

## Generations

# How do Americans really feel about gun control?

**M**y opinion will be unpopular because I don't believe anyone should own a gun unless he or she is in the military or a police officer. And with that put out there neat and tidy, I know many, if not all, gun owners reading this are probably shaking their heads, muttering, "She's lost touch with reality."

Let me clarify: My suggestion would take place in a perfect world where everyone had respect for human life. But the world isn't perfect, is it? There are bad guys out there, so I concede that the need "to protect oneself" could account for one gun as long as there was a background check, a permit and a safe place to lock it. Do you think our forefathers who wrote the Second Amendment could ever imagine that schoolchildren would have to die before our government moved to enact better laws to protect them? I think not. The Second Amendment says something about personal freedom to arm oneself, but it doesn't go into detail about amassing guns or anything about assault-style weapons and

high-capacity magazines. It was adopted on Dec.



**Peg DeMarco**

15, 1791, and will be 227 years old. Since it was adopted, we've gone through a couple of world wars, lots of good and bad political leaders, the Space Age including putting a man on the moon, the Electronic Age, curing many diseases, and we're just *now* making great strides in protecting the rights of *all* peoples of color, sexual preference, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities and religions ... sort of (depending on which side of the spectrum is looking at that statement — right, left, middle or not sure).

When The News Herald did a survey on the street, the person who responded that kids should be armed and teachers, too, really made me shudder. Instead of backpacks, do we arm our kids with holsters? Instead of teachers earning degrees and collecting pitiful salaries, should we instead take

them to the shooting range to make sure they are crack shots?

The problem is that buying a gun is way too easy in this country and even one gun in the hands of an irrational person, no matter what age, is one gun too many, let alone arming that person with an arsenal.

While many lawmakers, victims and gun-control advocates have demanded swift political action, their opponents have cautioned against knee-jerk reactions and implored the public to wait for more information first. In other words, we should wait for a bigger school shooting?

As for the American public, pros and cons on better gun control have some similarities. A 2017 survey showed that 89 percent of Americans, including gun owners and non-gun owners, agree on one thing: The mentally ill should be prevented from purchasing guns. That's reasonable, but what's not reasonable is to expect someone on the fringe of sanity at a gun show or at a Walmart not revealing past history as he or she loads a shopping cart.

The so-called "gun-show loophole," through which people can purchase firearms without background checks, is similarly non-controversial. Surveys show 84 percent of U.S. adults, 77 percent of gun owners and 87 percent of non-gun owners believe the loophole should be closed.

Another 83 percent of American adults believe people on the FBI's no-fly list should be blocked from buying guns, and here begins the friction. Civil-liberties groups have decried attempts to push such legislation through Congress, arguing the no-fly list is arbitrary, frequently inaccurate and discriminatory against Muslim-Americans. Has anyone in a civil-liberties group had one or more of their children shot during any mass shooting?

Major disagreements begin when assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines come into play. Less than half of gun owners favor banning assault-style weapons, compared with 77 percent of non-gun owners, while those numbers are 44 percent to 74 percent,

respectively, for banning high-capacity magazines.

The National Rifle Association's lobbying power is, to me, a disgrace. Just 19 percent of U.S. gun owners say they belong to the NRA, less than one-fifth of all the gun owners in the country. Forty-four percent of American adults believe the NRA has too much influence over gun legislation, 40 percent believe it has just the right amount of influence, and 15 percent believe it has too little. I feel it should have no influence, but that's just me.

In actuality, gun ownership in America has been declining for years (today 76 million own a gun), yet gun sales are at historic highs. This suggests that America's dwindling group of gun owners is stocking up on firearms more than ever. In fact, the average U.S. gun owner wants to possess more than the average eight. Is that even slightly alarming to anyone reading this?

Peg DeMarco is a Morganton resident who writes a weekly features column for The News Herald. Contact her at [pegdemarco@earthlink.net](mailto:pegdemarco@earthlink.net).