

Newton vs. Congress: preventing the next massacre through gun control

One gunman. 28 dead. Two injured. Countless loved ones of the victims.

One failed piece of gun legislation.

Now, an indefinite number of spree killings will not be prevented.



BY SHELBY SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Most Americans know exactly where they were on Dec. 14, 2012, when they first heard news of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. I specifically recall standing stiff in my living room gawking at the TV when the numbers began to scroll across the screen.

We lived through the D.C. sniper, Columbine and a very recent Aurora, Col. theater shooting. Yet, the idea that such a young adult not only gunned down his own mother, but 26 other innocent people, mostly young children, before killing himself shook our sense of security as a society.

Rather than watch the body count of U.S. mass shootings rise, the citizens of Newtown, Conn. decided that no one would die in vain that day.

"Speaking as a parent, I think these parents have a unique moral position that could create a movement in the protracted gun control debate," said Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies Jeremy Rinker.

Since the tragedy, parents of the slain children have acted in attempt to enforce stricter gun control laws in the U.S. This included mandatory background checks, limiting the amount of rounds in a magazine and banning assault weapons.

"I don't see the point of assault weapon use in the general population," said Virginia gun owner Penny Smith. "You don't need them for home protection, hunting and target shooting. There's no point. What we do need is background checks."

However, last Thursday, the bill to enforce these new protections failed to pass the Senate.

The devastation and disappointment reached the White House, as President Barack Obama called its failure to pass "a dark day in Congress."

The failure of a bill that would protect our basic safety is a disgrace to our processes in government and an abuse of the votes we have given to our representatives.

As a person training in gun use, I fully support regulating what type of guns are being sold and to whom they are being sold. The fact is, certain people in this country who should never have access to firearms, and certain guns should not be in the hands of the general public.

I can relate this reasoning to personal experience. In early 2008, my father shot my stepmother dead and wounded my eldest stepbrother before committing suicide.

My father should have never had access to firearms. He was a convicted drug dealer and user and had untreated mental health problems.

The reason he was able to bypass his past convictions was the gun show loophole. No background checks, just easy access.

The fact is everyday citizens would be unaffected by gun control. Background checks wouldn't restrict nonviolent citizens in terms of access to firearms.

With this being said, is Congress in a state to pass gun legislation that will protect innocent citizens from violent offenders? No.

Congressional leaders are far too busy fighting amongst themselves for personal and partisan needs. The last thing on their minds is implementing policies that will prevent the next inevitable massacre.

It is also important to consider that Sandy Hook was the second deadliest shooting in U.S. history. Its body count does not fully measure up to the 33 dead and 23 injured in the Virginia Tech massacre of 2007. From that tragedy, no new gun control was enforced. And, as usual, no one was inspired to act based on something in second place.

I fear that it will have to take a greater amount of death in order to get Congress to take action.

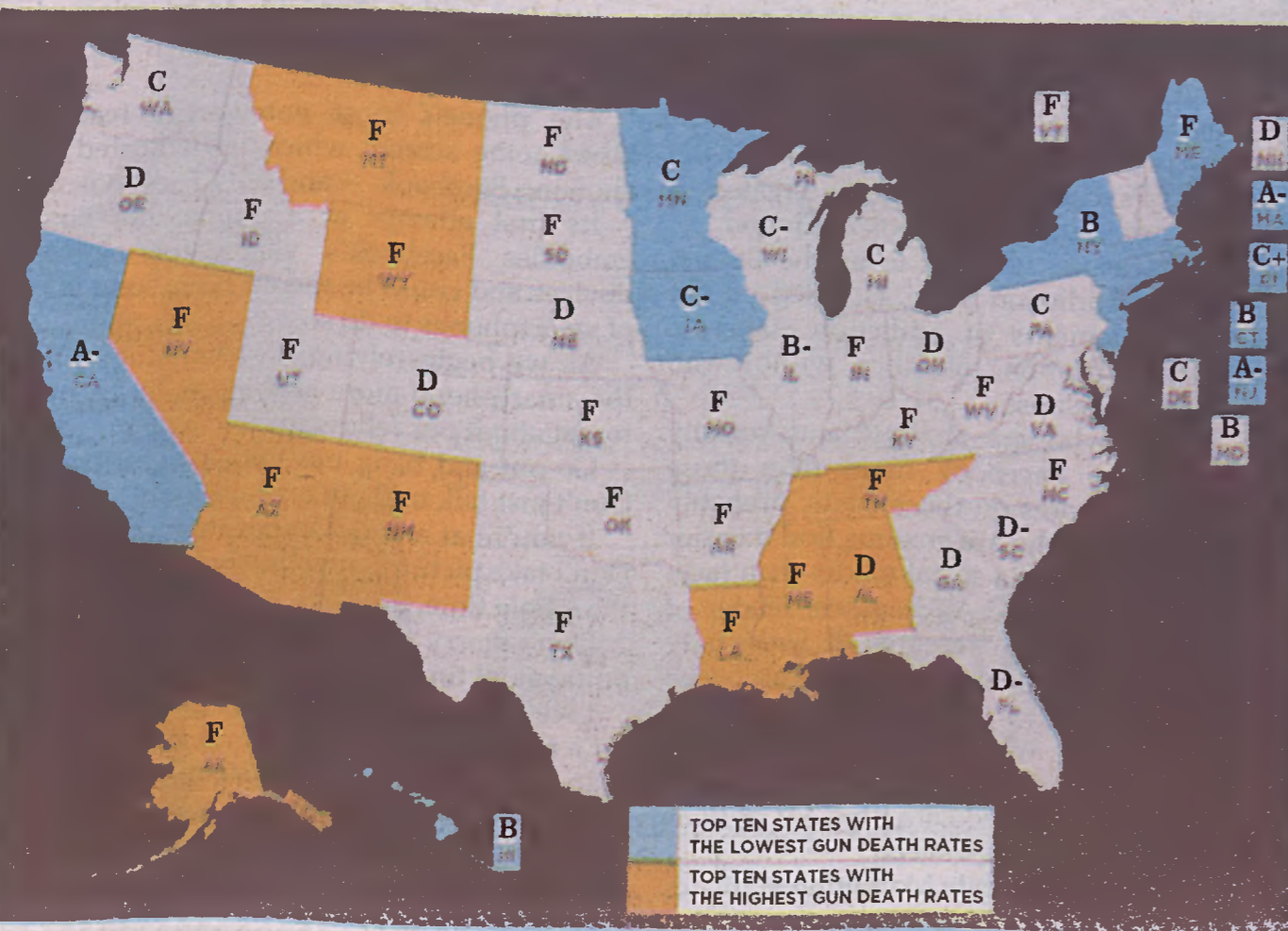
However, the collective conscience of the country is better geared to be proactive in these tragic situations.

"Newtown has changed us," said Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) to the Huffington Post. "There is no going back now."

Grading State Gun Laws:

Criteria - states were awarded points based on their laws in these areas:

- People prohibited from firearm possession
- Sales and transfers
- Gun dealers and other sellers
- Gun owner responsibilities
- Firearms in public places
- Consumer and child safety
- Classes of weapons/ammunition/magazines
- Ammunition regulation
- Investigating gun crimes
- Local authority to regulate
- Other:
 - Nullifies federal law/inhibits safety



This grade, that grade, what's the difference?

California (A-)

Gun regulations/laws: In California, all gun sales must be through a state-licensed dealer, and there is a 10-day waiting period prior to the sale. In addition, they maintain a permanent record of firearm sales, ban most .50 caliber rifles and assault weapons and regulate gun shows. Large-capacity magazines are prohibited, and handgun buyers must take a written test to obtain a license. In addition, a person may only purchase one handgun a month.

North Carolina (F)

Gun regulations/laws: North Carolina does not regulate or license firearms dealers, nor does it impose a limit on the number of guns one can purchase in a given time period. Gun-buyers do not have to report lost or stolen firearms, and they do not have to undergo background checks in order to purchase a weapon. In addition, North Carolina does not prohibit assault weapons, .50 caliber rifles or large-capacity ammunition magazines.

This Week's

STAFF EDITORIAL

Different tour, different experience

Birds of a feather flock together.

A recent survey suggests that a non-athlete/athlete divide holds true at Guilford College, a liberal institution that prides itself on testimonies of diversity and equality. Apparently many members of the community still feel a divide among groups on campus.

Theater studies plays with theater studies, science department mixes with science department, business majors interact with business majors. We are drawn to commonalities because that is who we spend the most time with in class and who we study with after class.

However, Guilford has athletes that came to Guilford for biology, philosophy, art — more than just the turf. Therefore, they are connected through more than just sports. So, just how sharp is this divide? Does it even exist?

Students usually meet new friends through their major and minor department. Meanwhile, our athletes spend a large chunk of time together outside of the classroom at practice and in games, building team chemistry. Most of them stay in residence halls together, securing this bond.

A potentially larger reason for a divide is that there are different recruitment strategies that may inadvertently create a separation.

Student-athlete tours differ from the tours that non-athletes receive. While recruiting athletes, coaches facilitate tours of campus that are tailored to the potential recruit, and some touring student-athletes spend a night with their prospective teammates to conclude their visit. These visitations are based on signing an athlete to play rather than helping that student to accomplish academic goals or see other aspects of Guilford.

When asked, one athlete mentioned that he wished he had been given the same tour that non-athletes were offered. On his tour with a coach, he wasn't shown critical areas of campus, like the Learning Commons tutoring facilities or the Multicultural Education Resource Center.

Neglecting to share these Guilford highlights could inhibit the successes of student-athletes, although the athletic program insists that it focuses on victories off the field first and victories on the field second.

It is time we recognize that the recruitment tour system may be helping to foster a divided student body. Students applying to a diverse school like Guilford deserve a tour that accurately represents the campus experience.

While there are other potential reasons for the student/student-athlete divide, we suggest a step in the right direction is having a single tour that shines a light equally on both academics and athletics and introduces all students to the many corners of campus.

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