



Rod Emmerson's view



nzherald.co.nz **TOP 10**



1. Trio found alive after helicopter crash near Auckland Islands
2. Sri Lanka attacks: Billionaire Asos tycoon Anders Holch Povlsen loses three of his four children
3. Sir Peter Leitch in hospital after heart surgery
4. Family watch as great white pokes head out of water and chews on outboard
5. Philippines earthquake: Horror as quake empties rooftop pool
6. Southern Lakes Helicopters elated at news three crew survived crash
7. Courtroom tears as Queen St assault-accused charged with manslaughter
8. Waterspouts in Auckland
9. Prince Louis' (pictured) first birthday
10. Oklahoma City Thunder tipped to trade Steven Adams

Short & sweet

On wealth

If 10 per cent of Kiwis own 60 per cent of New Zealanders' wealth and two men own as much as the bottom 30 per cent that means there's only 10 per cent left for the rest of us. *Gary Hollis, Mellons Bay.*

On religion

Dear Cherry and Derek, I attend church and have watched all the Monty Python movies and found that laughter is good

medicine. Don't take life too seriously; you'll never get out of it alive.

Glenn Forsyth, Taupō.

On comedians

If Ukraine can vote a comedian for President I vote Tim Shadbolt for Prime Minister. *Karola Wheeler, West Harbour.*

On going forward

Something has crept into our vocabulary

lately and is driving me nuts: people discussing something "going forward". What does that mean? And why don't they say "going backward" also? Maybe someone with a greater knowledge of these things could explain this to me.

Julie Pearce, Matamata.

On hooligans

As often happens following a major tragedy, have we gone too far the other

way? Seen on Good Friday TV, noisy hooligan boy racers in Christchurch warned to "keep away from the mosques". What about Christian churches on this significant day?

Hylton Le Grice, Remuera.

On Pike River

Has anyone checked on Winston Peters' itinerary for the Pike River day?

AD Kirby, Papamoa.

US should learn from NZ's quickfire gun control

Just six days after the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand, Parliament voted 119-1 to ban assault weapons. On April 10, less than a month after the shooting, the new laws were passed into effect. The United States should follow the lead of New Zealand and ban assault weapons.

In fact, the US once had a ban on assault rifles. In 1994, President Clinton signed the Federal Assault Weapons Ban into law, effectively banning the manufacture of assault weapons for civilian use. It worked, but under National Rifle Association pressure, the ban was for 10 years and expired in 2004 with no law to extend or replace it.

It has been 15 years since it expired, yet the US Government – fighting against themselves, the constitution and the NRA – has failed to pass any form of common-sense gun control legislation. While the US Congress is locked in an ongoing stalemate, the populace are not. The US has had 76 mass shootings since the ban on assault weapons expired in 2004.

Seventy-six mass shootings. Zero new laws affecting the weapons used. After just one mass shooting, NZ's



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comment



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comment

Government took effective action. After 76, the United States still struggles.

In February, the US House of Representatives did pass the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. But this is a token law at best. The act does not address the real issue for mass shootings.

The bottom line is that machine-gun high-capacity military assault weapons are used in more than 95 per cent of mass shootings where 10 or more people are killed. The US doesn't need a token bill, it needs an assault weapons ban.

Americans need to think about the people from Orlando and Las Vegas. They need to think about the students from Parkland. They need to think about the children from Newtown. NZ needed change and made it. The US needs change.

If teenagers from Parkland, a suburban town in Florida, can rally an entire population across the nation that desperately want change and help a vote to flip 40 seats in Congress, why can't the elected officials now in place hear them?

People used to blame the gun issue for Al Gore's 2000 presidential loss in the US, but it's not 2000 anymore. Politicians don't lose votes because they are in favour

of gun control, in fact, they gain votes. More than 60 per cent of Americans support stricter gun control laws, according to a 2018 Gallup poll.

But to really accomplish something, Democrats and Republicans alike have to stand up to the NRA. New Zealand respected and worked with gun owners, allowing hunting rifles. But in America, as support for stricter gun control laws increases, the NRA's leaders are flexing muscles they don't have any more. They are trying to make this an issue of mental health, school security and video games – anything but the assault rifles doing the damage. Americans, like New Zealanders, must not let that scam work any more.

In the US, the land of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, there should be no need to worry about school security against mass shootings. Parents should not have to send their children to school and worry about whether or not they will be coming home alive.

And while there are popular, violent, war-involved video games the NRA says are a culprit, mass shootings are not a new issue. In 1984, 22 people were killed and 19 others were injured in the San Ysidro

McDonald's massacre, but nobody blamed it on *Pac-Man* or *Tetris*.

There's no longer space for legislative timidity. Mass shootings are not an issue of the past. You can compare numbers and look at the history of assault weapon usage, but history is not what matters right now. Mass shootings are an issue of today. The fact is people are being gunned down by assault rifles now more than ever.

Think about Columbine; think about Parkland; think about Newtown; think about Pulse; think about Christchurch and the countless others.

The lightning speed of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and the Parliament has taught a lesson about how to get something meaningful done to make real change. America should learn the lesson – and ban assault weapons designed for war.

Robert Weiner was spokesman for the United States House government operations committee, the House judiciary committee, and the White House narcotics control policy office. **John Black** is policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.