



## Gun Control Laws

Those who have no confidence in ordinary Americans may expect a bloodbath, as the benighted masses start shooting each other, now that they can no longer be denied guns by their betters. People who think we shouldn't be allowed to make our own medical decisions, or decisions about which schools our children attend, certainly are not likely to be happy with the idea that we can make our own decisions about how to defend ourselves.



When you stop and think about it, there is no obvious reason why issues like gun control should be ideological issues in the first place. It is ultimately an empirical question whether allowing ordinary citizens to have firearms will increase or decrease the amount of violence.

Many people who are opposed to gun laws which place severe restrictions on ordinary citizens owning firearms have based themselves on the Second Amendment to the Constitution. But, while the Supreme Court must make the Second Amendment the basis of its rulings on gun control laws, there is no reason why the Second Amendment should be the last word for the voting public.

If the end of gun control leads to a bloodbath of runaway shootings, then the Second Amendment can be repealed, just as other Constitutional Amendments have been repealed. Laws exist for people, not people for laws.

There is no point arguing, as many people do, that it is difficult to amend the Constitution. The fact that it doesn't happen very often doesn't mean that it is difficult. The people may not want it to happen, even if the intelligentsia are itching to change it.

When the people wanted it to happen, the Constitution was amended 4 times in 8 years, from 1913 through 1920.

What all this means is that judges and the voting public have different roles. There is no reason why judges should "consider the basic values that underlie a constitutional provision and their contemporary significance," as Justice Stephen Breyer said in his dissent against the Supreme Court's gun control decision.

But, as the great Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, his job was "to see that the game is played according to the rules whether I like them or not."

If the public doesn't like the rules, or the consequences to which the rules lead, then the public can change the rules via the ballot box. But that is very different from judges changing the rules by verbal sleight of hand, or by talking about "weighing of the constitutional right to bear arms" against other considerations, as Justice Breyer puts it. That's not his job. Not if "we the people" are to govern



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on June 29, 2010

---

ourselves, as the Constitution says.

As for the merits or demerits of gun control laws themselves, a vast amount of evidence, both from the United States and from other countries, shows that keeping guns out of the hands of law-abiding citizens does not keep guns out of the hands of criminals. It is not uncommon for a tightening of gun control laws to be followed by an increase — not a decrease — in gun crimes, including murder.

Conversely, there have been places and times where an increase in gun ownership has been followed by a reduction in crimes in general and murder in particular.

Unfortunately, the media intelligentsia tend to favor gun control laws, so a lot of hard facts about the futility, or the counterproductive consequences of such laws, never reach the public through the media.

We hear a lot about countries with stronger gun control laws than the United States that have lower murder rates. But we very seldom hear about countries with stronger gun control laws than the United States that have higher murder rates, such as Russia and Brazil.

The media, like Justice Breyer, might do well to reflect on what is their job and what is the voting public's job. The media's job should be to give us the information to make up our own minds, not slant and filter the news to fit the media's vision.

**Thomas Sowell** graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University (1958) and went on to receive his master's in economics from Columbia University (1959) and a doctorate in economics from the University of Chicago (1968). He is the author of 28 books including his most recent, *Intellectuals and Society*. Currently he is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. His Web site is [www.tsowell.com](http://www.tsowell.com).

COPYRIGHT 2009 CREATORS.COM

Please contact your local newspaper editor if you want to see the Thomas Sowell column in your hometown paper.



## Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



### What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.

**Subscribe**