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Johns Hopkins study recommends stronger gun laws

Pat Perriello | Nov. 12, 2012 NCR Today

The recent election has pushed a lot of important issues to a back-burner. One issue that generated some significant new data a couple of weeks ago is related to gun violence and deserves a hearing.

Johns Hopkins has released a study [1] illustrating how specific changes to our laws regarding guns could contribute to the safety of all of us.

The study makes several interesting points centered on the notion that there are things that can be done to reduce the rising tide of gun violence in our country. Some of the suggestions they make include targeting who can own guns and closing loopholes involved in the sale of guns. The study shows that such measures actually do save lives. Specifically, the study recommends that young people under the age of 21 not be allowed to possess handguns, since the highest rate of homicide is among those 18 to 20 years of age.

The study attempts to convey the message that there are things that can be done to reduce gun violence without taking guns away from law-abiding citizens. It notes that many potential regulations are favored by most gun owners, including background checks on all gun transactions.

A few days later, the *Baltimore Sun* referenced [2] the Hopkins study in an editorial that found it disturbing that there was no discussion of gun violence during the presidential campaign, and that no question on the topic was raised during the debates.

The *Sun* believes that lives can be saved and violence reduced if those most at risk are prevented from having firearms. Those at risk include those under 21, alcoholics, drug abusers and those convicted of violent crimes. This goal can be achieved through federal laws requiring background checks before gun transactions occur.

The path to saner gun laws is therefore clear. The obstacle is also clear. Politicians fear challenging the gun lobby, and therefore choose not to bring up the issue. The gun lobby indeed remains a powerful force in electoral politics, and politicians are right to fear it.

Yet the result is that the public remains powerless in a democracy to address such a critical issue of life and death. A depressing laundry list of recent incidents, such as the shooting in a Colorado movie theater, fails to move people to stand up and demand action.

One wonders if anything can overcome the fear and the powerful opposition that is out there.

Yet, the notion that in a democracy there is any issue that cannot be discussed is counterintuitive. No one can say exactly what the right mix of laws, incentives and enforcement is that can best produce a desired result of reduced gun violence. However, the idea that reduced gun violence is not desirable or that our society should not be permitted to discuss such a topic in a serious way is not an acceptable position for anyone, including the gun lobby.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/20/2014 - 23:39*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/johns-hopkins-study-recommends-stronger-gun-laws

Links:
[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/breaking/bs-md-gun-control-study-20121025,0,1585601.story
[2] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-gun-control-20121105,0,1962741.story