



## Skepticism About Second Amendment Support

Photo: AP Images

**ITEM:** A press release issued by the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, dated November 5, asserts: "The election of Barack Obama as President and Joe Biden as Vice President along with significant wins in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and key state legislative chambers, have significantly improved the political environment for progress on gun violence prevention issues in the years ahead.... 'This is a good day for people who want to reduce gun violence in America,' said Sarah Brady, Chair of the Brady Campaign. 'It's a bad day for extremists who are stuck in the rhetoric of the past.'"



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**CORRECTION:** The disarmers of the Brady group no doubt are also offended by the rhetoric of past extremists such as Thomas Jefferson, who said that "No free man shall be debarred the use of arms," and Patrick Henry, who maintained that "The great object is that every man be armed."

In contrast to such straight shooting, President-elect Obama seems resentful that citizens should be wary of his intentions just because he has inveighed against Americans who "cling to guns or religion" in times of adversity, and has a record, at one time or another, of supporting handgun and ammunition bans, outlawing concealed-carry permits, and favoring stricter restrictions on rifles and shotguns.

Some of Obama's positions proved embarrassing to him in times of political adversity, so he subsequently affected not to cling to those extremist views. Take, for example, a questionnaire filled out in Obama's name, when he ran for the state Senate in Illinois (with his own handwriting shown on the form). The document acknowledged that he favored a ban on the manufacture, sale, and possession of handguns. He later said those answers did not reflect his opinions, repeating that claim in particular this past year when he was running for national office and more Americans were looking carefully at his record.

In April of 2008, columnist Robert Novak also took note of the fact that Obama was on the board "of the Chicago-based Joyce Foundation, which takes an aggressive gun control position, and in 2000 considered becoming its full-time president. In 2006, he voted with an 84-16 majority (and against [Hillary] Clinton) to prohibit confiscation of firearms during an emergency, but that is his only pro-gun vote in Springfield or Washington. The National Rifle Association grades his voting record (and Clinton's) an 'F.'"

There are many reasons to be leery of Obama's views on the right of Americans to keep and bear arms. Among these are his false assertions relating to concealed-carry permits and support for a permanent ban of so-called assault weapons. Obama called the ban on the latter "common sense" — though it was



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nothing of the kind, since it outlawed almost 200 types of firearms, many simply for cosmetic reasons such as having a rifle grip that protruded “conspicuously” from the stock or including a bayonet lug. Such weapons, despite their name, are not automatic weapons and do not necessarily fire faster than other weapons or have more powerful ammunition.

The NRA’s Institute for Legislative Action has kept a careful eye on the purposely misleading claims about this ban, which has since expired:

Perhaps no other firearm issue has been more dishonestly portrayed by gun prohibitionists. Notwithstanding their predictions that the ban’s expiration in 2004 would bring about the end of civilization, for the last four years the nation’s murder rate has been lower than anytime since the mid-1960s. Studies for Congress, the Congressional Research Service, the National Institute of Justice, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found no evidence that gun prohibition or gun control reduces crime. Guns that were affected by the ban are used in only a tiny fraction of violent crime — about 35 times as many people are murdered without any sort of firearm (knives, bare hands, etc.), as with “assault weapons.” Obama says that “assault weapons” are machine guns that “belong on foreign battlefields,” but that is a lie; the guns are only semi-automatic, and they are not used by a military force anywhere on the planet.

There are real-world consequences to disarming local populations, as Indians found out not long ago during the terrorist attacks on Bombay (Mumbai). Scholar and author John R. Lott, Jr., now at the University of Maryland, pointed out in the “Fox Forum” that the terrorists just smuggled their automatic weapons into India. Accordingly, he asked, “Would anyone argue that India’s extremely strict gun licensing and artificially high prices for guns helped prevent the terrorist attacks? In fact, the reverse is more likely the case.”

In India, said Lott, victims were forced to just watch as “armed police cowered and didn’t fire back at the terrorists.” Meanwhile, “according to the hotel company’s chairman, P.R.S. Oberoi, security at ‘the hotel had metal detectors, but none of its security personnel carried weapons because of the difficulties in obtaining gun permits from the Indian government.’” Who was disarmed by the strict gun-control laws? Lott answers: “The terrorist attack showed how difficult it is to disarm serious terrorists. Strict licensing rules meant that it was the victims who obeyed the regulations, not the terrorists.”

In the United States, in the 40 states that have “right-to-carry” laws, violent crime rates on average are 26 percent lower than the rest of the nation. Yet, Obama has supported federal legislation to supersede the rights of citizens carrying weapons because the laws in those other states are “threatening the safety of Illinois residents.” Never mind the truth, such as the fact that the seven states with the lowest violent crime rates are “right-to-carry” states, according to FBI statistics.

Even before Barack Obama’s inauguration, he was making moves that raised more concerns among those who believe in the right to self-defense, with the selection of Eric Holder as his potential attorney general and Rahm Emanuel as chief of staff of the White House. John Snyder, a spokesman for the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, observed: “Holder has stated that the Second Amendment does not protect an individual right to keep and bear arms. Emanuel worked at the White House for passage of the Clinton administration ban on certain semiautomatic firearms, which President Clinton himself later admitted led to Democrat loss of the House in the 1994 elections.”

The right to keep and bear arms is not restricted to hunters, despite the claims of certain politicians



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and left-wing activists. Asserting this right not only has an effect on crime, but it also tends to protect citizens from terrorists and tyranny. As Texas Representative Ron Paul put it: "As long as there is metalworking and welding capability, it matters not what gun laws are imposed upon law-abiding people. Those that wish to have guns, and disregard the law, will have guns. Gun control makes violence safer and more effective for the aggressive, whether the aggressor is a terrorist or a government."

While Barack Obama has been urging citizens not to stock up on weapons because they mistrust him, other anti-gunners are a tad more candid, seeing in the new administration an opportunity to disarm Americans. The Brady Campaign, the day after the election, was demanding the adoption of what it duplicitously calls "common sense gun laws." Similarly, John Rosenthal, co-founder of Stop Handgun Violence, gleefully wrote in the *Boston Globe*: "With the historic election of Barack Obama, the nation finally has an opportunity to enact sensible national gun control policy."

Not so. We already have such a "policy." It is called the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution



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