The Failure Of Gun Control Laws Essay, Research Paper

The Failure of Gun Control Laws Americans are faced with an ever-growing problem of violence. Our streets have become a battleground where the elderly arebeaten for their social security checks, where terrified women are viciously attacked and raped, where teen-age gangsters shoot itout for a patch of turf to sell their illegal drugs, and where innocent children are caught daily in the crossfire of drive-by shootings.We cannot ignore the damage that these criminals are doing to our society, and we must take actions to stop these horrors.However, the effort by some misguided individuals to eliminate the legal ownership of firearms does not address the real problemat hand, and simply disarms the innocent law-abiding citizens who are most in need of a form of self-defense. To fully understand the reasons behind the gun control efforts, we must look at the history of our country, and the role firearmshave played in it. The second amendment to the Constitution of the United States makes firearm ownership legal in this country.There were good reasons for this freedom, reasons which persist today. Firearms in the new world were used initially for hunting,and occasionally for self-defense. However, when the colonists felt that the burden of British oppression was too much for themto bear, they picked up their personal firearms and went to war. Standing against the British armies, these rebels found themselvesopposed by the greatest military force in the world at that time. The 18th century witnessed the height of the British Empire, butthe rough band of colonial freedom fighters discovered the power of the Minuteman, the average American gun owner. TheseMinutemen, so named because they would pick up their personal guns and jump to the defense of their country on a minute’snotice, served a major part in winning the American Revolution. The founding fathers of this country understood that an armedpopulace was instrumental in fighting off oppression, and they made the right to keep and bear arms a constitutionally guaranteedright. Over the years, some of the reasons for owning firearms have changed. As our country grew into a strong nation, we expandedwestward, exploring the wilderness, and building new towns on the frontier. Typically, these new towns were far away from thecenters of civilization, and the only law they had was dispensed by townsfolk through the barrel of a gun. Crime existed, but couldbe minimized when the townspeople fought back against the criminals. Eventually, these organized townspeople developed policeforces as their towns grew in size. Fewer people carried their firearms on the street, but the firearms were always there, ready tobe used in self-defense. It was after the Civil War that the first gun-control advocates came into existence. These were southern leaders who were afraidthat the newly freed black slaves would assert their newfound political rights, and these leaders wanted to make it easier tooppress the free blacks. This oppression was accomplished by passing laws making it illegal in many places for black people toown firearms. With that effort, they assured themselves that the black population would be subject to their control, and would nothave the ability to fight back. At the same time, the people who were most intent on denying black people their basic rights walkedaround with their firearms, making it impossible to resist their efforts. An unarmed man stands little chance against an armed one,and these armed men saw their plans work completely. It was a full century before the civil rights activists of the 1960s were ableto restore the constitutional freedoms that blacks in this country were granted in the 1860s. Today’s gun control activists are a slightly different breed. They claim that gun violence in this country has gotten to a point wheresomething must be done to stop it. They would like to see criminals disarmed, and they want the random violence to stop. I agreewith their sentiments. However, they are going about it in the wrong way. While claiming that they want to take guns out of thehands of criminals, they work to pass legislation that would take the guns out of the hands of law-abiding citizens instead. For thisreason the efforts at gun control do not address the real problem of crime. The simple definition of a criminal is someone who does not obey the law. The simple definition of a law-abiding citizen issomeone who does obey the law. Therefore, if we pass laws restricting ownership of firearms, which category of people does itaffect? The simple answer is that gun control laws affect law-abiding citizens only. By their very nature, the criminals willcontinue to violate these new laws, they will continue to carry their firearms, and they will find their efforts at crime much easier

when they know that their victims will be unarmed. The situation is similar to that of the disarmed blacks a century ago. Innocentpeople are turned into victims when new laws make it impossible for them to fight back. An unarmed man stands little chanceagainst an armed one. An interesting recent development has been the backlash against the gun-control advocates. In many states, including Florida andTexas, citizens have stated that they want to preserve their right to carry firearms for self-defense. Since the late 1980s, Floridahas been issuing concealed weapons permits to law-abiding citizens, and these citizens have been carrying their firearms to defendthemselves from rampant crime. The result is that the incidence of violent crime has actually dropped in contrast to the nationalaverage. Previously, Florida had been leading the nation in this category, and the citizens of that state have welcomed the change.Gun control advocates tried to claim that there would be bloodshed in the streets when these citizens were given the right to carry.They tried to claim that the cities of Florida would become like Dodge City with shootouts on every street corner. These guncontrol advocates were wrong. Over 200,000 concealed carry permits have been issued so far, with only 36 of these permitsrevoked for improper use of a firearm. This statistic is easy to understand. It is the law-abiding citizens who are going through theprocess of getting concealed carry permits so that they may legally carry a firearm. The people who go through this legal processdo not want to break the law, and they do not intend to break the law. The people who do intend to break the law will carry theirguns whether or not the law allows them to do so. Criminals will always find ways to get guns. In this country we have criminalized the use, possession, sale, and transportation ofmany kinds of narcotics, but it’s still easy for someone to take a ride and purchase the drugs of their choice at street cornervendors. Firearms and ammunition would be just as easy for these black-market entrepreneurs to deliver to their customers.Today, criminals often carry illegal weapons, including sawed-off shotguns, machine guns, and homemade zip-guns, clearlyshowing their disregard for the current laws which make these items illegal. And when they are caught, the courts regularlydismiss these lesser weapons charges when prosecuting for the more serious charges that are being committed with the weapons. The gun control advocates have argued their case by demonizing the gun itself, rather than addressing the people who commitviolent crimes. This is the main fallacy in their argument. They slyly attempt to claim that possession of a gun turns averagecitizens into bloodthirsty lunatics. This theory falls apart under close scrutiny. If legal possession of a firearm caused this sort ofattitude, then why are crime rates highest in areas such as Washington, D.C. and New York City which have strict gun controllaws? And why are crime rates dropping in states such as Florida where private ownership of firearms is encouraged? Simplystated, legal ownership of a gun does not cause crime. The most recent efforts of the gun control lobby has been to claim that certain types of guns and ammunition are inherently evil.They assign emotional catch phrases such as “assault weapons” and “cop killer bullets” to broad categories of firearms andammunition in the hopes that people will believe that some guns have an evil nature. Most people who are unfamiliar with firearmsdo not fully understand what these phrases mean, and they accept the terms being used without question. What people do notoften understand is that the term “assault weapon” has been defined to include all semi- automatic rifles, and “cop killer” has beendefined to include any bullet that can penetrate type two body armor. It comes as a surprise to most people that a large number ofsimple hunting rifles can do both. Does ownership of one of these weapons cause people to become mass murderers? It does not,and we must not fall into the trap of blaming the sword for the hand that wields it. So I’ve shown that the act of making it illegal to own firearms does little to prevent criminals from getting guns. These laws onlyrestrict people who respect the law itself, the people who would only use firearms for legal purposes anyway. And when we givepeople the right to defend themselves, we find that criminals start looking for other victims out of fear that they will become thevictims themselves. We must work to reduce crime in America, but we should look at the problem realistically, and develop plansthat would be effective. It is obvious that gun control laws are neither realistic, nor effective in reducing crime. Therefore, wemust direct our efforts toward controlling crime, not controlling legal ownership of firearms.