



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 19, 2013

The Real Reason Gun Control Failed

In Gabrielle Giffords' [editorial in the New York Times](#) on Wednesday about the failure of senators to pass the so-called Toomey-Manchin compromise amendment that doomed Senate Bill 649, she expressed her frustration through vituperation without understanding why the amendment, and consequently the bill, failed to pass the Senate on Wednesday. She wrote: "A minority of Senators gave in to fear and blocked common-sense legislation.... These senators made their decision based on political fear and on cold calculations about the money of special interests like the National Rifle Association."



She wrote that the senators were interested only in saving their political skins — three of the four Democrats who voted no are up for reelection in 2014 — and that as a result they had a "misplaced sense of self-interest" and used "willfully false accounts" of what the bill, had it passed, might have done to gun owners' rights to defend their votes. She threatened that she, her husband Mark Kelly, and their anti-gun group, Americans for Responsible Solutions, would "use every means available to make sure we have a different Congress [in 2014], one that puts communities' interests ahead of the gun lobby's."

Despite the fact that four Republicans — John McCain (Ariz.), Susan Collins (Maine), Pat Toomey (Penn.) and Mark Kirk (Ill.) — voted for the amendment, Democrats were unable to keep four of their faithful in line, as Mark Pryor (Ark.), Mark Begich (Alaska), Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.), and Max Baucus (Mont.) voted against it, resulting in the defeat of the amendment 54 "yea" to 46 "nay," [six "yea" votes short of the 60 needed for passage](#).

The tortuous path to oblivion for S. 649 [was carefully laid out](#) by Jennifer Steinhauer in the *New York Times*, tracing it through a maze of bad decisions, failed opportunities, poor messaging, an extraordinary lack of coherence, and political reality. Yet even she failed to grasp what really ended the matter even before it began: an awakening by sufficient numbers of Americans that they were once again about to be taken for a ride.

The first misstep was a decision made in the White House on Friday evening, December 14, the day of the Newtown shooting, to go for broke in trying to get a series of gun control measures passed, including expanded background checks, bans of assault rifles, and limits on the size of magazines. As Steinhauer noted, it all went downhill from there. Vice President Joe Biden's mishandling of the message enhanced by his continued buffoonery in downplaying the serious nature of the need for Americans to defend themselves, the blowup of the tentative agreement between anti-gun Senator Chuck Schumer and pro-gun Senator Tom Coburn, and the traction gained by the National Rifle Association (NRA) in its reasonable call for potential victims to be able to defend themselves all conspired to end the bill's chances even as it began. [Steinhauer wrote](#):



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In the nearly 10 years since the expiration of the assault weapons ban, even modest gun safety legislation has proved impossible to advance on Capitol Hill, where the momentum has been in the other direction, with lawmakers pushing various expansions of gun rights.

The 68 votes last week to allow the debate on gun legislation to proceed was a mirage, a temporary triumph granted by senators willing to allow shooting victims and their survivors the vote they sought with absolutely no intention of supporting the final legislation and crossing the gun lobby or *constituents who see gun rights as a defining issue*. [Emphasis added.]

That “opportunity” to be seized — to pass gun control laws in the wake of the Newtown shooting — had no chance for success in the face of what Steinhauer called “a combination of the political anxiety of vulnerable Democrats from conservative states, deep-seated Republican resistance, and the enduring clout of the National Rifle Association.” She admitted that although the political “conversation” had changed (with the adoring and consistent help of the media), the underlying political “dynamic” had not. When the NRA backed away from supporting Manchin (who had, at least up until Wednesday, an A rating from them), it was game over. With help from Gun Owners of America and the Second Amendment Foundation, there was no chance of a resurrection.

Brian and Garret Fahy, two brothers who are both attorneys with White House and Senate Republican Conference experience, [outlined at least five reasons](#) why S. 649, and additional gun control laws in general, failed so predictably and miserably.

First was the evident hypocrisy of the White House waiting for the best “opportunity” to force its gun control agenda. It did nothing following the shooting at Fort Hood, it did nothing following the shooting of Giffords, it did nothing following the Aurora, Colorado, shooting. To even the most trusting soul in the country it was obvious the president was looking for just the right moment to force the issue.

Second, Obama was handicapped by his vice president who has repeatedly, often humorously, offended his supporters and ridiculed his opponents with misstatements that regularly make the rounds of late night television.

Third, the administration continued to use phony statistics that Americans knew were just plain wrong.

Fourth, there remains a commitment by Americans to the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms that transcends local tragedies, no matter how grievous or heartrending. As the brothers noted, “Gun rights ... are less susceptible to emotional ploys and legislative efforts born of tragedy.”

Fifth, the harder Obama and his radicals push for gun control, the easier it is for average Americans to see what’s really afoot. The lawyers suggest that this defeat “reveals the divide between our president and the nation. His priorities are not the nation’s.” For support the authors quoted a brand new Gallup poll that showed only four percent of Americans listing gun control as a national priority.

It’s taken longer than many have expected, but the end game of the Obama administration has now not only been fully revealed, but is beginning to invigorate Americans who still cherish precious rights and recognize the threat to them that Obama presents.

As Michael Hammond, legislative counsel for Gun Owners of America, expressed it: “This [defeat] will spell the end of gun control for the 113th Congress.”

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