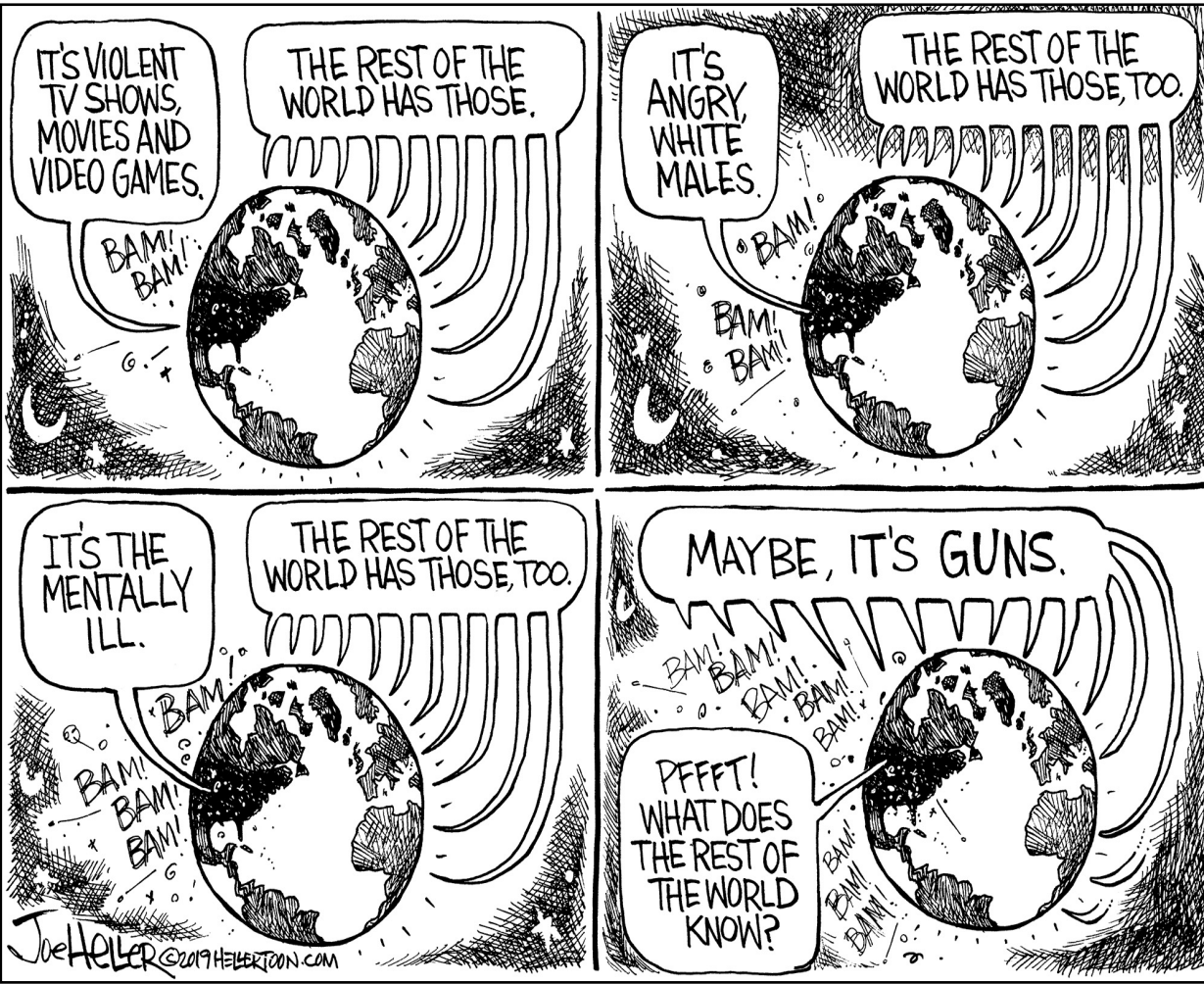


Siuslaw News
 P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

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.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



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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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News 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.

Email letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

Biggest challenge to ending gun violence? Political will

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

The *New York Times* recently pointed out U.S. mass shootings cannot be explained by a violent culture, racial divisions or mental health.

A more plausible explanation: America has more guns in private hands than people: 120.5 per 100 people. Canada, by comparison, has 34.7 guns per 100 people. Americans — about 4.4 percent of the world's population — own 42 percent of the world's guns, more than all civilians combined in 25 other countries.

Definitions of mass shooting vary. Defined as three or more victims in a single incident, there have been 294 mass shootings in the U.S. so far in 2019. However defined, from Sandy Hook to El Paso, "assault-style" rifles are the weapon of choice of America's mass shooters.

Domestic assault-style rifles are derived from the Colt ArmaLite AR-15 (military M16). They (and foreign imports such as the Russian AK-47) were re-

stricted by the Federal Assault Weapons Ban from 1994 to 2004, when the law sunset and was not renewed.

From the expiration of Colt's patents to 2015, the number of

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Arnold Buchman
Florence

AR-15 style variants and knock-offs increased dramatically. Because of this wide variety, estimates of the total number of assault-style rifles in private ownership varies widely.

The numbers are uncertain in part because the ATF does not break out state-level ownership by category. But, the most conservative estimates put the number in the 3 to 5 million range within the total of more than 300 million firearms owned by Americans.

Gun violence may be explained by mental illness and video games. Maybe it is controllable by background checks, waiting periods and red flag laws.

But as we wait for our politicians to enact these "solutions," assault-style weapons remain readily obtainable. Enough so

that any suggestion the number can be effectively reduced is dismissed as impossible.

Australia did so after a mass killing in 2016 with ban-and-buy-back legislation — and has not experienced a mass killing since. Earlier this year after a similar tragedy, New Zealand did the same.

Neither country's programs involve police knocking

down doors.

Is it worth a try here?

Ban-and-buy-back is not a silver bullet.

Nevertheless, the Dayton shooter killed 10 and wounded 26 in just 30 seconds! Had he not been armed with an assault-style rifle (and a 100-round magazine) the casualty count certainly would have been a lot lower.

The challenge of attempting to take assault-style rifles out of circulation is to be measured by the cost of El Paso, Dayton and the 294-and-counting mass shootings we have experienced since 2019 began. The challenge we face is political will, not the Manhattan Project or the moon landing.

Is it worth a try?

You decide.



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