

**Siuslaw News**  
P.O. Box 10  
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# Opinion

**The First Amendment**  
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

## NRA is part of solution, not problem

As I read the gun control editorials in the Feb. 28 edition of Siuslaw News, there was little to think about. It seems that folks can — and do — get worked up over what will turn out to be nothing, because that is what it will be.

We can start with talk of the public health crisis. I agree that we most certainly do have one. However, it is facilitated by current laws that restrict intervention and/or incarceration of the mentally ill who have a history of being a danger to others or themselves.

Instead of addressing the problem, organizations such as the ACLU and others have left them to fend for themselves with little or no support programs. As a result, we are now seeing how the rules touted as preventing discrimination have hampered police, sheriffs, the FBI and school authorities from intervening even when disturbing conduct is reported because information isn't being shared.

I have to wonder if these agencies had been able to do the jobs they were hired for, whether the tragic situation in Parkland, Fla., could have been avoided.

Another letter writer seemed confused about the difference between automatic and semi-automatic weapons. Fully automatic weapons have been banned in this country by two federal laws since 1935. The only way to get one legally is with a Class 3 license and a whole

lot of money. That's because the ban on production of these weapons in the 1960s has driven the cost to over \$20,000.

That, in addition to the extensive, mandatory FBI background check required to purchase such a weapon makes it unreachable for

people believe them.

For instance, the right to drive a car. There is no such right in our Constitution.

Driving is a *privilege* that can be revoked for any reason. Gun ownership, on the other hand, is a *right* guaranteed by our Constitution. Some think the NRA's con-

was made clear in Florida.

In the event of an active shooter in our school, providing teachers with the choice of being the first line of defense when every second counts just makes sense.

As a life-long shooter and gun owner, I'd like to suggest some common sense changes we can not only institute but agree on in order to address the issue:

1. Get rid of those rapid fire devices. There are a few.
2. Strengthen the background check system, it's good but it can be better.

3. As for increasing the age to buy a rifle to 21, I'm not convinced that would do any good. Keep in mind, we do accept and admit 18-year-olds in the military and give them access to weapons much more lethal than an AR-15.

4. Make it mandatory by law that every state manage and produce, as part of background checks, all reports pertaining to an individual's history of mental illness when it endangers others or themselves.

5. Do the same for all military branches.

6. Enforce mandatory sentencing guidelines for any state or military authority that fails to comply.

7. Make any failure to perform your duty as a law enforcement or military personnel that results in the death of children (under 18) life in prison or, in states and instances where applicable, death.

**GUEST VIEWPOINT**  
BY DAVID ECKHARDT  
FLORENCE RESIDENT AND NRA LIFE MEMBER

most folks.

However, the semi-automatic weapons ban passed by Congress in 1994 expired in 2004 in accordance with the law's sunset provision. And when it came up for renewal, it was found by the government's own agencies that it had in effect made little or no difference. As such, it was not renewed.

As for the NRA representing gun makers, as a Life Member I can assure you that is just plain false.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) represents the many Americans who feel as we do and contribute to our cause, which is the unfettered preservation of the Second Amendment.

The gun manufactures are represented by the National Shooting Sports foundation (www.nssf.org). It seems that so many folks who know little to nothing about firearms and the Second Amendment are the ones saying the most outrageous things and, sadly,

cern over entering the slippery slope of confiscation is an overreaction.

Those folks conveniently ignore history and would like everyone else to do the same by saying it can never happen here. While I sincerely hope they are right, it's not a risk many Americans are willing to take.

This week was my time to take the Hand Gun Safety Course, which is a very comprehensive course held in cooperation with the Florence Police Department.

One of those participating in the class was a retired Florence teacher. As you might guess, the Florida shooting came up in conversation. Suffice it to say, the Florida shooter is lucky our teacher wasn't there. I say this because I know a few former teachers and law enforcement officers who would have no problem carrying in class. To me, it makes perfect sense considering the alternative, which

## Worshiping guns contradicts Christian ideals

It has happened again. Of course it has. And it will continue to happen.

And again and again and again...

We as a nation are infatuated with gun culture, and we seem to worship the Second Amendment more than we do The Bible or Jesus. What does it say about us as a nation when sales of assault rifles *soar*, not decline, in the days following an attack like the one that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.?

I'm not saying that my religion, or anyone else's for that matter, should dictate our gun policy; but for a nation that claims so loudly to be Christian, there certainly seems to be a disconnect between the faith we profess and the actions we commit.

In the five years since Sandy Hook, 168 people (mostly children) have been killed in our nation's schools, and hundreds more have been injured. Since Sandy Hook, over 1,700 people have been killed in mass shootings across our nation, from Orlando, Fla., to San Bernardino, Calif. to Las Vegas, Nev., and many points in between.

And yet, while mass shootings get all the headlines, they only tell half the story. Almost overlooked in the background, away from most of the public outcry, 170,000 people have lost their lives to gun violence in that same period — an estimate considered conserva-

tive by many.

Imagine my dismay when, on Monday, Feb. 19, just days after the latest tragedy in Parkland, I learned that our local Boys and Girls Club affiliate in Florence, was raffling off a 9mm semi-automatic pistol with an 18 round magazine as part of a

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BY REV. ROBERT BARRETT  
YACHATS

fundraiser for its program.

Perhaps dismay is not a strong enough word.

It would be more accurate to say that I was sick.

Shocked.

Disgusted.

Even more repulsive was my subsequent learning that countless other organizations across our nation are currently conducting similar fundraisers.

Please don't get me wrong, I am not opposed to the Second Amendment. But I would argue that we need to tighten up background checks and keep military type assault weapons out of the hands of ordinary citizens.

But that is not my point here.

While the flag is still at half-mast for the victims of the carnage in Florida, youth organizations across the country are offering gun raffles as a means to raise money for their organizations. Quite often, the weapon of choice for these

raffles is the AR-15.

Not far away from here, a girls softball team in Dallas, Ore., has decided to move forward with their plans to raff off such a weapon.

I find this offensive.

Raffling off any firearm, assault style or not, is certainly not appropriate for any

organization that exists to enhance the lives of our nation's young people.

It is not only insensitive and inappropriate, it is irresponsible, particularly in a nation where guns are now the third-leading cause of death amongst children under the age of 19.

It is irresponsible when eight children a day are dying as a result of gun violence; it is irresponsible when 2 million children are living in homes with an unlocked gun accessible to them; it is irresponsible when 89 percent of all unintentional childhood shooting deaths occur in the home.

And it is irresponsible in an age when school shootings have become an almost daily occurrence.

We as people of faith have a clarion call to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. Our varied faith traditions teach us to seek the peace and welfare of the city, call us to love our neighbor, and implore us to

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Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry, or letters from outside our readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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