



Biden's 'commonsense' gun law reforms make no sense

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The Biden administration has started the long-promised march toward disarmament. “I am calling on Congress ... to enact commonsense gun law reforms, including ... banning assault weapons,” wrote President Biden in a statement last month.

The enemies of the Second Amendment and individual freedom are moving quickly with their legislative majorities to ban undefined “assault weapons” under the guise of ambiguous “commonsense” reform. What does “common sense” mean? As it turns out, it means nothing, but it has the power to encompass everything.

Like so many discussions about legally purchased firearms, one side is advocating for their strict limitation without addressing the true villain: illegal firearms. This occurs because this administration doesn’t seem to understand what it’s talking about. Why else use vague phrases such as “common sense”?

But as long as Democrats hold a simple majority in the House and a tiebreaking vote in the Senate, they have the power to shove through sweeping, restrictive regulations that infringe the individual’s right to keep and bear arms. Even more frightening, the president has made it clear his administration has considered using “executive action” to curb gun violence. Surely, if the law can crack down on “assault weapons,” gun violence will finally be curbed.

This is false for two reasons. First, assault weapons aren’t real. Second, the data show legally purchased firearms are not the problem.

“Assault weapons” do not exist; the term was fabricated sometime in about 1989 “to allow an attack on as many additional firearms as possible on the basis of an undefined ‘evil’ appearance.” When gun control advocates refer to “assault weapons,” they seem to be referring to “any scary firearm that looks like an AR-15.” But “scary-looking firearm” is just not nearly as frightening to the average individual as “assault weapon.”

Because the term is a meaningless political invention that sounds technical in origin, it’s regularly misused. Even a term such as “assault rifle” is used incorrectly. Professor David Kopel, with the Cato Institute, highlights in the *Journal of Contemporary Law* that “assault rifles” are “short, compact, selective-fire weapons ... in other words, assault rifles are battlefield rifles which can fire automatically,” not civilian-owned AR-15s.

We must question the prudence of pursuing “commonsense” reform when no one has agreed to what counts as common sense or whose standard of common sense we will use. But while the

phrase “commonsense gun laws” is unclear by definition, it is crystal clear in intent: It is the bellwether of disarmament. The subliminal message of Biden's administration is clear: Don't worry about what any of this means, just pass the reforms, and we'll “find out what's in it” later.

The Biden administration is not trying to address an issue or fix a symptom. It is targeting a phantasm. The president has yet to address fully how to combat the larger issue of illegally acquired firearms used to commit offenses.

Based on the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates, the Justice Department reported in 2019 that “among prisoners who possessed a gun during their offense, 90% did not obtain it from a retail source.” Read that again. Among those individuals arrested, convicted, and sentenced, 90% of the firearms used in gun-related crimes *did not* come from legal sources, which include gun shows.

Astoundingly, only 0.8% of prisoners who had a firearm during their offense legally “obtained it at a gun show.” So, less than 1% of all firearms used in gun-related offenses came from gun shows. This is fascinating, seeing that the current administration and congressional majority would have us believe the “gun show loophole” is one area where the plague of gun violence is spawning from and it is just “common sense” to address it. But yet again, the facts show this is an illusion.

What is not an illusion is this: If the Biden administration successfully shoves firearm regulation through Congress or enables it through executive action, Biden will be solely responsible for criminalizing the estimated 72 million people who legally own firearms, as if our prison and legal system weren't overburdened enough. So much for common sense.