



Opposition to Ammo Vending Machines Grows

The growing popularity of self-serve ammunition vending machines, operating like ATMs, is [causing increasing angst](#) among the anti-gun fraternity. Kris Brown, president of the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, is direct: “We need to remove these machines from our grocery stores, and we need to do it now.”

Said Nick Suplina, senior vice president of Everytown for Gun Safety, those machines should “not be in the place where you buy your kids milk.”



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High Demand

Brown and Suplina are swimming upstream. According to Grant Magers, CEO of American Rounds LLC, demand for his automatic vending machines is growing faster than his company can make and install them. He is seeking additional capital to expand his Dallas-based operation, which currently employs just 10 people.

Said Magers, “When we looked at the market, we wanted to create a safer environment for ammunition while still respecting the integrity of the 2A community.” To date he has installed fewer than two dozen machines, mostly in rural areas to serve hunters and others who don’t otherwise have ready access to shooting supplies.

The machines are massive, weighing more than 2,000 pounds, and are only installed indoors. They use state-of-the-art facial-recognition technology to assure that a purchaser is 21 or older and that the driver’s license he or she is using for identification is legitimate. Other than that, it operates like an ATM or a Coke machine: easy, convenient, and safe.

Standard Opposition

But, according to Chethan Sathya, director of Northwell Health’s Center for Gun Violence Prevention, that easy access to ammunition will just make it likely that gun violence in the area will increase:

If you’re increasing access to ammunition and it’s just that much easier for someone to go to their corner store and buy it, it’s kind of common sense that certain firearm injury and death rates are going to go up, like suicides, public mass shootings and unintentional injuries or potentially certain types of homicide.

It was Giffords, the big gorilla in the anti-gun movement, that took the time and the pains to lay out all of the reasons why these machines are “dangerous” and “troubling.” First, it scolds anyone supporting the idea that buying ammo should be easy and convenient, titling its response “You Shouldn’t Be Able to Get Unlimited Ammo from a Vending Machine.” The author, Spencer Myers, did his best to explain why:

- The growth of such machines is “a troubling trend”;
- Their presence “raises significant concerns”;



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- They're "shockingly easy to use — and misuse";
- The increasing use of these machines "creates new risks and vulnerabilities when it comes to who can get their hands on ammunition";
- They "cannot identify when a buyer may be experiencing a mental health emergency or similar crisis"; and
- They "cannot identify ... whether a buyer is intoxicated."

All of this means that "individuals in crisis will more easily be able to acquire the ammunition they need to perform acts of gun violence — either upon themselves or others — that would otherwise be easily preventable."

Straw-man Argument

There's another "danger": straw purchases of ammunition made by people who pass the technology but then make it available to someone who can't. Said Myers: "This practice is heavily undercut by just how easy it is to straw purchase from unmanned vending machines."

His solution echoes those of his compatriots in the anti-gun movement: "Untended ammo vending machines have no place in our communities." He added:

Regardless of the security risks or benefits, neighborhood grocery stores are simply not the place for automated ammunition dispensers.

It shouldn't be as easy for anyone to buy an unlimited number of bullets as it is for them to buy a can of soda, and often with less human interaction.

Putting ammunition in stores next to "impulse buy" items at checkout like gum, chips, and candy only serves efforts to normalize weapons in public spaces, ultimately making our communities less safe....

It's dangerous to place them in locations where 24-hour access is possible, or where they can be accessed and used without the buyer ever having to interact with an actual person....

Nobody should be able to walk into a store and purchase an unlimited amount of ammunition for an assault weapon — but right now, anyone with an ID could walk up to one of these machines and buy every bullet it contains.

The "Solution"

Myers finally promotes the predictable answer to gun violence allegedly likely to be stoked by the easy access to ammunition — background checks:

Ultimately, the most effective solution to preventing the unlawful acquisition of ammunition is by requiring a background check for all ammunition sales. But even in the absence of that change, there are still many steps retailers can take to ensure ammunition is sold more safely and responsibly.

The automated ammunition dispensers that are currently featured in grocery stores, with 24-hour access and several security vulnerabilities, fall far short of keeping our communities safe. And as long as these vulnerabilities remain unaddressed, these machines have no place



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in our communities.

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