



Gun Confiscation Via the Therapeutic State Moves Ahead in California

California Governor Jerry Brown [signed into law](#) on Wednesday legislation that provides \$24 million in funding to hire another 36 “special agents” to scour neighborhoods starting in July to confiscate an estimated 40,000 firearms owned by citizens, deemed to be illegal owing to reasons that include a diagnosis of mental illness. Those approximately 20,000 owners of those guns likely purchased them legally but because of criminal convictions, restraining orders, or diagnoses of mental illness, under California law they no longer can own them. Said Evan Westrup, a spokesman for the governor’s office:



This bipartisan bill makes our communities safer by giving law enforcement the resources they need to get guns out of the hands of potentially dangerous individuals.

Calling it an “investment” (the \$24 million comes ironically from fees paid by citizens for background checks the state requires in order to purchase a firearm), Mark Leno, the legislator who authored the bill, said, “Our investment in this tracking program gives us the opportunity to confiscate” guns from those who should not have them.

Approximately one-third of those on the list were disqualified due to a conviction for a felony or a violent misdemeanor, one-third because of “mental health” reasons, and the balance because they were deemed to be “dangerous” or subject to restraining orders. The 36 new agents doubles the present roster of enforcers who have already tracked down and seized 4,000 weapons over the last two years. The task is made easier as California is the only state in the union which has a cross-link between gun owners and those on the list of those now deemed to own them illegally.

This falls in line with President Obama’s directives issued a month after the Newtown, Connecticut, shooting, called [“Now is the Time”](#) in which he promised to “make sure dangerous people are prohibited from having guns:

The background check system is designed to keep guns out of the hands of those forbidden by law to have them.

But we need to make sure our laws are effective at identifying the dangerous or untrustworthy individuals that should not have access to guns.

The President will direct the Attorney General, in consultation with other relevant agencies, to review the laws governing who is prohibited from having guns and make legislative and executive recommendations to ensure dangerous people aren’t slipping through the cracks.”

Those deemed “dangerous or untrustworthy” include those suffering from mental illness, a diagnosis



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declared as a myth more than 50 years ago by Thomas Szasz, professor of psychiatry emeritus at the State University of New York's Health Science Center. Author of [The Myth of Mental Illness](#), Szasz wrote that "mental illnesses [that] are diagnosable disorders of the brain" are not based on science or scientific research at all but instead are "a lie." [He explained](#),

My claim [is] that mental illnesses are fictitious illnesses ... not based on scientific research ... [which properly] rest on the definition of illness as a pathological alteration of cells, tissues and organs....

If we accept this scientific definition of disease, then it follows that mental illness is a metaphor. Instead, says Szasz, mental illness refers to "the judgments of some persons about the bad behaviors of other persons" and therefore falls well outside the scientific definition of disease. Once he began to understand the distinction between "metaphor" and "disease" Szasz said,

It seemed to me self-evident that many persons categorized as mentally ill are not sick, and depriving them of liberty ... on the grounds of a non-existing disease is a grave violation of basic human rights.

Those rights have been protected by the injunction invoked in medical schools for years, called [Primum non nocere!](#) — first, do no harm — which rests on the premise that the patient is free to seek, accept, or reject medical diagnosis and treatment for his illness. On the other hand, the modern practice of psychiatry is based on the premise that a mentally ill person may be dangerous to himself or to others and must be restrained, by force if necessary, to protect society at large. This has resulted in a melding of interests together between psychiatry and political power. As Szasz explained:

Politicians, pandering to the public's ever-present fears of dangers, find the psychiatrists' willingness to define *deviance as disease* and *social control as treatment* useful in their quest to *enlarge the scope and power of the therapeutic state*. [Emphasis added.]

If government is allowed sufficient power to define mental illness in such a way, then all the powers of that profession can be enlisted in those efforts. Psychiatry then becomes, according to Szasz, "an arm of the coercive apparatus of the state.... This is why [such mislabeling] threatens [to turn] personal therapy into political tyranny."

Numerous investigators have proposed just how that tyranny can be installed. [Mark Crovelli asked](#), for example,

if a medical student suffers a panic attack due to stress and is institutionalized for a day or two, does that mean that she is mentally ill and should be disarmed? If so, for how long will she lose her right to bear arms, and who is to decide if and when she is to recover her ability to defend herself?

Or, what about the estimated 11% of Americans who are taking antidepressants? Are these people also mentally ill, and will they be disarmed as well?

What if a person took antidepressants years ago, but has since stopped taking them? Is he mentally ill, and will he be disarmed?

Or, even more dangerous, what if a prescription-happy doctor tells you to take antidepressants, but you don't want them and don't even take them? Would you still be classified as having been diagnosed with mental illness and lose your right to own guns?

In response to that last suggestion, [The New American recently pointed out](#) that Mayor Michael



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Bloomberg's New York City has already begun rounding up the mentally ill if they aren't taking their meds. Chillingly, the article quotes from the *Washington Times* that the arrest warrants aren't the usual kind that are used for people accused of committing a crime "but rather for avoiding court-ordered mental-health treatment.... Once tracked down, the suspects will be forcibly taken by detectives to hospitals for treatment."

In an article appearing in the print edition of *The New American* magazine entitled "[False Solutions to Gun Violence](#)," researcher Bill Jasper noted,

The federal "mental health" agenda is one of the most dangerous attacks on the Second Amendment we face today. Tens of millions of Americans have been prescribed psychotropic drugs by "mental health professionals" for everything from ADHD to depression and insomnia.

Under ObamaCare, might we see a directive categorizing all these prescription drug users (or former users) as automatically presumed to be mentally or emotionally unstable, and ordering all healthcare providers to notify law enforcement authorities of these patients who have a gun in the home?

Will the millions of military veterans who have been forced to go through PTSD counseling and other psychological evaluations find themselves subjected to scrutiny by federal "mental health" bureaucrats who will be empowered to comb through their files and to decide whether they are "fit" to keep and bear arms as a private citizen?

It does not take much imagination to envision a myriad of similarly realistic scenarios that could be used by the Therapeutic State for piecemeal disarmament of virtually the entire populace.

Governor Jerry Brown's latest extension of government into what used to be private matters between a patient and his doctor — for physical or mental conditions — is one more of those "pieces" that could lead to gun confiscation of the entire population of the country.

Photo of a table of confiscated guns in California: AP Images

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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