Frequently Asked Questions about Gun Violence Prevention

1. **What makes you think you have any chance to pass handgun legislation, when it's a known fact that the NRA and the sportsmen's associations refuse to concede even a little bit on changing gun laws?**

   Creating change and moving what was considered unmovable at one time is an essential characteristic of American history. At times, such conditions as slavery, women’s suffrage, auto and road safety, regulation of smoking and on and on were deemed unchanging parts of the American landscape. Nonetheless, voters and their representatives wrought change. And, whatever the old and tired accepted wisdom, the fact is that the gun lobby does not control voters, a majority of whom, including a majority of gun owners, favor strengthening handgun laws. Most sport shooters and hunters do not support the radical and uncompromising positions of the reactionary pro-gun organizations. The bulk of voters and gun owners are not threatened by moderate limits on handgun sales, nor do they oppose other means to permanently disrupt the illegal handgun trade. Gaining enactment of legislation to reduce the availability of illegal handguns to criminals and violent teens will take time and commitment, but it will be done.

2. **Why shouldn't we just hire more police? Doesn't that mean we'll be safer without sacrificing gun owners' rights?**

   Without doubt, better and more efficient law enforcement is a critical part of reducing gun crime and violence. But, as police chiefs across the country have said repeatedly: "We cannot arrest our way out of this problem." Law enforcement executives know that handguns move far too easily from legal sale at gun shops to illegal sale on street corners and across playgrounds. This knowledge is why law enforcement typically favors moderate limits on handgun purchases. Lawful societies have a duty to balance individual privilege with public safety. Ours does it every day using laws and legislation. Whatever the gun lobby may want people to believe, there is no absolute “right” to purchase as many handguns as anyone might wish. Besides, it is fanciful to describe limiting individuals to the purchase of twelve handguns per year as a sacrifice of anything other than the ability to illegally supply handguns to prohibited purchasers, who cannot buy handguns legally themselves.

3. **Isn't gun violence just an urban problem?**

   No, illegal handgun violence strikes nearly every community of any size across the USA. Recently released FBI data shows that, while crime in general has declined in recent years across the country, handgun crime and violence has increased. Evidence from cities and towns in PA, such as Allentown, York, Reading, Harrisburg, Erie and others, confirms this trend. This is a symptom of the growing efficiency of the business of illegal handguns, which puts handguns into the hands of more and younger people. Sadly, more handguns in more hands translates into more death and injury. As long as lax gun laws encourage the easy movement of handguns from gun shops to illegal street sale, handgun crime and violence will grow across the country.

4. **Doesn't the Constitution guarantee me the right to have as many guns as I want in my home?**

   No, of course not. The US Supreme Court recently struck down a Washington, DC municipal ordinance banning private possession of handguns and found that individuals have a right to possess handguns in their homes for self-defense. However, in the same ruling the Court specifically approved the ability of states and municipalities to regulate the possession and purchase of firearms, including quantities of same.

5.
6. Why can't we just use gun locks?
   Gun locks (trigger locks, gun safes, etc.) are only effective if they're used, which takes the will to do so. There is plenty of evidence to show that a large portion of people who acquire gun locks with the intent to use them do not, so it is obvious that, whatever their merit, gun locks will not adequately reduce handgun crime and violence. Furthermore, gun locks will do nothing to stop the illegal handgun trade, which is the main supply source for felons and those intent on mayhem.

7. I'm a hunter and I just want to hunt deer. Why are you trying to take away my rights?
   No one's seeking to interfere in any way with your ability to hunt. We seek only to reduce the availability of handguns to people we all agree shouldn't have them. Legislation we seek, mainly a law to limit individuals to the purchase of no more than one handgun in any thirty-day period, does not restrict long gun sales or purchases at all. And, limiting individuals to as many as twelve handguns per year is not a hardship on anyone but illegal handgun traffickers and their criminal customers.

8. Doesn't having a handgun in my house make me safer?
   Hardly. There is abundant evidence that keeping a handgun in a home makes that home much less safe. Handguns in homes are far more likely to be used to wound or kill residents of the home, their families, friends or neighbors than any intruder. Law enforcers recommend alarms and dogs as more effective and infinitely safer ways to discourage intruders.

   The gun lobby is bound by its role to encourage sales for its patrons in the gun industry to do whatever it can to discourage new laws to prevent gun violence, including making claims that are not factual. In fact, every other developed country in the world, including our neighbor Canada, has laws that severely limit the availability of handguns. These same countries also have crime and violence, much like ours in the USA. But, none of these countries has more than a tiny fraction of the rate of the per capita handgun crime and violence that we have. Further, the American states typically having among the lowest per capita rates of handgun violence are also considered among the states with the strongest gun laws. Clearly, laws to prevent handgun violence work.

10. Why is it that in cities with strong gun control legislation, like Washington DC, the homicide rate is higher than in cities with weaker/fewer laws?
    Another gun lobby myth. Actually, according to a recently released study, Philadelphia, under Pennsylvania's weak gun laws, has the highest rate of violent crime among the largest cities in the country. Note that New York, which has among the most strict gun regulations, has a rate substantially less than half that of Philadelphia's, and two cities among the ten most populous in the country, San Diego and San Jose, also have among the lowest rates of gun violence. Both exist under California's strict gun laws. More germane yet is that the states with the lowest per capita rates of gun violence (per federal CDC data) are all states with relatively strong gun laws (MA, HA, NJ, NY and CT)

11. Why are hunters and other sportsmen so opposed to handgun control? You don’t shoot deer with a handgun!
    Actually, most hunters and sportsmen are not opposed to reasonable limits on access to handguns. It just seems that they are because the gun lobby spends millions of dollars in public campaigns to convince the media and politicians that they speak for everyday hunters and sportsmen, when, in fact, they speak for the gun industry that funds their activities. Rather, hunters and sportsmen are every bit as concerned about illegal handgun crime as are gun violence prevention advocates, and most of them favor moderate limits on handgun purchases. According to a recent Pennsylvania statewide survey, for instance, a majority of hunters support a statewide One Handgun A Month law.

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