



Americans Against Gun Violence
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**2020 National High School Essay Contest
\$1,000 Winner**

(Student's name and high school withheld at student's request)

All Is Not Well: A Call to Action

In 2019, there were more mass-shootings in the United States than days in the year (1). In the past 30 days, there have been 24 more (2). Nearly 40,000 people lose their lives to firearms every year in this country, and that rate is increasing (3). People of every color and creed are forced into fear because, in a country with more guns than people (4), everyone is a potential threat. The United States has a gun problem. What have we done to fix it? Nothing. We've given the victims: innocent men, women, and children, our hollow thoughts and prayers instead of our protection. We've offered them sympathy instead of safety. We try to give them hope for a better world tomorrow, yet change nothing today. This isn't the American way. Enough is enough. It's time to fight back.

The American Academy of Pediatrics claims that stricter firearm regulations including but not limited to the outlawing of handguns and assault weapons are the most effective way to prevent firearm injuries. They are completely correct. Logic dictates that providing a legal incentive against gun ownership will reduce rates of gun-related deaths and injuries. If we look at the empirical data, we see exactly what we'd expect: states with weaker firearm regulations have higher rates of gun-related deaths (5, 6), meaning the stronger the regulation, the lower the casualties. If we look internationally, we can effortlessly recognize the exact same trend. In the United States, the rate of gun violence is extraordinarily high as compared with all other advanced democratic countries (7). Why? Because every other developed nation has come to the commonsensical yet apparently evasive realization that guns of all kinds are a problem in need of a solution. It's about time we joined them.

Why is America so far behind? If the other developed nations have had their eyes opened, why not us? Aren't we supposed to be leading the free world? To blame is a deluded sense of our own Constitution. As is apparent from a once-over of the document, the Second Amendment only protects the right of a "well-regulated militia" to keep and bear arms (8). Twice has the Supreme Court ruled exactly this (9, 10). And yet, in 2008, all of that was reversed. With a fantastical decision rivaling Dred Scott, the Supreme Court ruled in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (11) that the Second Amendment protects the "right" to own and use a firearm in self-defense; a right which does not exist. James Madison, who penned the amendment, is rolling in his grave as the government misconstrues his own words to justify the death of innocent Americans. This has to stop.

It's time to restore the Second Amendment to its original meaning and to adopt stringent gun control laws in the United States comparable to the laws in other advanced democratic countries. We cannot delay. Every year we wait is paid for with tens of thousands of American lives. In the next election cycle, I'll be able to vote, and I'll let candidates know that I expect them to offer more than thoughts and prayers for gunshot victims. I expect them to work toward the adoption of stringent firearm regulations, including, but not limited to, bans on civilian ownership of handguns and assault weapons. I hope you'll join me.

References

- (1) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mass-shootings-2019-more-than-days-365/>(Note: a mass shooting in this report was defined as one in which at least four people, not including the shooter, were wounded but not necessarily killed by gunfire.)
- (2) <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting>
- (3) <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/united-states>
- (4) <https://injury.research.chop.edu/violence-prevention-initiative/types-violence-involving-youth/gun-violence/gun-violence-facts-and#.XptaZshKg2w>
- (5) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2673375>
- (6) <https://vpc.org/press/states-with-weak-gun-laws-and-higher-gun-ownership-lead-nation-in-gun-deaths-new-data-for-2018-confirms/>
- (7) <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons>
- (8) https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment
- (9) U.S. v. Miller, 307 U.S. 174 (1939) (n.d.).
- (10) Lewis v. United States, No. 55 (U.S. 1980).
- (11) District of Columbia v. Heller, 554 US (Supreme Court 2008).