

One of the major downfalls of our current political system is the way we talk about each other. As Joseph Schumpeter once said, “We fight for and against not men and things as they are, but for and against the caricatures we make of them.” It’s easy to say that Republicans don’t care about dead children. It’s easy to say that Democrats don’t care about individual liberty. What’s not easy is to recognize that we all want essentially the same thing: we want people to be safe and we want gun violence to be reduced as much as possible. My problem with these bills is that I feel they won’t accomplish that goal. What these bills will do is punish law-abiding citizens for what criminals do while doing nothing to prevent criminals from committing crimes.

HB 2005, the “Ghost Gun” ban, is yet another attempt to reinterpret what the 2nd Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I, Section 27 of the Oregon State Constitution means. There is a constitutionally mandated process to alter what an amendment says. But, instead of going through this process, government officials have decided to circumvent the Constitution to say, “you have the right to bear arms, but not these arms.” I can believe that some opposition to the manufacturing, sale, and possession of “ghost guns” is based in an interest to ensure safety, but I also believe that the other side of that opposition rests in a desire for the Government to maintain a database of who owns guns and what kind of guns they own. I am fundamentally opposed to Government having that information because of the great power that it possesses. When the Government holds a monopoly on the use of force, I, and every other law-abiding citizen, should be able to justifiably defend ourselves. If you need proof, I would direct you to the long and well-documented history of the United States violating the rights of its citizens; see Kent State massacre, Japanese-American internment during WWII, the Waco siege, the Bundy standoff, etc.

HB 2006 raises the age limit for purchasing a firearm from 18 to 21. There are already provisions in the law that prevents certain people from purchasing and owning a firearm, such as felons and mentally unstable people. This bill will further discriminate against young people who have committed no crimes nor have shown any indication of being mentally unstable. If the reasoning behind this bill is that young people are not mature enough to possess firearms, then why are they mature enough to vote or drive a vehicle or go to war. If the reasoning behind this bill is to prevent young people from having access to firearms to kill people, it would not prevent those young people from obtaining the firearm in an illegal manner. I have also failed to see any bill that would prevent young people from purchasing and driving vehicles as young drivers are more likely to be involved in a car accident than any other age group.

HB 2007 is a further expansion of “gun-free zones”. With the passage of this bill, not only would it be illegal to carry a firearm on various city, county, district, or “municipal corporation” grounds, but also on “adjacent grounds”. The definition of “adjacent grounds” is not listed, meaning that it is up to the discretion of the public building which adopts this policy, ordinance, or regulation. Even though “gun-free zones” have been shown to be ineffective against gun violence, our elected officials want to expand those zones. These zones create soft targets which let criminals cause as much damage as possible with minimal response, at least until the police show up.

The misguided view that prohibiting who can carry a gun, what kind of gun can be carried, and where a gun can be carried will reduce gun violence will only lead to more gun violence. Instead of fearing firearms, we should be taught from a young age how to safely carry and operate a firearm as this will assist in reducing accidental shootings. We should do away with “gun-free zones” so that potential mass shootings can be thwarted as quickly as possible. But above all, we should remember that the inalienable right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. I will leave you with that all too famous Benjamin Franklin quote, “Those who would give up essential Liberty to purchase a little temporary Safety deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”

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