

# Perspectives

## Is democracy just too confusing? Guns as tools: NRA and butcher knives



**Shaun Cashman**  
Columnist

While doing some contract work for A-B Tech recently, I had the honor of editing together a video promo for the upcoming Education Bill. It really made me think about our whole screwed-up voting system.

One of the last titles I made in the video says, "Vote on November 7th." I felt so hypocritical saying that. Here I am, making a video to convince people to vote for a bill that would give the university system more money when I have not in my entire life ever gone to vote.

And then I thought, "Why have I never voted?" I've had plenty of opportunities. I even registered when I turned 18. And what with the new no-excuse policy that allows me to vote anytime between Oct. 16 and Nov. 7, I can't say I'm too busy anymore.

Now, I like to consider myself an intelligent individual, so not voting must be a conscious choice. Sure, laziness and lack of interest plays a part, but there has to be more to it. After all, voting is one of our most prized rights as citizens. We choose our leaders, right? Birthright, luck, age or money has nothing to do with it anymore... or does it?

Who can afford to run for govern-

ment? It takes a lot of money to get your face plastered before hundreds of thousands of non-voting Americans. Ever notice how 99 percent of the people running for government are usually rich lawyers?

Sure, an odd pro-wrestler or two can get elected on sheer name recognition, but most major politicians are bred in fancy upper-class hatcheries in Texas. And under protective lighting, our young politicians are trained for their future careers as big-mouthed slackers. Rejects become school board leaders.

But, to get to the point, the number of people who can actually run for government is a lot smaller than we would like to admit. Got to keep out the riffraff after all. We can't have any sex offenders or drug addicts getting into positions of power. That would be foolish.

And to make it even harder to run for office, we have a two party system with little or no chance of a third party ever winning an election.

There are just way too many people who vote a straight party ticket because they actually believe that Democrats and Republicans are different. But we'll let those people

remain in their happy little fantasies. I wouldn't want to break anyone's bubble.

As such, bitterness towards our current party system plays a small part in my not voting. But if all the nonvoting people like me went to the polls, our votes would indeed make a difference, so still there has to be more.

So, would electing a third party candidate really change anything? No. Why? Because we live under a bureaucracy, and anyone who has ever worked in one knows that the essence of a bureaucracy is to never get anything done.

Paper work, legal bribery, media manipulation and inner-party squabbles have made sure that our government only does something when alien invaders blow up half a state. But even then, it has to be an important state. After all, the British invaded and destroyed Montana years ago and no one noticed.

So we have a small group of lawyers running for offices and then doing very little when they actually get into them aside from bleeding us dry for "senatorial benefits." And you want me to be part of this process?

And how much is the popular vote really worth? In the vague recesses of my mind are memories from middle school and of something called the Electoral College. Aren't they ones who really make the voting decisions? And don't they base their choices on the Republican/Democratic registry in specified counties in upstate New York?

Do I even make a difference? I've heard some say yes and some say no. Who am I to believe? Who can I trust? Can I listen to the politicians? What was that about "No new taxes," or "I did not have sexual relations with that woman?" How

about this whole thing on term limits, and didn't somebody say they'd legalize pot or praying in schools or something?

I personally believe we vote for whoever has the funniest voice so we can make fun of them. Nowadays, if a child says, "I want to be the President when I grow up," we quickly rush him to a psychiatrist.

But ignoring my pessimistic and cynical view of our current policy leaders, voting should still be my civic duty and pride, right? Who cares if I have no knowledge of any of the candidates or their platforms? Why should it bother me that the popular vote doesn't mean anything?

So you're telling me that all I have to do is flip this small switch for some annoying candidate, and not only do I get a new leader bent on economically ravaging the middle-class, but I also get signed up for jury duty. Cool. What a great privilege. It would be un-American to think otherwise.

Have I confused you yet? If not, please read paragraph two, section three again, but this time, ignore any reference to "small-beaked-chipmunk-cooker."

To conclude, I don't vote because I simply could care less who wins and I find the whole process terribly confusing and pointless. Those in charge, whether Republican, Democratic or other, will continue to run things the same way.

Taxes and inflation will steadily increase, our environment will go to crap and with any luck I'll probably be drafted in the next war, which will conveniently occur right after that whole pygmy-sex-slave scandal thing in the White House.

Oh well, time to go support this great country of ours with 30 percent of my wages.

## Guns as tools: NRA and butcher knives



**Josh Day**  
Columnist

What would the NRA do without their butcher knives?

Laws fixing the gun-show loophole and banning assault weapons would have been passed years ago if it weren't for the overwhelming NRA influence in Congress. An Aryan Nations lunatic can shoot up a daycare center and Congress has the audacity to compare his submachine gun to a butcher knife. Yes, Buford O. Furrow, Jr.'s guns and bulletproof vest were all legally purchased.

Let's face it. If America didn't have such easy access to guns, the murder rate would drop significantly. In Britain, private citizens cannot own handguns. A total of twelve people died from gun crimes in 1999. You know how many people died in the U.S.? About 16,000.

And the NRA tells us it ain't the guns.

This issue has been on people's minds ever since Columbine. In case you've forgotten the weapons used in this particular gun massacre, let me refresh your memory.

A pair of old shotguns were used, the all-American home-defense gun. With the barrels sawed off, the spray of pellets covers a much wider area — horrible for duck hunting, but ideal for close quarter work.

Also used in the attack was a semi-automatic Hi Point Rifle (9mm). According to the Ohio manufacturer who created this weapon, this gun was designed for the average working man. Wal-Mart sells 9mm ammunition.

Intratec TEC DC semi-automatic pistol (9mm), a now illegal handgun that was originally designed as a "peace keeper" for the white South African government, was employed as well. When it was still legally being manufactured (in the Reagan years before John Hinckley tried to impress

Jodie Foster) the TEC-9 was once advertised as the most popular crime gun in America.

If it weren't for Clinton getting the ban passed the NRA-owned congress, this gun would still be manufactured and sold at gun shops around the country.

Of course this "ban" means little to nothing because owners of the gun can still sell to anyone they please. In fact, you can go to a gun show and find guns sold in bulk quantities alongside other semi-illegal weapons like rocket launchers and submachine guns.

The NRA has us believing most guns used in crimes are stolen. That's true, only if you include all crimes — armed robbery, kidnapping and rape — where a gun is only

present, not fired. These crimes make up the bulk of criminal activity in the country.

But if you look at crimes like mass murder, non-gang related homicide and hate crimes, the guns are most often legally purchased, usually at a gun show. The Columbine guns were legally purchased, as were nearly all of the weapons used in school shootings and other mass murders.

You could hop on the interstate one weekend, drive to the nearest gun show, pick up a fully automatic M-11 machine gun and mow down dozens of people by Monday. Meanwhile, the NRA is talking about butcher knives.

After all, a firearm, no matter how wickedly designed, is merely a tool. It's an inanimate object. Guns don't kill people, people kill people, right?

Despite it being created to kill and thus being a tool of indisputable evil, it remains just a tool, according to the NRA.

So what's to be done? Close the gun shop loophole? Ban assault weapons (seriously this time)? Impose child safety locks? Prosecute parents? Require registration on all handguns currently owned and purchased? Ban handguns? Ban all guns?

First of all, the child safety lock law is nonsense. It's only on the discussion table because Democrats are trying to please dumb gun control advocates who don't know any better. Look at Al Gore's crusade to ban the Saturday Night Special, for instance. If you're keeping a loaded gun for defense, it somewhat ruins the purpose of a fast retrieval when you have punch in a four-code combination which you could easily forget in the heat of the moment.

Yes, the availability of guns is the largest contributing factor to America's outrageous murder count. Yes, a lot of innocent people have to die to preserve our right to bear arms. This is America. "We're armed, and we like to shoot," as Roger & Me creator Michael Moore once aptly put. With all the armed citizens in this country, it's a miracle we don't have bullets flying over our head whenever we walk outside.

We are a violent culture because of guns, and we have to either accept that fact or do something about the influence of the NRA in our government.

In the meantime, please stop the nonsense. It insults all of us, Senator Orrin Hatch, when you compare an M-16 assault rifle to a garden-variety kitchen knife.

## Addressing mid-semester problems



**Jason Allen**  
Columnist

As the midpoint of the semester flies past us, there are issues that simply need to be discussed.

First, I wonder about the new eating establishment on campus. Now, as a carnivore, I find the idea of having a place that specializes in meat (namely chicken) within walking distance very appealing.

But the thing I don't get is the fact that even the salads there have sliced, grilled chicken in them. I'm surprised they haven't started a petition or a protest yet.

I know this one is a little late, but what about Coming Out Day? Does everyone have a holiday now? I'm not gay, but I feel, as a liberal-minded individual, that they deserve a month like African Americans and women.

By the way, can we have a We

Love Jason Allen Day? You know, where everyone wears little buttons proclaiming their love for their favorite columnist. That could be neat. Everyone eats a three-meat-minimum pizza, drinks a Sun Drop soda and watches at least one hour of cartoons or WWF wrestling. Then they all sit around the Jason Allen Day tree, sing songs and exchange presents.

Next is the sudden shift of seasonal events in the retail world. Now, call me crazy, but I thought the order of events for the fall and winter was Halloween, Thanksgiving and then Christmas. I know that some places kind of gloss over Halloween because of the stigma attached to it, but wouldn't that mean that the next logical holiday would be Thanksgiving?

If that is correct, then how come department stores are already putting up Christmas trees and wreaths?

I remember the Christmas shopping season used to start the day after Thanksgiving, not the day after the Fourth of July.

Speaking of order, the weather is out of control. First, it gets cold enough to snow around the beginning of the month and now we are back to early summer temperatures. I'm not complaining about it, but the sudden shifts in the temperature drive some of us crazy as our bodies scramble to keep up with the changes.

I know it can't be Mother Nature's fault, so I'm going to blame the atmospheric science students. Oh, come on, we all know they have special magical powers to mess the weather up just by predicting it. One will make a prediction, the weather does something else, then another one of them makes a prediction and so on.

If they ever all agree on something, all weather will cease to exist and the world will come to an end, so there's never a happy medium. Oh, well.

It seems that the departments could use a happy medium to resolve these funding fights. I got in an argument with an athlete who will remain nameless about funding for departments. This individual was very knowledgeable about economics, and gave me a run for my money, so to speak.

He said that I had no room to talk about the athletic department's

funding when my department, the drama department, also had a huge budget.

"But at least our USITT (United States Institute of Theatre Technology) team that goes to national competition has won two national championships in the four or so years they've been around," I said. "What about you guys?"

In the end, I didn't win the argument, but that shut him up for a few minutes. Oh, you can support our national champs by coming to the Haunted Theatre at Carol Belk Theatre and get some well-needed scares for a few bucks. The money helps to send our team to competition, so watch for fliers and posters for the dates and times.

Speaking of theater, I'm going to use a spot here to plug my latest endeavor. Oct. 30 and 31 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. in Carmichael 208 will be the auditions for my show of the season. The show is an adaptation of Jim Henson's "Labyrinth." That's right, you heard me correctly.

The auditions are open to all students, faculty and staff, and no previous experience is necessary. Some come on out and support me in my work.

So, anyhow, I want you all to go out there this week or the next and just look for something that just seems wrong. Just find it, wonder about it and then have a good laugh at the silliness of life.

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