted-to recognize which ones of them look troubled and have that psychotic look in their eyes.

Is white America up to it? Let's get real, folks, if we're going to keep pretending we are a "free and equal" society.

Linda Kanzinger
Northeast Portland

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