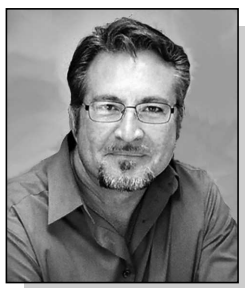


Siuslaw News
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Opinion



Decreasing gun violence requires increasing evidence-based debate

Although I'm not a gun owner, I have nothing against responsible gun ownership and the rights protected under the Second Amendment — which, in conjunction with the First Amendment's right to free speech, assure that all Americans have the right to protect themselves against tyranny in their words as well as their actions.

And as much as the fringe on both sides of the gun issue would like us to believe there is a clear chasm separating those for gun control and those against it, that simply isn't true.

I have many friends across the country who are proud gun owners, NRA members and

supporters of the Second Amendment. Though we have certainly had "spirited" conversations about solutions to the escalating gun violence in our country, the one thing we agree on is the need for responsible gun ownership.

Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health any funding for studies on injury or death related to guns.

In short, the gold standards of public health research in the U.S. are unable to provide data

claimed that 18 school shootings have occurred since Jan. 1 — a fact called into question by the Washington Post, which revealed the group's data included shootings on permanently closed school grounds, a security guard's non-injury accidental discharge of his weapon, etc.

To find real solutions, having non-partisan facts and statistics as a baseline is crucial.

With the recent passage of Oregon's gun bill raising the minimum age of a gun purchaser to 21, many opponents are saying there's no evidence to prove it will have any effect on decreasing incidents of gun violence.

Maybe so.

But to have a true evidence-based debate, we have to agree on a baseline of evidence in the first place.

From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

The problem comes in defining what being "responsible" means and what it should require. Unfortunately, the answers to those questions were essentially sequestered with the passage of the Dickey Amendment in 1996, which was inserted as a rider within that session's federal spending bill. The provision effectively denies the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health any funding for studies on injury or death related to guns.

Regardless of where you stand on the Dickey Amendment, the end result has been a lack of any definitive long-term, medical-based data or studies provided by a non-partisan agency for the last 22 years.

Recently, the organization Everytown For Gun Safety

LETTERS

RESPONSIBLE GUN USE MAY REQUIRE GETTING MADD

Remember the organization MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)? In the late 1970s and early '80s, the highway slaughter of innocents by drunk drivers prompted parents and others to organize and demand better laws, more responsible police and judicial work, education for drivers, legal ramifications for servers of alcoholic beverages and public education to the effect that drinking and driving was socially unacceptable.

The concepts of designated drivers, free taxi service to and from events and "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" became popular and embraced socially.

As a result, highway deaths due to drunk driving fell dramatically.

Here in Florence, the number of cars and trucks seen abandoned along Highway 101 on Monday mornings nearly vanished; it used to be so common that the kids and I would wager on the number we would spot on the drive to school Monday mornings.

I pray that we are now experiencing a change in our cultural tolerance of violence with weapons similar to that of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Based on the MADD experience, promoting more responsible gun use will not be a one shot, one change endeavor. It will take years.

It won't be perfect.

It will require better laws, more diligent enforcement, judges who are onboard, families and friends to step up and businesses to take an active and responsible role (as many now are doing on their own).

A cultural change this vast must be bottom-up as well as top-down.

Friends don't let friends even think about destroying lives, including their own.

—Jim and Jane Pittenger
Florence

AERIAL PESTICIDES BAN GETTING CORPORATE PUSHBACK

The push-back to the Lane County aerial spray ban in Oregon's forests is on.

A phone poll has been mounted asking responders, "Do you support County Commissioners putting the spray ban initiative on the ballot even though it has already been proven illegal?"

The initiative has *not* been proven illegal. This poll is clearly designed to discredit the efforts of spray ban proponents.

What is *true* is that the Freedom from Aerial Herbicide Alliance is seeking to make the practice of aerial spray illegal, due to significant health issues and concerns.

Another example of the push-back came in the form of a petition circulated at the recent Logging Conference.

It asked potential signers to approve

this statement:

"I oppose the extreme measures proposed for the countywide ballot that would ban the safe and effective farm and forest management practices in Lane County."

One must ask: Safe and effective for whom?

Profit motives for industry are driving this notion. And the Right to Farm and Forest Act that protects this activity is deeply flawed. It elevates the rights of industry above those of local residents.

We all live downstream.

Many county residents don't approve of aerial spraying. We must decide for ourselves — and do so at the ballot box.

—Michelle Holman
Deadwood

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.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

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.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

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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