

Obama's Futile Tantrum over Gun Bill

By: Arnold Ahlert – April 19, 2013

During his 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama ran as a great uniter. "I don't think there is anybody in this race who's able to bring new people into the process and break out of some of the ideological gridlock that we have as effectively as I can," he said at the time. Yet after his party's resounding defeat on gun control legislation, the president may have pulled the final piece away from a facade that has been crumbling for quite some time. In his Rose Garden speech Wednesday, unity, above all else, was the most obvious casualty.

"Families that know unspeakable grief summoned the courage to petition their elected leaders—not just to honor the memory of their children, but to protect the lives of all our children," said Obama. "And a few minutes ago, a minority in the United States Senate decided it wasn't worth it. They blocked common-sense gun reforms even while these families looked on from the Senate gallery."

What the president fails to mention is that "these families," relatives of the Newtown victims, were in the gallery because he flew them down from Connecticut aboard Air Force One, precisely for the purpose of using them as props to persuade senators to vote for the bill. Yet the president angrily denied that reality. "I've heard folks say that having the families of victims lobby for this legislation was somehow misplaced," he fumed. "'A prop', somebody called them. 'Emotional blackmail', some outlet said. Are they serious? Do we really think that thousands of families whose lives have been shattered by gun violence don't have a right to weigh in on this issue? Do we think their emotions, their loss is not relevant to this debate?"

Relevancy is a two-sided coin, and the president sidesteps an obvious reality: are people whose lives have been shattered by gun violence the *only* ones with the moral authority to weigh in on the debate? In a recent column titled "Fact Free Crusades," Hoover Institute fellow and noted author Thomas Sowell cites a Cato Institute estimate that postulates as many as 100,000 defensive uses of guns occur on a yearly basis. Moreover, in an earlier column, Sowell notes that "most defensive uses of guns do not involve actually pulling the trigger." He then offers a viable counterpoint to progressive sensibilities. "The lives saved by guns are no less precious, just because the media pay no attention to them," Sowell contends.

Or the president either, for that matter. None of *those* Americans were flown aboard Air Force One to Washington, D.C. to offer senators "advice" on how to vote. Don't they have the same right to "weigh in on this issue"? Charles Krauthammer, like many Americans, objected to the use of "emotional blackmail" for the purpose of getting legislation passed. "The question is: Would it have had any effect on Newtown?" he asks. "If you're going to make all these emotional appeals—he's saying you're betraying the

families—you've got to show how if this had been law it would've stopped Newtown. It would not have. It's irrelevant."

The president was further incensed that while "90 percent of Democrats in the Senate just voted for that idea...it's not going to happen because 90 percent of Republicans in the Senate just voted against that idea." Once again, while Obama's effort is to portray Republicans as the ultimate bad guys, the more important factoid is that members of his own party defected, a move the president attributed to the politics of intimidation and fear. "And so they caved to the pressure, and they started looking for an excuse—any excuse—to vote 'no,'" he claimed.

Yet it is the job of the president to convince members of Congress, especially those of his own party, that such critical legislation is worth voting for. Instead, the president once again believed that a media-abetted campaign of high profile speeches given around the country was a viable substitute for the hard work of convincing members of Congress he would stand behind them in exchange for their vote. Since the five Democrats who voted against the legislation come from red states where support of it may have imperiled their reelection chances, it should have behooved the president to offer them something in return. Yet if there is one thing the 2010 election proved, the rout of moderate Democrats who supported Obamacare meant little to a president far more interested in his own agenda.

That may have been the best excuse of all for these Democrats to vote no on this legislation.

Obama put a great amount of emphasis on the 90 percent support this package had, undoubtedly referring to a Quinnipiac University poll that showed 91 percent of Americans support universal background checks. Yet a Gallup Poll revealed that only 4 percent of Americans think gun control is an important issue, and a survey of more than 15,000 law-enforcement professionals shows overwhelming resistance to gun control legislation. Furthermore, the same Quinnipiac poll that showed support for background checks revealed that American voters, by a 48-38 percent margin, believe the government could use those checks to confiscate legally owned firearms. Among gun owners that suspicion grows to 53 percent, versus only 36 percent who believe it won't happen.

The latter poll numbers suggest that a greater number of Americans are beginning to grasp the left's overwhelmingly successful use of incrementalism to eventually get what they want. Several Democrats alluded to that reality. "It might be inconceivable to the NRA that [gun control] might happen; it's inevitable to us," said Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid issued a warning. "Make no mistake, this debate is not over," said Reid, as he further contended that a successful gun package is "more important than preventing imagined tyranny." Obama upped the ante, making it clear that congressional resistance was no impediment. "Even without Congress, my administration will keep doing everything it can to protect more of our communities," he promised. Joe Biden echoed that intention. "Number one, the president is already lining up some additional executive actions he's going to be taking later this week," he told supporters.

Obama also reserved some of his more divisive rhetoric for people who shared such concerns, contending that "the gun lobby and its allies willfully lied about the bill. They

claimed that it would create some sort of 'big brother' gun registry, even though the bill did the opposite. This legislation, in fact, outlawed any registry. Plain and simple, right there in the text. But that didn't matter," he added.

But it did matter to those concerned about the erosion of freedom taking place in this nation. NRA spokesman Chris Cox explained that universal background checks "would have criminalized certain private transfers of firearms between honest citizens, requiring lifelong friends, neighbors and some family members to get federal government permission to exercise a fundamental right or face prosecution."

Yet even Cox misses the point, to a certain extent. If this administration and its allies wish to change the parameters of the Second Amendment, the Constitution provides the precise method for doing so. Moreover, if 90 percent of Americans really are for such changes, a constitutional amendment ought to be a slam dunk. That the administration and Democrats would rather bypass that process completely, is *precisely* indicative of their real, not imagined, tyrannical impulses.

President Obama typified the progressive arrogance that invariably accompanies such impulses. "So all in all, this was a pretty shameful day for Washington," he insisted.

Hardly. As the *Washington Times* put it, it was a "good day" for the Second Amendment. "The president raged. The mayor of New York frothed. Joe Biden cried. But at the end of the day, common sense prevailed," the paper explained. "The Senate killed the effort to unreasonably expand background checks for buyers of guns."

Better still, other amendments cherished by progressives fared even worse. A proposal to limit ammo clips garnered only 46 votes, while the assault weapons ban got only 40. An amendment inimical to progressive interests, cutting aid to state and local governments that release information on gun owners, was approved 67-30. And perhaps the most effective means of cutting gun violence, a boost for federal mental health programs, sailed though on a 95-2 vote.

The only "shame" that occurred was owned by the president, perhaps the most divisive individual to ever occupy the Oval Office. Reading the excerpts of his speech presented here cannot possibly convey the combination of petulance, anger and arrogance exhibited by a man more than willing to embrace the Saul Alinsky tactic of polarizing and demonizing one's enemies for political gain. In short, his speech was little more than a tirade, made even more despicable by the fact that it occurred during a period of national mourning for those brutalized and killed by a terror attack in Boston.

"When good and honest people have honest differences of opinion about what policies the country should pursue about gun rights...the president of the United States should not accuse them of having no coherent arguments or of caving to the pressure," said Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX). Cornyn is naive. "Good and honest" are irrelevant terms. In this president's lexicon, everyone can be reduced to "us" or "them." Those in the latter category are beneath contempt.

