



Trentonian editorial: Stopping maniacs

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The progressives are fork-lifting out of storage old gun-control proposals stacked high on skids. Among them:

- A ban on military-style rifles and other firearms able to fire multiple rounds in seconds.
- Registration, licensing and more thorough background checks for gun buys, including person-to-person and gun-show transactions.
- Limits on the number of firearms an individual can buy within a specified period.
- Better detection and access to treatment for people with mental problems.
- A data base for keeping firearms away from anyone who's been adjudicated mentally unstable.

They're all okay ideas. But only okay, not fantastic. They'd likely have a marginal effect, at best, on gun carnage such as that in Newtown. Typical gun-control suggestions focus "almost exclusively on persons who are not part of the problem," says the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy. And missing from the lists is the one proposal that just might have more than a marginal effect on gun-spree massacres: Expanded right-to-carry laws.

We're braced for the shrieks of protest. Eeeek! Arrrrrrgh! When we suggested this the other day, the response was a fusillade of scorn. Do we want all of America to become one big Boot Hill from sea to shinning sea? Do we want people emptying their Glocks to settle barroom arguments on who was MVP in 1959? No. But just one armed normal human being — just one — in that Batman movie audience or in that Newtown school might have been a life-saving godsend.

With an estimated 250-300 million firearms already out there, legal and illegal, the occasional deranged (or if you insist, evil) person with access to this vast cache of weaponry is going to snap. The only question then is: How many victims will this person take out before police are able to get to the scene and deal with him? Ten? Twenty? Thirty? Or — with right-to-carry — maybe three? Two? One? Maybe even none?

There's been no incidence of Wild West gunslining in any of the existing right-to-carry jurisdictions. UCLA Law Prof. Adam Winkler, who's researched the subject in depth,

reports that the crime rate is lower among right-to-carry permit holders than among the general population. Another researcher who has delved deeply into the data, statistician John Lott, a Second Amendment advocate, says the crime rate among right-to-carry permit holders is lower even than the crime rate among police officers.

Certainly at a minimum, right-to-carry applications should be painstakingly vetted and require serious training. They should be frequently reviewed and easily revoked at the slightest doubt. It's something to weigh along with the other suggestions. It might even serve as the linchpin of compromise enabling the other suggestions — at long last, after too much bloodshed — finally to win enactment.