

Should the U.S. Have Tougher Gun-Control Laws?

Public-safety officials say yes, but others say such laws infringe upon Second Amendment rights

YES

Gun laws must be designed to keep firearms out of the hands of the criminal minority without violating the freedoms of the law-abiding majority.

Currently, gun-control laws vary from place to place. That's because on top of federal gun laws, some states have enacted additional laws—such as mandatory reporting of lost and stolen guns to police and requiring state inspections of gun dealers—in an effort to reduce criminals' access to guns.

A recent study by Mayors Against Illegal Guns indicates that the marketplace for illegal guns is strongest in the states with the weakest gun laws: The report tracked the sources of guns used in violent crimes and found that they tend to come from states with comparatively weak gun regulation.

That's why we need federal legislation to beef up background checks in states where laws are more lax.

Congress should adopt these four measures: First, mandate background checks on all gun-show sales, which 32 states do not require. Second, require gun dealers to do background checks on all employees who handle guns, which only five states now require. Third, close the "fire-sale loophole" in many states which allows gun dealers whose licenses have been revoked to continue to sell their inventory. Finally, close the "terror gap" that currently leaves individuals on the nation's terrorist "no fly" list off the list of those prohibited from purchasing guns.

The fight against illegal guns is an issue of public safety. We must keep guns out of the hands of people who, by law, shouldn't have them. This can be done while respecting gun rights of law-abiding citizens. We can and must do both.

—**Thomas M. Menino**

Mayor of Boston & Co-Chair, Mayors Against Illegal Guns

NO

Gun-control laws have never, and can never, reduce violent crime. That's because anti-gun laws don't affect criminals, who ignore all laws. Government studies prove it, finding that most criminals get guns through theft or the black market, where gun laws have no effect.

The 20,000 anti-gun laws already on the books in states, cities, and towns throughout the U.S. too often disarm innocent victims. That's one reason why violent crime is often highest in places with the toughest anti-gun laws.

For example, in 1976, Washington, D.C., outlawed handguns, even for self-defense in the home. After that, armed crime skyrocketed, earning the nation's capital the shameful nickname, the "Murder Capital."



Compare that failure with the success of dozens of states that, since 1987, have passed laws allowing licensed law-abiding adults to carry firearms for protection. In each of those states, violent crime fell after the "right-to-carry" was adopted.

Politicians talk about all sorts of supposed rights—a right to health care, to a clean environment, and so on. But your most fundamental right is your right to defend your life. Our Founders understood this underpinning of a free society, so in the Bill of Rights they guaranteed the right "to keep and bear arms" with the Second Amendment.

In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that the Second Amendment specifically protects Americans' right to own a handgun for self-protection. That is as it should be. Self-defense is our birthright. Firearms secure that birthright. All anti-gun laws do is put the innocent at the mercy of the lawless.

—Wayne Lاپierre

Chief Executive Officer, National Rifle Association