



Other Viewpoints

Gun owners' rules evolve with society

When the nation heard about the gun massacre, its leaders were moved to action. People were slain by weapons certainly not envisioned by the Founding Fathers, so a line was drawn on the absolute provisions of the Second Amendment. The crime: The St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago, in which gangland violence resulted in seven deaths from several weapons, including Thompson machine guns with high-capacity magazines. In the passage of federal regulations tightening controls on weapons such as machine guns and silencers, the National Rifle Association cooperated to ensure the proper balance between individual rights and collective security was observed. As a result, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms now regulates "destructive devices" such as machine guns, silencers, artillery and land mines. Few would now argue for the unfettered ownership of bazookas and missiles, and rightly so.

Another gun massacre, the Aurora movie theater shooting that left 12 people dead and 58 injured, has brought a new awareness on where the line has been drawn between legal and casual gun ownership and those that should be regulated much more tightly.

Make no mistake: The guns used by the shooter early July 20 were purchased legally, and no action taken by either the local retailers who sold him his weapons or the online businesses that supplied him with ammunition and the capacity to use much of it at once has been deemed to be outside the rule of law.

Moving forward, however, it is incumbent on lawmakers to have an honest discussion of whether, again, technology has advanced to the point where the line between casual ownership and heavily regulated ownership should be redrawn.

In the past 20 years, attempts have been made to redraw that line. The "assault weapon" ban from 1994 to 2004 did take some guns off the streets. But did it deter criminals? There were high-profile mass gun deaths during that period, such as Columbine, as well attacks using other weapons, such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the Unabomber attacks. Right now, many of those types of rifles are owned by law-abiding Americans. Reinstatement of the ban would likely have no effect.

A couple of products used in the Aurora shootings should merit more scrutiny, however: high-capacity magazines that allow for 50 or even 100 rounds, because they can cause the level of destruction that initially drew the attention of federal lawmakers; and the types of body armor designed to thwart would-be shooters, which should be limited to law enforcement and the military.

Gun advocacy groups point out that had members of the theater audience been armed, the massacre might have been avoided. It's unlikely, however, that a civilian would have the training and firepower to match the awful events of that night.

Those who are willing to commit mass murder will work hard to concoct ways to kill people; it's the evil nature of their beings. As a democratic republic, we should elect leaders who are willing to weigh individual rights versus collective safety to ensure mass murderers do not have easy access to the tools to accomplish their goal.

— Loveland (Colo.) Reporter-Herald, via Associated Press
www.reporterherald.com/opinion/editorial/ci_21182546/where-draw

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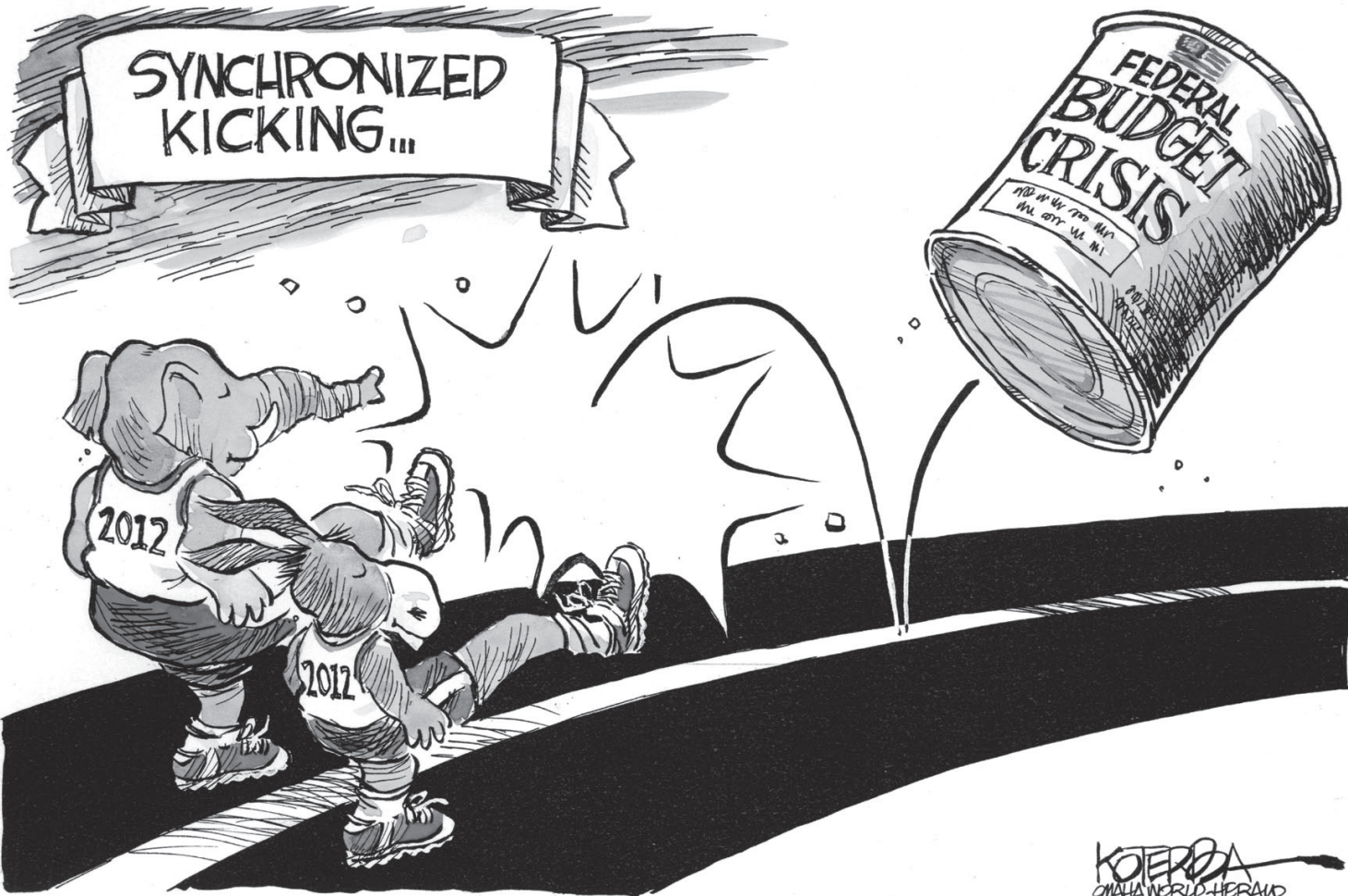
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Gun laws shouldn't be radically reformed

The tragic shooting massacre in Aurora, Colo., that left 12 dead has brought the discussion of gun control back to the forefront.

Not wanting to be accused of double standards, I have always steered clear of most gun control debates. As someone who takes a libertarian stance on most social issues, any promotion of gun control would look to many like a cowardly abdication of my principles. I mean, how could I be an absolutist on the First Amendment, but an opponent of the second?

While I'm sympathetic and, honestly, more ideologically in tune with gun-control advocates — I'm unconvinced that the Second Amendment should be interpreted as permitting citizens to buy any gun they want, no matter how lethal that gun's purpose may be — I don't think the massacre in Aurora is reason enough to resurrect the assault weapons ban that ended in 2004.

Although an investigation by the *Washington Post* provided evidence the ban was effective, policies — especially policies that possibly involve tinkering with constitutional rights — shouldn't be judged solely by their outcome.

The real question is, should law-abiding citizens be prevented from buying certain guns when other, less-lethal weapons are available and well-suited for hunting or self-defense purposes? My gut tells me the answer is yes, but stances should rarely be based on visceral emotions alone. It's wise not to be controlled by the heartless head or the headless heart. So, with a bit of hesitancy, I support a ban on some automatic weapons, but I don't think the ban should be as widespread as some gun-control



Andy Heintz

Wildcat Ramblings

advocates might like.

There certainly are automatic weapons that should be completely banned, specifically the weapons that will continue firing until you release the trigger or you have fired the last round and the weapon is empty. These weapons don't belong in the hands of any civilian, whether he or she is law-abiding or not. But Geoffrey Norman, in an article for National Public Radio, wrote that it's illegal for most citizens to buy this type of weapon, anyway. Mostly, however is not good enough; these guns shouldn't be legally owned by anyone. Period.

But the case for banning semi-automatic weapons, which requires a separate trigger pull for each round fired, is less compelling. Norman writes that civilians can own an AK-47 that is configured for semi-automatic fire only. While I don't understand the appeal of this sort of gun, I do think completely banning it would be an example of government overreach.

Whether more gun control would actually lead to less gun violence is a separate issue and people on both sides of this issue have offered persuasive arguments to bolster their cases. Critics of gun control, like Norman, point to the fact that despite its anti-gun legislation,

Chicago still has its fair share of gun violence while Vermont, a state that doesn't require a permit for concealed carry; has a fairly low crime rate. But proponents of stricter gun control can counter by pointing to the sad fact that gun violence is much worse in America than it is in any other industrialized country. In fact, no other country comes close to American levels of gun-related violence.

A study in the *Journal of Trauma-Injury Infection and Critical Care* that was done last year analyzed gun death statistics for 2003 from the World Health Organization database and the results were shocking and disheartening.

"It found that 80 percent of all firearms deaths in 23 industrialized countries occurred in the United States," E.J. Dionne wrote to bolster his stricter gun-control argument in a column for the *Washington Post*. "For women, the figure rose to 86 percent; for children age 14 and under, to 87 percent."

Despite these disconcerting statistics, I think any efforts to radically revamp our gun control laws would undercut the delicate balance between liberty and public safety that our nation has long relied upon.

Americans, however, should really think hard about why so many people in our country are so quick to pull the trigger?

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision.

Bipartisanship's become a dirty word

A recent statement by Gov. Sam Brownback really caught my attention. He announced his intention to work against moderate Republican state senators in the 2012 Primary Election because they worked with Democrats in the Legislature. I have been scratching my head about this statement for several days now because it flies in the face of what virtually all Kansans — and Americans — want to see in government.

People are sick of partisan politics. The federal government has become increasingly polarized because Democrats and Republicans can't work together. I acknowledge that President Obama deserves some blame for not being able to forge a better working relationship with Republicans. However, I believe the biggest cause of the increasingly bitter atmosphere in Washington has been the injection of Congress members who are unwilling to work with members of the other political party. They don't understand that compromise is necessary if government is going to accomplish anything meaningful.

The environment in Washington, D.C., has been festering for a long time. Despite

Other Opinions

Paul Davis House Minority Leader

this, state lawmakers in Kansas have always seemed to take a different approach. We have partisan fights from time to time, but Democrats and Republicans have traditionally been able to work together very well. Unfortunately, I'm worried that Washington influences are changing how things function in Kansas at every level of government.

For example, the Sedgwick County Republican Party recently censured a Republican County Commissioner for publicly supporting his Democratic colleague over the Republican candidate in the upcoming election. The commissioner was simply stating what he thought would be the best outcome for the people of

Sedgwick County. Actions like those taken by the Sedgwick County Republican Party will increasingly prohibit elected officials from working across party lines for the betterment of their constituencies.

This is why I fear the consequences of Gov. Brownback's pronouncement. Do the people of Kansas want their representatives to work with each other or not? I believe the answer is a clear yes. If that is the case, I hope Kansans will ask political candidates the same question that a bright high school student asked me recently: Give me an example of an issue where you agree with the other political party and where you disagree with your political party?

Hopefully, Kansans will send a strong signal that bipartisanship is not a dirty word and is actually something that voters will reward on Election Day.

Paul Davis of Lawrence is the Kansas House Minority Leader. He can be reached at (785) 296-7630 or Paul.davis@house.ks.gov.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax

(202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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