



Gun bans may not be the answer

By: Holly New - January 15, 2013

As they say, outlaw guns and only outlaws will have guns.

Following the Newtown, Conn. shooting, the gun control debate has become more heated than ever. While everyone wants to prevent tragedies like that at Sandy Hook Elementary School, no one can really agree on the best way to do that.

Are stricter gun laws the answer to preventing gun violence?

When James Holmes killed 12 people in the Aurora, Colo. theater shooting, many asked why no one shot back. Colorado allows concealed carry in most places, including theaters, but does allow businesses to prohibit guns if they wish.

Of the seven theaters within 20 minutes of Holmes' home showing "The Dark Knight Rises" on July 20, Cinemark Century 16 Theater was the only one that forbade concealed carry. This theater wasn't the largest, nor was it the closest to his home. Instead, it held the perfect targets for a mass murderer: unsuspecting, unarmed civilians.

This seems to be a trend. According to a Fox News article from September 2012, "with just one single exception, the attack in Tucson last year, every public shooting since at least 1950 in the U.S. in which more than three people have been killed has taken place where citizens are not allowed to carry guns."

Unfortunately, we here at NIU are no stranger to crimes involving gun violence like these mentioned.

It's easy to attack people when you know that they will be defenseless, but public shootings are only one part of gun crimes. There were 12,664 murder victims in 2011, according to the FBI. Of those, 8,583 were caused by firearms. These are not all public shootings; gang activity, domestic disputes and random killings all account for these homicides. So the question is, if lax gun laws can deter public shootings, can they reduce other homicides with firearms?

The answer is sometimes.

In Texas, which has very lenient gun laws, a staggering 64 percent of homicides in 2011 were due to firearms. However, California, which smartgunlaws.org ranked as having the strongest gun laws in the nation, is home to Oakland, which has the fourth highest rate of gun-related violence in a city.

Why don't gun laws work? The answer is simple: Criminals don't follow the law. An analysis from politics.co.uk, an independent political web site in Britain, pointed out that "despite the handguns ban imposed under the 1997 Firearms Amendment, research carried out following the implementation of the Act saw a 40 [percent] increase in the number of gun crime incidents in the UK." Also, a study published by the Cato Institute, a public policy research organization that

promotes small government and individual liberties, states that “the fact remains that no careful empirical study, regardless of the type of data used, has found a negative relationship between gun control measures and crime rates.”

There are positives and negatives to gun laws, but there is no clear-cut solution to solving this issue of crime. Guns are part of our society. While some collect guns, others have been hurt by them. Our community, like so many other people and places, has been affected by the ill use of guns. The answer to preventing violence is not clear. Taking guns away, however, will never be the answer: When you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns.