

Exclusive to OpEd News:

OpEdNews Op Eds 12/10/2022 at 5:39 PM EST H2'ed 12/10/22



The NRA'S Big Mistake Opposing Assault Weapons Ban

By *Robert Weiner* and Henry Deng of RWA

BY OPPOSING ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN, NRA IS KEEPING UP THE HEADLINES OF 95% OF MASS KILLINGS OF 10 OR MORE

By Robert Weiner and Henry Deng

The NRA's big mistake is that by opposing an assault weapons ban, they are keeping the headlines ongoing of 95 per cent of mass killings of ten or more. We surveyed 20 of those, and 19 were carried out with AK 47's, AR-15's, or similar assault weapons banned for 10 years until sunsetted in September 2004 by agreement with the NRA in the legislation. The NRA cooked their own goose by effectively re-upping virtually all 10+ mass killings as well and increasing by 30% all mass killings and shootings of four or more. For the many who do support the Second Amendment, this is a logical solution to stop a huge amount of the negative coverage.

It is a shame that gun violence was not even one of the top-five issues for voters in the 2022 midterms. The slaughter goes on and on and on while a big reduction opportunity that already worked for 10 years -- banning military assault weapons from the rest of society-- until the NRA-imposed sunset set in-- is available. Three have been charged with killing one person and injuring eight with assault weapons in Tallahassee on Oct. 29. In addition to the tragedy in Tallahassee, another shooting killing six people happened in Chesapeake, Virginia, on Nov. 23. More than 600 mass shootings have occurred in the United States so far this year, and more than 18,000 people have died from non-suicidal gun violence.

With gun violence and mass shootings on the rise, the Biden administration and Congress should be taking more effective actions to tackle this issue, with President Biden expressing his intention to work with Congress to "try to get rid of assault weapons."

However, only the minimal Bipartisan Safer Communities Act has become law to assist juvenile mental health and expand background checks a hair. The rate of mass shootings has not diminished.

In addition, with no fundamental gun control policies introduced, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is clearly not addressing the need for public safety as crime rates and shootings are generally increasing. In Tallahassee, shootings have increased from 50 in 2018 to 95 shootings and increasing in 2022. While violent crime nationwide in 2021 remains stable from 2020, the violent crime rate of 7.82 per 100,000 people in Tallahassee is still higher than the national median of 4 per 100,000 people, with the murder and assault rates in Tallahassee much higher than the nationwide rates per 1,000 people. It is evident that more measures shall be taken to both save lives and control gun crimes, but Congress is not working enough on that.

So what is stopping the government from taking more action? Gun manufacturers and NRA.

While the country is, as it has for decades, struggling with gun violence, manufacturers actively benefit from murder. A recent U.S. House of Representatives Oversight and Reform Committee memorandum shows gun industries have increased income by more than \$1 billion from selling weapons like the AR-15 as mass shootings and gun deaths continue to rise. In addition to the memo, 60% of Smith & Wesson's revenue comes from the sales of assault rifles. With politicians like Republican Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) receiving more than \$3 million from the NRA, it's no wonder gun manufacturers have such an enormous role in stopping meaningful gun control legislation.

However, those who want to see gun control measures enacted are beginning to see victories. Smith & Wesson is moving their headquarters from Massachusetts to Tennessee. With the Massachusetts state legislature instituting ban on assault weapons and the recent defeat of pro-gun groups' legal challenge against the ban, Mark Smith, the CEO of Smith & Wesson, said in a news release that gun restrictions will push the company to review "the best path forward for Smith & Wesson."

And that may be the key to reducing gun violence: the move by Smith & Wesson reflects that the existing environment is unfit for gun manufacturers to do business. Moreover, it proves that banning assault weapons can stop weapons from overflowing in society.

When President Bill Clinton signed the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act in September 1994, firearms production in the U.S. decreased from 5.17 million in 1994 to around 3 million in 2004, when the 10-year assault weapons ban ended. Since then, firearms production has continuously increased, reaching 11.5 million in 2016.

While the ban was in effect, violent crimes decreased from 1.86 million cases in 1994 to 1.36 million in 2004. However, since the end of the assault weapons ban, the number of mass shootings has increased. As pointed out by the *Washington Post*, between 1966 and 1999, there were mass shootings on an average of once every 180 days. From 2015 to now, it has been 47 days.

It couldn't be more explicit that this is when Congress and state legislatures need to work to enhance gun reforms. With gun manufacturers like Smith & Wesson moving away from states that enacted assault weapons bans, it points to a way that Congress can do the same nationwide to reduce gun violence further.

Many proposals, including the assault weapons ban, are popular around the country and can be implemented and enacted. In addition, proposals such as expanding background checks, such as the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, have previously been brought to the table. Meanwhile, members from both sides voiced support for at least some form of background check proposal, as a poll indicated that most Democrats, Independents, and Republicans support gun law reforms, such as background checks, a three-day waiting period, raising the minimum purchasing age, and even a ban on high-capacity magazines.

As gun violence is happening almost daily around the country, the stakes are too high for Congress to stop work to end gun violence at the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, where the bill introduced virtually no legally binding clauses on gun control. Including background check expansion and many other proposals, Americans need and deserve gun laws reformed immediately.

With the U.S. House passing the first assault weapons ban in almost three decades, the Senate has remained silent. President Clinton had done it before, and President Biden, then Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pushed and enacted the assault weapons ban in 1994. Congress and state legislatures -- often more progressive than Congress -- could undoubtedly do it in 2022.

Robert Weiner, a Chief of Staff for Florida Rep. Claude Pepper, was a spokesman for the Clinton and Bush White Houses and the House Government Operations and Judiciary Committees. He was also a senior aide for Four-Star Gen. Barry McCaffrey, Congressmen Charles Rangel, John Conyers, Ed Koch, and Sen. Ted Kennedy. Henry Deng is a Policy Analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.