

OPINION



Blocking Common Sense Gun Reform at Every Turn

Dallas shooting debunks the myths

BY MARC H. MORIAL

One of the more unsettling revelations about the tragedy in Dallas is that the mentally unbalanced gunman was rejected, after a background check, for membership in an extremist group but was legally able to purchase a high-capacity assault rifle.

According to media reports, Micah Johnson was labeled “unfit for recruitment” among a network of extremist groups, including some designated as “hate groups” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Yet within months of that rejection, Johnson was able to meet in a parking lot with a gunseller he contacted online, and take possession of a military weapon designed to slaughter human beings as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In what kind of a world do we live when hate groups that actually encourage violence against law enforcement officers are more circumspect than our current firearm safety laws?

The man who sold Johnson the AK-47 said Johnson appeared during their 15-minute meeting

— as though dangerous mental instability is written across someone’s face.

“It’s my belief he would have passed a background check,” the man said. But it wouldn’t have mattered, not in Texas. Federal law requires only licensed gun dealers to conduct background checks. Millions of guns are sold each year online or at gun shows through private sellers. Felons, domestic

abusers, the violently mentally ill are able to acquire firearms and the law does nothing to stop them.

ing guns because a court found him severely mentally ill. But he passed a background check because his records never made it into the system. And if the current system wouldn’t have deemed Johnson’s bizarre behavior a red flag for a gun purchase, it certainly should have.

The background check database must be complete, and the types of incidents that warrant prohibition must be thoroughly examined.

attack took place were armed. Not one of them managed to stop Micah Johnson with a gun.

Every modern study concludes that more guns equal more crime. Right-to-carry laws are associated with significantly higher rates” of aggravated assault, robbery, rape and murder. American children are sixteen times more likely than children other high-income countries to be killed in gun accidents, with as many as 100 children dying each year.



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More than 90 percent of Americans support universal background checks. Legally-required background checks have blocked more than two million gun sales to dangerous people since the system was instituted.

Maybe Micah Johnson’s background would have slipped past the system. Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people and wounded 17 on the Virginia Tech campus in 2007, was banned from buy-

Prior to the attack in Dallas, each mass-shooting incident in the United States has prompted a bizarre chorus calling for even more guns in our society. “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,” as the saying goes.

Setting aside the impossibility of distinguishing a “good guy” from a “bad guy,” there were plenty of people with guns at the scene of the Dallas massacre and not one of them was able to stop the sniper. The police were armed. About 30 of the marchers at the demonstration where the

Our firearm safety system is broken – tragically, fatally broken. Lobbyists for the firearm industry hold our lawmakers in an almost literal death grip, blocking commonsense reform at every turn. Call your U.S. Senators and Congress member and demand action on gun violence. Learn the truth about gun violence in America and educate your friends and family. And work for a nation that puts the safety of its citizens ahead of profits for the gun industry.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.



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