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86th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial
By: Tom Wiknich

More talk about mental illness associated with guns

The Facebook blogs went wild after my last posting of my editorial topic: What new gun laws could be written to stop the types of school shootings we have seen lately? At the time I’m writing this editorial, there are almost 100 comments on this issue online. I really appreciate all the discussion, even though some posted used it for sarcastic comments instead of meaningful discussion. Sometimes through a person’s sarcastic humor, we really learn their true thoughts on an issue. The real challenge of my editorial was what new laws people think could be passed to stop the terrible senseless school shootings we’ve seen lately. Wally was hung up that Congress has to let the circumstances be studied by the CDC (Centers For Disease Control). Congress won’t let that happen, according to Wally. My reply to him was that is because the school shootings are a result of someone’s mental state, not because of a gun. The gun was just a chosen instrument a person decided to use to carry out a terrible plot to kill people. That person could have chosen to use any other means to do the same carnage. He could have chosen a knife, an axe, a baseball bat, run a car into a bunch of kids at a bus stop, thrown a fire bomb, or even made an explosive bomb. The gun is not the problem. It’s mental illness. The only connection to guns is that the lawmakers and doctors have not come up with a means to determine a person mental status, and get it input into a database that links to background checks for potential gun buyers. That is the problem, not guns.

The other thing I realized through the comments was a lack of understanding by people that do not understand the current laws already in place. Here is one I’ve stated before, but some still do not get it. They say private sale of firearms must be stopped. Again I state, in California, private sales of firearms are no longer permitted. Any person that wants to sell a firearm to another person, must present himself, the gun, and the buyer at a FFL dealer to have the gun transferred in accordance with California laws, which means, a background check is done on the buyer. Even at gun shows, in California all guns must be sold through a FFL dealer. There is no gun show loop hole in California. Unfortunately, criminals don’t care about laws. Only law-abiding people care about laws. Larry said he thought a ban on assault rifles was appropriate, as he didn’t see any need for people to own assault rifles. That is a fallacy. In current society, an assault rifle ban is totally based on the appearance of a type of gun used by military. Many manufactures have been making rifles for many years that don’t look like one of the current assault rifles, yet still has the same capabilities. These rifles are used for hunting, target competitions, and self-defense. Bans on the currently defined assault weapons are useless knee-jerk reactions that accomplish nothing. There are plenty of guns that are much more lethal than the assault weapons of current times that people see no reason for people to own. Some comments attack that gun owners should be licensed, just like drivers licensed. There is one big difference: driving is a privilege. Chris made the point that gun ownership is a constitutionally-protected right, not a privilege. Besides, what good would a license do? People that buy guns legally already go through a background check in every state. Yes, every state requires people that buy a gun through a FFL dealer undergoes a background check. That is a federal law. Hilary threw in a thought-provoking comment. She said, “Here's a question: just because a person might be sane when purchasing a firearm, what's to prevent him from becoming mentally ill after he/she purchases it? In my opinion, we can't measure or control this invisible problem.” Hilary makes a good point. It is an invisible problem most of the time, except when the person may demonstrate that they are being unstable, like making death threats against someone via any means (face to face, social media, in a school cafeteria, or in a restaurant). If someone hears or sees these threats, then they should report them to the police. Then, we have the capability of the first step to stop needless killings. The police will do an initial evaluation of the person. If they exhibit certain violent tendencies, then police will turn them over to doctors. Again, the answer gets back to my main point: the mental health system. It has to do with doctors reporting mentally unstable people to the DOJ for inclusion in a database linked to the background check system. That is the problem. This is where Congress can pass a better law. Pass a law that gets rid of the doctor/patient privacy privilege in the circumstance of mentally unstable people as far as gun purchases. The background check system doesn’t disclose the reason a person is blocked for purchasing a gun. All the background check tells a dealer is yes or no to the transfer. It checks different categories of a person’s background. The privacy of the individual is not violated in the system itself. As a gun dealer, when a person gets rejected for a transfer, the DOJ will not tell us why. They’ll only talk to the customer. People can be rejected for all sorts of reasons. Some of which, unpaid traffic tickets, dishonorable discharge from the military, being a felon, being guilty of a misdemeanor domestic violence charge, being behind in a court ordered child support, not being in the country legally, etc, and one more, being adjudicated mentally unstable. There’s the problem: when doctors do not report mentally unstable people. School shootings are not about the gun. It’s not about licenses, training, or bans on guns. It’s about the person. It’s about the mentally unstable person. It’s about the reporting system.

In conclusion, what we need is a law that forces people and doctors to reports mentally unstable people to authorities. In turn, reporting that to a computer data base linked to the background check system. I want to thank everyone for a really good discussion on Facebook.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.