



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 20, 2024

13 Gun Buybacks Net 2,052 Guns, No Reduction in Gun Violence

Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn [celebrated the results of her 13th gun-buyback program last weekend](#). This one was conducted in an empty parking lot in Torrance and, using an estimated \$20,000 in taxpayer-funded gift cards, brought in 256 firearms. Some of them were rusty, inoperable firearms that their owners were happy to offload onto LA taxpayers.

She rejoiced:

Today in closets and bedrooms across L.A. County, there are 2,000 fewer guns that can be found by a child, accidentally discharged, or stolen and used to kill in a crime. That makes all of the work we've done to bring these buybacks to our residents worth it.



artas/iStock/Getty Images Plus

There is absolutely no evidence of any kind that such publicity stunts have any impact whatsoever on gun violence, and precious little on suicides.

Her stunts have been going on since early 2022, and have cost L.A. taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. They brought in a total of 2,052 guns. But do these buybacks really do any good?

In December 2022, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) published the results of a study on just that question: Do gun buybacks have any measurable impact on gun violence? After all, that's the bill of goods sold to taxpayers who are funding the charade.

Concluded the authors of the NEBR study:

Using data from the National Incident Based Reporting System, we find no evidence that GBPs [gun buyback programs] reduce gun crime....

Using data from the National Vital Statistics System, we also find no evidence that GBPs reduce suicides or homicides where a firearm was involved.

The Data

It is estimated that there are about 20 million privately owned firearms in California. Ten percent of the state's population lived in L.A. It's reasonable, therefore, to calculate that two million of them exist in Hahn's county.

Doing the math, Hahn's taxpayer-funded kabuki theater has taken .001 percent of the total off the streets and out of the closets of happy gun owners delighted to take advantage of Hahn's generosity



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with other peoples' money.

But she persisted in voicing her belief in the myth:

Time and time again, these buybacks have shown that many people have these dangerous weapons they no longer want in their homes but have never had an easy, convenient way to get rid of them. This is that opportunity. They want to play a role in making their homes and communities safer.

Journalist Steve Scauzillo, writing about the event for the *Press Telegram*, had to ask the question that no one, including the LAPD, the board of county commissioners, or her office, wanted to answer:

So is removing 2,052 guns from homes, out of a total of about 20 million guns in the state, going to make a difference? Will these gun buyback events slow the rates of suicides, accidental shootings, or gun violence in L.A. County?

A study by RAND answered his question: "While the ultimate goal of most [gun] buyback programs is to reduce gun violence and crime, few studies have demonstrated that these programs have such effects. The empirical research available on gun buybacks suggest that there has been limited success in targeting high-risk individuals and guns."

Gun Crime Increases

In fact, the opposite appears to be true. Gun-related crime in the neighborhood following a gun-buyback program actually increases over the following couple of months. Wrote the NBER: "Moreover, we find some evidence of a small, short-run *increase* in gun crime in the two months following a GBP.... some criminals may be emboldened by the perception that victims will be less likely to defend themselves with deadly physical force." (Emphasis in original.)

Concluded the NBER authors: "Our results suggest that U.S. GBPs have been an inefficient use of taxpayers' dollars."

Not only has Hahn squandered thousands of taxpayer dollars on this effort, those 13 programs she ran since early 2022 have put local residents at increased risk of becoming victims of gun-related crime.

Hahn has, however, successfully fulfilled one essential role. Authors of a 2013 study of gun-buyback programs in Buffalo, New York, pointed out success in one particular area. They wrote:

Given the empirical evidence, police agencies may use gun buyback programs not with the expectation of reducing violent crime, but to satisfy the public's expectations. When serious crime problems occur, mayors and police chiefs are under pressure from their constituents to "do something dramatic and effective" about the violence.

Hahn did succeed in that. Her recent "success" in trading \$20,000+ in taxpayer dollars for 256 nonfunctional and useless firearms made the headlines of the *Press Telegram*. That daily boasts a weekday readership of a little more than 40,000 subscribers, which jumps up to 60,000 on Sundays.



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