

Guns, Gun Laws and a profound lack of common sense

By David Getoff, CCN, FAAIM

As a law abiding citizen, I always try to be level headed as well as honest and ethical in my dealings with others. I seek to use common sense whenever possible, even though this has become a rare trait in my fellow citizens. I am quite disturbed by some of the articles and letters to the editor which I have read in various magazines, newsletters and newspapers in addition to TV and radio commentaries and coverage.

I am not sure if some of these people lack adequate common sense, are simply being too fanatical about what they wish or incorrectly believe to be true, or are just immensely uninformed (ignorant of the facts). I do understand that the single most deficient characteristic today is not intelligence but rather it is common sense, often combined with a lack of logical reasoning abilities. People continually rant and rave that they **MUST** be given the right to do this or that, without ever taking the time to calmly consider how the rights which they desire might affect those around them and possibly cause some real problems.

I have used guns for target practice most of my life. I had a showcase full of medals from my years on the City College Varsity rifle team back in the early 70's. Unfortunately I lost all of these when my home and its contents were totally destroyed in the October 2007 national wildfire disaster here in San Diego.

Like automobiles, pens, pencils, laser pointers, arrows, hatchets, hammers, and electric drills, guns are tools and each tool can have many uses or purposes. Used outside of these purposes (and sometimes within them), many tools may become dangerous and people have died as a result of automobiles, hammers, kitchen knives, laser pointers blinding pilots, hatchets, guns, table saws, fists, etc....

The issue that must be properly considered (which can only be done accurately by those whose common sense and knowledge are stronger than their desire to be right) has to do with **OTHERS** rather than with ourselves.

Whether we like it or not, we live in a society and not in our own private worlds. Anyone who dislikes this fact, should consider moving somewhere away from other people, where they can live as a hermit. Where they can either stop interacting with other people, or else find a place with only like minded individuals. If however, you wish to live as a part of our society or in a mixed community or city where everyone does not feel as you do, you should learn to accept the fears which reside in and motivate those around you. We should strive to stop getting angry when some regulation or law helps force us to respect the fears of others, as this is often helpful and not harmful. It does **NOT**, however, prevent you from working to educate others. Possibly you will be able to prove, with valid research and adequate anecdotal evidence and experiences, that their fears are based on invalid and incorrect beliefs or on biased research and help them to understand, rather than yell at them, why you feel differently. Also by showing them that the facts and research back up your feelings and desires rather than their beliefs.

I strongly believe that it should be easier for people who are not felons, and do not have any history or background which might make them a poor candidate to own a firearm, to

be able to own a gun or even to apply for a CONCEALED handgun permit. I most certainly also believe that our founding fathers knew what they were doing when they passed the second amendment and that "safe" individuals should be allowed to own guns that they do not carry concealed, but wish to keep in their homes for protection of their homes and their loved ones. In many states, I feel that this process has become difficult, bordering on impossible such as in New York City and many parts of California. At the risk of further angering some pro-gunners, there are other areas of our country where I feel it is currently too easy to get a concealed weapons permit or to purchase a firearm.

I strongly believe that many current firearms laws and regulations (as well as many non firearm related laws and regulations) are poorly written, and/or in many cases should never have been passed at all, and hundreds or even thousands of these laws and regulation need to be investigated and repealed. Piling additional new laws and regulations on top of one another only makes things worse and makes attorneys wealthy. Poor laws need to be identified and either repealed or re-written. Ah, if only we could live in this ideal world which but I fear it may never exist.

I find, after having had many discussions with anti-gun friends, acquaintances, and patients, that if I show them the facts which they are unaware of, and possibly loan them a copy of either of Professor John Lott's books: **The War on Guns: Arming Yourself Against Gun Control Lies** or **More Guns Less Crime** to read, I get a completely different and much more beneficial reaction from them, than if I were to argue the point like a fanatic. I will always be pro facts and pro common sense, but not in such a way as to be labeled a fanatic (by most people).

When both sides of an argument only want to get **their way**, we have everyone being unhappy and the argument rarely gets resolved agreeably or peaceably. On the other hand, facts are continually withheld, when the anti-gun lobby gives their slanted information to the public and to the media. If we were to strive to **argue** less and to **educate** or **inform** more, I think we might get a better far more desirable result. If we began to do the things which made common sense, instead of what we think we want at the instant we feel our rights have been threatened, we might find ourselves happier with the final results. This holds true with health care laws, traffic laws, and many others in addition to firearms laws and regulations.

Let me give some examples of using common sense rather than a fanatical grab for the rights which someone else feels are being threatened.

- 1) If the pro gun people would like to get a federal law passed which would allow more interstate concealed carry reciprocity. (This the idea that if you are licensed to carry a gun in one state, that just like being licensed by your state to drive a car, you should also be automatically licensed to carry your gun as you are to drive your car, in every other state in the U.S.). We must allow common sense to enter into the equation if we are to have a chance of ever passing such a law. A number of variables MUST be incorporated based on the different levels of knowledge and expertise which each state requires for their concealed permit licensees. Why is an apprentice plumber, electrician, or carpenter, not given the same rights as a journeyman in their field?, because the journeyman

has a great deal more knowledge and abilities and has proven this to the satisfaction of their state, their union, or their licensing board.

Why is someone with only a motorcycle license not allowed to legally drive a car or a truck or 18 wheel tractor trailer or a bulldozer? Because these vehicles ARE DIFFERENT and they each require a different set of knowledge and skills. A person who is licensed as a psychologist in one state, may not have adequate educational credentials or experience to meet the requirements to be licensed in another state. **This is part of states rights** and although the FEDS need to get out of our way, the individual states should have the right to pass laws and regulations that they feel are needed to protect their own citizens.

And so: if one state requires actual firing range practice as well as both shooting and written exams before they will issue a carry permit, they **should not** be forced to give license reciprocity to a permit holder from another state, who was not required to demonstrate a similar level of training and proficiency for the permit they received from their own state. Numerous professional fields, from medicine to psychology, to plumbing, etc., do not get reciprocity for licensing. As a matter of fact, a drivers license is one of the very few exceptions to this type of regulation.

This would effectively make it so that possibly 3 or 4 or 5 different levels of training might become uniform across the United States, which, whether you like it or not, would actually be a good thing. Most likely (my opinion) more states would begin to increase their concealed carry licensing requirements (some have already done this), possibly adding some range time or longer safety classes, so that their permits holders would have reciprocity in more of the other states! If your state did not have the higher requirements, you should be allowed to take additional instruction and training, from someone authorized to teach it, so that you would get an amended permit to meet the higher reciprocity requirements and rights to carry in more states. If this was accomplished with common sense, then your additional training could be taken in any state, not just your licensed state, so long as the trainer met the requirements for carrying out the training and vouched for the fact that you had received and passed the required training. Your license would then get a sticker or be upgraded proving your higher level of training and you would immediately gain approval of reciprocity in additional states..

- 2) I am not against regulations which require proof of some kind of training in safety, cleaning and proper use, prior to purchasing a firearm, any more than I would be against proof of training in order to drive a car or truck or operate heavy equipment. I feel that to be against this type of regulation is silly and is very much opposite to the proper use of common sense. This type of training requirement would serve to better educate the public and to better protect us all. This should be important to thoughtful individuals who have adequate common sense (a severe minority I admit). The founding fathers did not have to include this requirement, since back then, most men and some women probably owned guns in their households and had been taught how to use them by their fathers

as a part of growing up. This is no longer part of growing up, and is something that only occurs in a tiny percentage of U.S. families today. Mine was one, and I received my first BB gun at about age 12. I still remember shooting at balloons that my Pop blew up and tied to a bush on our property in Abele Park New York in Putnam Valley near lake Oscawana. I also remember aiming at a bird on a branch one day and was horrified when I killed it, for which I am still very sorry, as it certainly never would have done anything to hurt me, and I wasn't hunting for food.

I would suggest at least 4 (or more) separate training classes and certificates just as we have motorcycle, automobile, heavy equipment operator, and multiple different truck licenses. THEY REALLY ARE ALL DIFFERENT!

I would recommend separate training for the use, cleaning and safe storage of revolvers, semi-auto pistols, bolt action rifles, lever action rifles, semi-auto rifles, and shotguns. Once someone has taken the class for the appropriate firearm, they should be allowed to purchase another of that class of firearm without having to take the training over again, **unless** their state requires their certificates to be renewed after some number of years or to provide proof of range time. This would simply be to show that the individual did not just buy their gun(s), and keep them locked up in their home, and now they have completely forgotten how to use them or store them safely since completing their class years before. Note that this is NOT LIKE A DRIVERS LICENSE, because almost everyone drives every day or week and yet the majority of gun owners have not fired any of their weapons in the past month or possibly even many years! I understand that the majority of the individuals reading any publication which has printed this article, probably do actually go to the range. You all need to understand that we are actually a minority and that most gun owners do not even go to the range to fire each of their guns at least once a year. That is why I feel proof of range time might be acceptable in place of any renewal training. I will never forget my father showing me where he kept his .410 gauge shotgun hanging in his bedroom closet, int their house out in Southold Long island one day. I opened the breach and asked him why there was a spent (already fired) cartridge in the barrel. He looked right down at the open barrel and said where? He didn't even know what he was looking at and clearly needed instruction which I then gave him. Turned out that someone had broken into their home months ago and although one of their cats was never seen since that day, they never realized the intruder had obviously loaded and fired the shotgun, most likely killing their cat, and then put it back where he (she?) Had found it without extracting the spent cartridge.

- 3) Anyone possessing a concealed handgun permit for their state, should not have to go through any waiting period as is required here in California, when purchasing additional handguns. If they hold a valid CCW permit, they should be able to walk out of the store with their additional new gun. Also, it should NOT be required to have a lock on any new gun purchased (another silly bureaucratic California requirement) if they can prove they own an approved safe where it will be stored.

- 4) Now to the open carry issue. Whether we like it or not, millions of people in our cities, are afraid of guns. People are afraid of snakes and spiders and rats and mice, and bees and hornets as well. Maybe you are not afraid of guns but you are afraid of poisonous snakes or wasps and hornets. I do not believe that it should be legal, for someone with a poisonous snake that can kill you, (even if they claim its ability to inject venom has been removed, like an unloaded gun) to walk into your immediate vicinity in a public place, carrying the poisonous snake. In fact, it is often not legal, since keeping poisonous reptiles is strictly regulated in many states. The pro open-carry people do not seem to understand that making people around them, in public areas, VERY uncomfortable, and even scared, is neither a good idea, nor fair to them, nor is it even safe. As people's discomfort levels increase, altercations and violence become more likely. It does not matter that you don't like this fact. Facts are facts. The anti-gun people may hate the fact (or not be aware of it) that more concealed weapon holders would reduce their state's violent crime rate. Two real facts, from opposing sides, that the other group does not like.

It is not in my (or anyone's) best interest to do something which openly aggravates, annoys and puts on edge, the people around us. Unless of course your goal is to get into a fight, like the possible goal of an angry drunk, it simply does not make Common Sense. In addition, anyone who would desire to carry an open, unloaded gun, truly does not believe in safety, since it might facilitate a fight that might otherwise never have occurred, not to mention all the people it could make uncomfortable, worried or afraid. Now, if you happen to live in a state or a small city or town, where lots of people legally carry loaded guns openly, then that should be allowed to continue and not be legislated against. Laws and regulations should take into account the local feelings and history of the population of the community.

I have often heard people say that the best defense against an unstable or homicidal man (or woman) with a gun, would be a sane man or woman with a gun. I agree, and of course this would be someone who happened to be there and who had a carry permit. Of course in states like California, the legal weapon holder might be so afraid that they would end up in prison after shooting the homicidal maniac, that they might hesitate to do so. Hopefully not.

The pro and anti-gun groups both quoted the old adage of "give them an inch and they'll take a mile" as they try to prevent making even the slightest concession away from the positions they hold dear. This worry would be unfounded, if only we could begin (oh don't I wish) to get along and communicate rationally. If we could all use the rarely present **common sense**, coupled with the **real facts**, we could have better laws and regulations, a safer country, less wars, a more friendly country and maybe even a better political environment. Everyone would be happier and safer.

I personally believe that the answer is to spend more funds getting the facts out to educate the public and less funds arguing and campaigning for what someone desires without any relation to what the facts have clearly shown. I will never be a Democrat or a Republican since both have taken turns ruining our country, and whittling away at our constitutional rights. I call myself a realist, and I will always calmly listen to all

candidates for any office and vote for the one I would truly want in office and NOT the lesser of two evils nor any particular party. Until we all begin to do this, we will never be governed by good honest people.

I spent about a year as a member of the Federal Grand Jury in San Diego about a decade ago and it was a fascinating experience viewing and participating in our legal system. I also about spent 4 years as an elected member of a neighborhood community planning board as well as about two years as a member of the 70th precinct Police Rescue unit in Brooklyn, New York, so I have had lots of exposure to many sides of these issues

Massad Ayoob, one of our country's top firearm experts and trainers, has said many times that none of the "accidental" children's shooting of their friends would happen if EVERY PARENT would begin to teach their children at a young age (5? 6? ...?) One simple gun rule. Guns are very dangerous and if you ever see a gun (and please make sure they know what different guns look like) there are two things you must do immediately no matter what any of your friends tells you. 1) Leave the area. 2) Tell a parent.. I highly respect Ayoob's expertise and his training (which I took over 25 years ago) and recommend his books

I feel that Front Sight may have the right idea with their free firearms training offer. Unless they have stopped doing so, their director/founder used to say that he will give free handgun training to any anti-gun politician or media broadcaster, as they have found that knowledge and experience is the best way to educate someone whose "facts" are wrong and to make them less afraid of guns.

I recently finished reading a book that should be required for all U.S. citizens, before any more of our previously held and now defunct constitutional rights get taken away by our republican and democratic presidents and their administrations. It is by Naomi Wolfe and it is entitled The End of America Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot. I think that if everyone in both parties were to read this book, they might feel a bit differently about our government and our presidents.

As a board certified clinical nutritionist, naturopath and educator, I spend quite a bit of time teaching physicians, nurses, dieticians and the public that most of what they were taught about diet and nutrition is NOT what the best research has shown. I am VERY familiar with trying to slowly use accurate facts and common sense to reverse ignorance in the public as well as in our various professionals. We must be more willing to discuss (not argue about) what the best research has shown in regards to private ownership of firearms, and stop yelling at one another without properly investigating where the truth may actually be located.

I will end with one of my favorite quotes,

What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know, it's what we know for sure that just ain't so.

Josh Billings (incorrectly attributed to Mark Twain by Al Gore in his movie an inconvenient Truth as well as and all over the web)