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### What Issues Do Guns Pose and Why is it Difficult to Create Gun Control Legislation?

Since the beginning of the United States, guns have been an essential piece to American identity. When the Bill of Rights was written in 1789, the right to bear arms was given to citizens. Over 200 years later, we still hold this right near and dear to our hearts. However, technology has evolved since the original article was written, and many are calling for an update on gun laws. Guns have become far more powerful and many feel unsafe with such a high number of firearms surrounding them at all times. With much of the public calling for stricter laws, it is expected that lawmakers would give into these demands of the public. However, legislation has not yet been designed to ease the minds of citizens, especially those who attend school and have seen how other schools have been affected by gun violence. Guns are the source of many deaths and unnecessary accidents, with the public opinion of guns being largely negative; however the United States has not created gun control legislation because it is a lengthy process, the laws would need to be very specific, and congressmen are not motivated to create legislation.

Originally, guns were used as protection from criminals, wild beasts, or other predators. As described in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt, Jim Williams says he has guns "for security... I've had a couple robberies." However, as time as gone on, they've been used in countless other violent crimes, like robberies, homicides, or suicides. A few

chapters later in the same book, Williams uses one of his guns to shoot somebody. He later is “taken into custody, charged with murder, and held on \$25,000 bond” (Berendt). According to Amnesty International, more than 500 people die from gun violence each day worldwide. In 2017, 14,542 people in the U.S. lost their lives to gun violence, which is almost 40 people per day (Key Facts about Gun Violence Worldwide). Of this number, 58.5% were African American however, they make up only 13% of the United States’ population. Clearly African Americans face a higher risk of being harmed in some way by guns than white people do. Women and children are also at a higher risk of being injured (Key Facts about Gun Violence Worldwide). One way in which the original purpose of guns has been altered is mass shootings. Mass shootings are defined by four or more people being killed, without a time of cooling off (Key Facts about Gun Violence Worldwide). Places like schools, movie theatres, and concerts have all seen many deaths caused by one person with a gun. Unfortunately, this has caused unrest and feelings of unsafety in these places, and these feelings are not assuaged. Guns originally were seen as protection, however their purpose has transformed into a more gruesome and violent one.

Guns and gun control has been the topic of many debates for many years, with the focus being mainly on school shootings. However, many hold onto the idea that guns are a basic human right, as given to us in the Bill of Rights. In general, guns are fairly easy to access, and whether it be for hunting or protection, many people own them. In the nonfiction novel *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, which takes place in Savannah, Georgia, Jim Williams describes the amount of guns he owns, saying “There’s a Luger in the rear library, another in the desk drawer in my office, a third in the Irish linen press in the hall, and a Smith and Wesson in the living room”, amounting to four loaded pistols, along with “a shotgun and three or four rifles”

(Berendt). He describes his extensive gun collection to almost a complete stranger. This shows how casually guns are discussed, and how some fanatics have more guns than is really necessary. Just as common as owning guns are shootings. A few days ago, I saw a friend of mine coming back to class from the front office. After asking why she was there, she told me that she had been at the counselors' office. There had been a shooting in a school in her hometown. She didn't seem phased at all, and went back to class as normal. The way in which she reacted shows how normalized shootings are. As a society, we've become desensitized to people losing their lives at the hands of another. Another sad reality is how little people seem to care. Had my friend not told me about the incident, I probably would have never heard about it. People losing their lives because someone treated a school as a shooting range is no longer national news. When an accident on a scale the size of Parkland or Columbine happens, an all too familiar cycle starts. "A mass shooting prompts calls for stricter gun safety measures. Gun safety advocates demand action, while gun owners raise alarms. Politicians make promises they know are far more difficult than they let on. Intensity fades. Congress ends up doing nothing" (Abramson). It seems that opinions on gun control tends to be entirely one way or another. Usually those of older generations and Republicans oppose any form of control, citing the repeated rulings of the Second Amendment right to bear arms as an individual right under the case of District of Columbia versus Dick Anthony Heller in 2008 (Turley). But the youth of the nation disagrees with this opinion. Having grown up with shootings being very common, they are beginning to realize how insane the concept of a school shooting is, and "believe that stricter gun control can keep them safer" (Key Facts about Gun Violence Worldwide). They're beginning to take over the push for gun control. Survivors of mass shootings are speaking out and using their

experiences to lobby for better gun control. As this generation ages, and begins to take over politics, it is likely that gun control will also be affected as the opinion of youths generally favors stricter regulations.

If gun control legislation has support from 90% of the public, then why don't we have it (Why It's More Difficult To Change Gun Policy In The U.S. Than In New Zealand)?

Unfortunately, it's not as simple as it sounds. The process of making any law is extensive, with bills having to go through the House of Representatives, Congress, and the President before becoming laws. With a republican president, and the Senate majority also being republican, it is unlikely that gun control laws will be passed anytime soon. Other nations seem to have no issues creating legislation, but American citizens hold onto their guns like it is as essential to life as water. In New Zealand, a shooting resulted in the deaths of 50 people (Why It's More Difficult To Change Gun Policy In The U.S. Than In New Zealand). Less than a week later, the Prime Minister created a ban on military style automatic weapons, saying that gun ownership is a privilege, rather than a right (Why It's More Difficult To Change Gun Policy In The U.S. Than In New Zealand). The National Rifle Association, which is one of the most powerful lobbies in Washington D.C., opposes this statement. One of their many slogans, printed on bumper stickers and posted on their website, is "It's a right, not a privilege". While they are correct that the right to bear arms is a right given to U.S. citizens, many believe that this right should be limited. One reason for the lack of regulations is how nit-picky the laws would have to be. David Kopel of the Cato Institute writes "the background check bills are written so broadly that they would turn most gun owners into criminals for innocent acts — such as letting one's sister borrow a gun for an afternoon of target shooting". In short, each and every transaction of guns, even ones as

small as giving it to a relative while the owner is out of town, would become illegal because the transfer of ownership did not go through all of the proper channels. Another reason gun legislation is difficult to create is that “a law cannot ban the look of a rifle. It must focus on the inherent power of the weapon” (Turley). This would mean creating a ban on assault style rifles or large magazines. However, a ban on large magazines wouldn’t work very well because exchanging magazines is relatively quick process (Turley). Moreover, a ban on assault style weapons is “essentially a political gimmick that confuses people. That is because the term is an arbitrarily defined epithet” (Kopel). Essentially, there is no exact definition of assault style weapons, and politicians use a promise to ban assault style weapons to gain political following without actually having to make any changes. Another proposed solution is background checks. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell claims that he is “totally onboard for intelligent background checks”, yet he still hasn’t committed to passing or even supporting background check laws (Abramson). A reason for this lack of committal could be the fact that republican senate seats are up for reelection in 2020, and supporting gun control could cost McConnell important votes from citizens in the South and the West, areas that tend to be extremely pro-gun (Abramson). Overall, gun control legislation is a daunting and burdensome task, and no politician is willing to take on the duty or the criticism that comes with it.

Overall, guns seemed to be a serious issue within our nation. When they fall into the wrong hands, innocent lives are lost. Citizens of the U.S. claim their right to bear arms includes all types of guns, including semi-automatic weapons. In the wake of the countless mass shootings at places thought to be safe, like schools or churches, many are demanding more gun control legislation from our Congressmen. Many of those pushing for higher regulations are the

peers of those who have been killed in these actions. While it would seem like the general public calls for more gun control, politicians have not yet satisfied this demand. They put off taking action because they don't want to lose votes and they do not want to tackle the daunting task of creating gun legislation. Gun legislation would also need to be extremely specific, and many laws would need to be created in order to appease the general demand for regulations. Guns are deadly weapons, and although the public wants more gun regulations, the government has yet to make changes.

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