

Gun Control: A Primer

- Gun control is an attempt by government to disarm its law-abiding citizens.
- Those who say that the 2nd Amendment pertains not to the people — but only to the National Guard — ignore the fact that the other nine amendments in the Bill of Rights are not so limited. Besides, the Bill of Rights does not *grant* rights — it prohibits government from intruding upon them.
- “Gun rights” and all other rights go hand in hand. One cannot defend just *one* right. A government powerful enough to curtail one right can deny all others!

We have a solution!

We invite you to contact us for introductory information about the role you can play in returning America to an era of **“less government, more responsibility, and — with God’s help — a better world.”** We welcome the participation in our work of men and women of good will and religious ideals, of every race, color, and creed.

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The John Birch Society
Standing for Family and Freedom

Post Office Box 8040 • Appleton, WI 54912
(800) JBS-USA1
JBS.org

Take this quiz!

Are the following statements
true or false?

1. Gun control helps to reduce violent crime.
2. Gun control laws help keep guns out of the hands of criminals.
3. Gun registration is a benign crime-control measure.

Here are the answers:

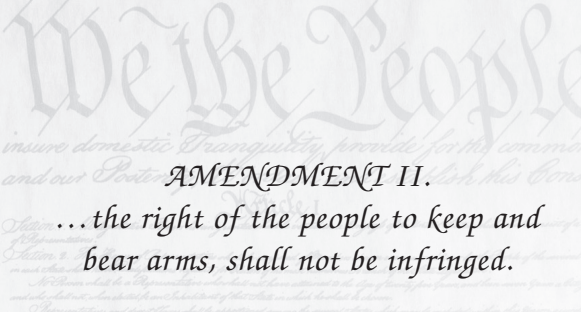
1. **False.** Statistics clearly show that cities and states with more gun controls have *more* violent crime.
2. **False.** Only law-abiding citizens obey gun control laws. Criminals ignore them — to the peril of unarmed citizens.
3. **False.** Pre-Nazi era German gun registration lists were used by the Nazis to confiscate guns in 1938. The scenario was repeated in Cuba in 1961.

Obviously, many Americans have been misinformed!

Since our founding in 1958, no other organization has worked harder than The John Birch Society to restore constitutional limitations on government, preserve our nation’s independence, and uphold the principles that have made our country the envy of the world.

The Right To Keep and Bear Arms ...

**The right that defends
all other rights.**



AMENDMENT II.
... the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

**“No freeman shall ever be
debarred the use of arms...”**
—Thomas Jefferson

**“Little more can reasonably be
aimed at with respect to the people
at large than to have them properly
armed...”**
— Alexander Hamilton

**“To preserve liberty, it is
essential that the whole body of
the people always possess arms.”**
— Richard Henry Lee

**Your right to defend yourself
is under assault.
See inside for details...**

The Right To Keep and Bear Arms ...

Where does this right come from?

The Second Amendment does not “grant” the right to keep and bear arms, but rather protects it from usurpation. The right has deep roots in English common law and is related to the common-law right of self-defense. (The common law, itself, was in part built up from the Bible.)

The battles of Lexington and Concord in 1775 represented a firm stand taken by the colonists against confiscation of their arms by British soldiers. Forty-nine colonists died in those battles, so this obviously was not a trivial matter to them.

Why is it part of the Bill of Rights?

When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, the infringement by a strong government upon their right to bear arms was fresh in the minds of our Founders, so they explicitly prohibited their new federal government from repeating this travesty. Or so they thought....

In recent decades, this right has been as much under attack as it was in 1775. While no “red-coated” federal troops march through our towns, overzealous Presidents and misguided members of Congress have sought to accomplish the same objective, step-by-step. And thanks to courts sympathetic to their crusade, the erosion of our rights is proceeding, though unconstitutionally.

In order to understand why this trend is such a national tragedy, let us look at some facts.

Why is gun ownership a key to freedom?

The freedom of the individual, the peace of the community, and the independence of the state all depend upon a substantial portion of the adult population having firearms. It is a hallmark of society in a constitutional republic that citizens have rights and responsibilities. Ownership of (and proficiency in the use of) a well-maintained firearm is not only a right, but also a responsibility.

Responsibility? For what purpose?

Again looking at the common law for guidance, the family, as the basic unit of society, has the *primary* responsibility for certain functions, including its own material support, the religious and practical education of its members, and *self-protection*. Since everyone must sleep or leave home on occasion, people have delegated others, primarily their local police, to supplement their own self-protection. But this does not relieve the head of the household from protecting his own family, nor does it excuse him from assisting his neighbors — when necessary — in the protection of the community at large. (The posse raised by the Western sheriff was a perfect example of this role.)

But the Founders had more critical issues in mind when writing the Second Amendment. Richard Henry Lee said: “To preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms.” Lee knew that possession of arms by the people provides a roadblock to government officials intoxicated by power, a force to repel invaders, and protection from civil turmoil and anarchy.

How does firearms ownership affect crime?

Let’s make comparisons at both local and national levels. In 1981, the city of Morton Grove, Illinois banned handguns; subsequently the number of burglaries increased. In 1982, the city of Kennesaw, Georgia passed an ordinance *requiring* heads of households to keep at least one firearm in their homes. In 1995, Kennesaw Police Chief Dwaine Wilson testified before the House Judiciary Committee: “Kennesaw is an armed community, but a very peaceful community.” After 1982, crime, particularly armed crime, in Kennesaw dropped off significantly.

In 1976, Washington, DC instituted one of the strictest gun-control laws in the country. The murder rate since that time has risen 134 percent (77.8 per 100,000 population) while the overall rate for the country declined two percent. Washington, DC

politicians find it easy to blame Virginia’s less stringent gun laws for the DC murder rate. Yet, Virginia Beach, Virginia’s largest city with almost 400,000 residents, has had one of the lowest rates of murder in the country, 4.1 per 100,000.

In Switzerland, every draft-age male is *required* to maintain a firearm in his home, yet the Swiss murder rate is only 15 percent of the U.S. rate. An added benefit: No foreign enemy has invaded Switzerland in centuries.

In contrast, a 1971 Cambridge University study showed that in heavily gun-controlled Great Britain, “the use of firearms in crime was very much less before 1920 when Britain had no controls of any sort.”

What is to be done?

The solution is one of education and action. Because of the failure of our government schools to teach constitutional principles, the vast majority of American citizens are completely unaware of their rights — and their responsibilities.

There are several well-known “national associations” that allegedly stand up for the right to keep and bear arms, but because they do not adequately explain and defend the constitutional principles that guarantee this right, their opposition to its infringement falls short. In recent years, the leadership of such groups has more and more frequently become party to compromise with — and capitulation to — the anti-gun forces of big government.

The John Birch Society is the leading organization standing up for your right to keep and bear arms *without compromise*. We recognize that this right exists for more essential reasons than game hunting and target shooting. If you are committed to defending your right to keep and bear arms, and in exercising that right as a responsible citizen, we invite you to learn more about our work on this and many other issues.

Please turn the page ...