

Special Series from 7A

These examples are a sample of the myriad of different laws throughout the country and can create confusion among gun owners as to where and how they are able purchase or own guns. Volumes could — and have — been written on these laws, but it shows just how widely gun control has been attempted throughout the last century.

Taken as a whole, most of these laws mirror Australia's laws, in one way or another.

One of the major actions of Australia's gun control effort, the buyback program, has been put into motion in the U.S. multiple times by different states — but none have been considered wildly successful. Austin, Texas, has held two buyback programs, one in 2010 with \$100 VISA gift cards for each handgun or rifle, and \$200 for what they determined to be "assault weapons" were offered. All told, 736 firearms were brought in, but only seven "assault rifles."

None of the guns had been involved with crimes, and it was found that "most of the firearms received were unwanted guns that were gifted or bequeathed by will," according to a report by the Hawaiian Attorney General's office, who looked into the efficacy of these programs.

It is unclear if the Austin buyback programs, which cost The Greater Austin Crime Commission \$70,000, led to any decrease in crime.

The cornerstone of Australia's law, the banning of "assault weapons," was attempted in 1994 with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, a sweeping crime law that included a 10-year, temporary ban on certain firearms, including some semi-automatic rifles and pistols and magazines holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

After the law sunsetted, both sides of the gun debate claimed victory, with reformers saying it reduced crimes with assault weapons — and gun rights advocates stating that it was a failure. While both of these arguments have merit, neither are completely accurate.

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Justice looked into the effectiveness of the program and found fixed messages. When speaking with Factcheck.org, the lead investigator for the study found that while there were less incidences of the "assault weapons" being used after the ban, the benefits were

outweighed by the rise in frequency of crimes using non-banned semi-automatic weapons.

Criminals were just swapping out the types of guns they used.

Lethality of the injuries were also not being affected by the ban.

But that's not to say the ban could not have had a greater effect if it had been put in place for a longer period of time. Because the ban allowed existing "assault weapons" to remain, it's possible that over time these guns could have become so scarce that they would eventually be non-existent, as happened with machine guns.

The 10-year ban didn't have time to make that kind of a statistical impact.

But still, Factcheck.org also pointed out that only 2 percent of all firearm-related crimes involved the listed "assault weapons."

So even if the ban was able to play out, it wouldn't have had a drastic effect on overall crime. But, proponents would argue, some progress is better than no progress at all.

Putting general violent crime aside, would getting rid of "assault weapons," or the accessories involved in the shootings, work to curb the death toll of mass shootings?

Much was made about "bump stocks" after the Las Vegas gunman used them to gain more rapid fire with his semi-automatic rifles. But a stock is not needed to bump-fire a rifle. The same effect can be used just in the way a gunman holds their rifle.

In fact, bump-firing a gun, stock or no, decreases accuracy because the entire firearm needs to move in order to reset the trigger during bumpfire.

And what about banning an "assault rifle," like an AR-15?

"The AR-15 has become the weapon of choice, but there are other weapons that you can use that will cause as much damage," Florence Police Commander John Pitcher said. "If you had two pistols that carry 15 rounds each, you could shoot as many rounds out of that as an AR15."

Pitcher also brought up armor-piercing bullets, which can be equally devastating no matter what gun fires them.

With 20 years of experience on the force and an avowed bipartisan on the issue, he sees both sides of the gun debate without bias.

"You're never going to get rid of all guns," he said. "That's never going to happen. Even if

they did a ban right now, there's millions of guns out there. I don't know anybody who's going to go to someone's house and start taking their guns away."

If getting rid of all the guns isn't the answer to mass shootings, what about arming more people?

Good guy with a gun

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, National Rifle Association (NRA) Vice President Wayne LaPierre stated, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun, is a good guy with a gun."

The suggestion was to get more trained personnel, like resource officers, into schools to help prevent school shootings. But the debate has dovetailed into an even broader question: Do "good guys with guns" make society safer?

"I don't know the answer to that," Pitcher said. "I think, just like everything in society, most people are good people. If they have a gun, they're not going to use it illegally. But you also have that percentage that aren't good people, and those are the people that scare me."

"It's not like TV, where I can see, 'This is the good guy, this is the bad guy.' In real life, the good guys and the bad guys look the same for the most part."

However, there are multiple examples of good guys with guns making a difference.

In May 2017, a gunman entered a sports bar in Arlington, Texas, with two loaded guns and two knives and began yelling at the bar's manager before killing him. At that point, a man with a concealed handgun permit shot the gunman, and is credited with saving lives.

In June 2016, a man opened fire in a South Carolina bar, shooting and wounding four before a man with a concealed weapons permit fired back, wounding and stopping the gunman.

But there are tragic incidences where good guys with guns don't make a difference.

In July 2016, a man in Dallas targeted a massive crowd protesting the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile by police.

There were nearly 100 armed police officers at the protest, yet the shooter killed five officers in total and was only stopped by a remotely detonated bomb after a lengthy standoff. Adding to the chaos of the scene were about 20 protesters with ammo gear, protective equipment and

rifles slung over their shoulders.

The police didn't know if any of them were the shooter, so they began rounding up all of them.

"When the shooting started, at different angles, they started running and we started catching," said Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, as quoted by the Dallas News.

The mayor questioned if the shooting could have been stopped sooner if there were not so many armed citizens in the middle of the fray.

It was also noted that those civilians who attempted to fire back at the shooter created more chaos for police, attempting to figure out who the shooter actually was.

In 2005, a civilian and firearms instructor fired upon a rampage shooter outside a courthouse in Tyler, Texas, but was instantly killed by the heavily armored shooter.

And then there are examples of armed civilians choosing not to engage gunmen.

During the 2015 Umpqua Community College (UCC) shooting in Roseburg, Ore., an armed veteran who was on campus during the shooting said he avoided getting involved because he didn't want to open himself up to being a potential target by the police when they arrived.

The UCC shooting became a point of controversy over the "good guy" debate when Florida State Rep. Greg Steube sponsored a bill in his state allowing open carry because UCC was a "gun-free zone."

In fact, the college wasn't. Oregon allows students to bring guns on campuses, as long as the college permits it as well.

Gun rights advocates often point to "gun-free" zones as a cause for mass shootings, arguing that shooters specifically target these areas because of their supposed lack of guns. But that assumption shows an inherent misunderstanding of mass shooters.

A 2013 FBI study on active shooters found that the majority location for a shooting was a business, with 45.6 percent of incidents occurring at them. That was followed by schools at 24.4 percent. Only 9.4 percent of shootings occurred in open spaces.

A quick look at the most deadly workplace shootings shows that the shooters had a direct connection to their target locations. The deadliest shooting was in 1986 at the Edmond, Okla., U.S. Post Office, where a disgruntled employee killed 15 and injured 6 after being verbally disciplined.

The Atlanta day trading spree killings of 1999 took place at the shooter's home as well as two trading firms the shooter had worked for.

As for schools, the Virginia Tech, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Sandy Hook Elementary and Columbine High School shootings were all carried out by current or former students. Even shooters with no personal connection don't appear to base plans on "gun-free zones."

An often-stated claim is that the Aurora, Colo., movie theater shooter chose his location because it was specifically a gun free zone — the other movie theaters in the area did not post gun restrictions, therefore the shooter must have chosen that particular theater because it was "gun free."

But gun advocate publication The Truth About Guns disputes this claim in a 2015 article. The shooter had narrowed his locations down to two places, an airport or a movie theater. He originally wanted to attack an airport, but along with concerns about federal security, he was worried about his actions being mistaken for terrorism.

So he opted for the theater.

The shooter never mentioned gun free zones and was wearing heavy armor, suggesting he was expecting crossfire. But more importantly, he had no intention of leaving the scene alive. In

fact, of those mass shooters who leave behind records, few had escape plans; they knew they would either be killed by someone else or take their own life.

In regard to a good guy with a gun, Pitcher stresses the point that, "If you're going to put yourself in the position to help people and prevent these things, you need to have that training. There's different types of training you can do, video training, firearm experts. It's a lot for your average citizen to put themselves through that training, but if you decide to do it, you need to train, on an ongoing basis."

But the data shows that not all gun owners are as responsible in their training, even the good guys.

While research on whether or not owners train in firearms is scant, in August 2017, Reuters reported that a University of Washington School of Public Health in Seattle found only 61 percent of firearm owners in the U.S. received formal training. Individuals who owned both handguns and long-guns for multiple purposes, like hunting and protection, were more likely to have training.

But many of those who only used firearms for protection did not get training.

So are more guns really an answer? Even for those who are comfortable and familiar with guns, the very presence of one can create hesitation.

"In any situation where someone else has a gun, they're going to be nervous," Pitcher said.

Just because Americans have the right to bear arms doesn't necessarily mean more guns is the solution to gun violence. The answer to that lies in the cross section of politics, taxes, the media and culture — all of which will be explored in the final part of this series in the April 25 edition of Siuslaw News.



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120 Maple Street
Phone: 541-997-4435
Hours Open: Wed-Fri noon-5pm,
Sat 10am-5pm, Sun. noon-5pm

Classes, Workshops & Events

Crochet Workshop with Eleanor Ross

Sunday, May 6, 1-4 pm
Detailed description soon coming soon.
Pre-registration req'd at FRAA or with Eleanor. Questions: 541-997-4435

Florence Fest '18

Friday, April 27, 2-8 pm and Saturday, April 28th, 12-8 pm at the FEC
As the sponsor of the Art portion FRAA invites you to come enjoy 55 juried pieces of artwork, while listening to Jazz and enjoying some wine!

Next Art Change-Out Day

Monday, May 14th, 9-11 am
Please pick up your artwork and bring something new to help keep the art at FRAA fresh to our visitors.

Whimsical Hand Building

Ceramics w/ Alissa Clark
Wednesdays, 3-5 pm & Thursdays, 6-8 pm
Open Lab Ceramics on Saturdays
Drop in, work at own pace. Sat 12-5 pm
Call Alissa with questions, 503-957-5222.
All ceramics classes held at Alissa's Studio, 180 Laurel Street.

Big Wave Poetry 1st Tuesday Open Mic

May 1st at 6:30 pm. Admission is free and refreshments will be available.

Writers on the River - Creative Writing Workshop with Catherine Rourke

Sat., April 21, 10 am - 12 noon
The Blank Page: Tips to Conquer and Master it Move past writing blocks with tips to fill the page.
All writing levels and genres, Contact: CJReditor@gmail.com, 541-708-2120

Rhody Days Art Festival

Friday, May 18th, 11 am - 5 pm and Saturday, May 19th, 10 am - 5 pm at the FEC.
Paintings, Photography, Wood, Jewelry and more. Come enjoy our talented artists.

Painting with John Leasure

Saturdays 9 am - 12 pm
Contact: jleasure@hotmail.com or 541-991-2754 for details and fees.

Oil Painting with Michael Wood

On hiatus but will be back soon.
fmwood@msn.com to reserve a spot.

For more information about classes, visit fraaoregon.org. To register for these classes, please call or visit FRAA at our art center on Maple Street.

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