Policy Analysis: U.S. Gun Policy

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**Overview of the Gun Problem in the United States**

The United States has a law that allows gun ownership among particular citizens, which has increased the rate of people owning different types of guns. According to Enrin and Hemenway (2016), “the United States has the world’s highest rate of gun ownership among civilians, sixty percent. The statistics translate to nine guns for every ten people including teenagers and adults.” The high possession of firearms has contributed to increased cases of gun-related crimes in the country such as suicide, homicides during robberies and disagreements, and mass shootings in public places and within schools. Other issues associated with guns in the United States include accidental and negligent injuries, as well as deaths. Gun ownership in the United States can be linked to many problems.

A study conducted by Enrin and Hemenway (2016) found that the rates of homicide are six times higher in the United States than in other developed countries, and an increased number of the killings are connected to handguns. Despite the fact America does not have higher-than-average suicide rates, approximately 60% of all adult firearm deaths are by suicide. America has also experienced increased rates of mass shooting such as the 2012 killing of the twenty school children in Newton, Connecticut and the recent 2017 mass shooting in a music festival in Las Vegas among other cases. Accidental or negligence firearm deaths are also a problem in the country because they are six times higher than in comparison to other developed countries such as Canada (Enrin & Hemenway, 2016). Accidental firearm deaths or injuries occur when guns go off unexpectedly or when children access weapons that are not stored properly and end up injuring or killing themselves or others. Apparently, gun ownership in the United States has contributed to the increased violence leading to injuries and deaths of many people. The death rates associated with guns, shows that there is a gun problem in the United States.

**Summary of the Gun Control Policy in the United States**

The Second Amendment of the Constitution allows gun ownership in the United States because it states the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be invaded. Nevertheless, because of the increased cases of gun-related violence, injuries, suicides, homicides, and accidents among other problems connected to firearms, the United States has established a gun policy directed at minimizing the high rates of problems in the country. According to Masters (2017), the policy regulates gun ownership through the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA). The Act requires citizens and legal residents to be at least 18 years-old to purchase guns such as shotguns, rifles, and ammunition. All other firearms under the law including handguns can only be sold to people from 21 years-old and above. Governments at state or local levels have the right to implement higher age restrictions but are prohibited to lower the national minimum.

Apart from the age limit, the U.S gun policy has also established specific people that should not purchase or own a gun. They include outlaws, or the people deemed a danger to society due to their criminal history and patients that have been or are omitted to mental institutions who could commit accidental firearm suicides, injuries, and homicides. Further, individuals with a history of felony convictions that entail a prison sentence of more than one year, or delinquencies with sentences of over two years are also prohibited from purchasing firearms (Masters, 2017). Federal laws also restrict the sale or ownership of guns to people that have been found guilty of unlawfully possessing or using controlled substances within the past year. These regulations are implemented on people that are most likely to use firearms with the intention of causing harm to others or themselves. Regulations have currently played an essential role in minimizing the rate of gun violence in the United States compared to past years.

Nevertheless, despite the regulation of gun use among United States citizens based on age and criminal history among other factors, other people that are not prohibited have access to guns, which contributes to gun-related issues. According to Masters (2017), America has a less than five percent of the world’s population but has about thirty to fifty percent of the world’s civilian-owned guns. With the high levels of gun ownership, criminals, drug dealers, teenagers, and children can access weapons; which increase gun-related violence, accidents, and criminal activities in the United States.

**Recommendations**

The United States Constitution has established gun ownership as a right to civilians. Therefore, the government cannot prohibit gun ownership unless the regulation in the Constitution is amended. The government should implement significant efforts to ensure gun safety and reduce gun-related violence in the country. One of the best solutions to the gun-related problem is to enforce strict and sensible gun laws that minimize easy access to dangerous weapons. For example, the government should ban the selling and purchasing of high capacity guns such as assault weapons, handguns, and military grade weapons. Further, register gun owners and carry out universal background checks without loopholes to review the people that are purchasing firearms. Waiting periods or delay to provide firearms to civilians should be extended to about a month to allow the review of potential buyers including their history of violence. Second, gun owners must be educated on the best ways to store guns at home. The selling companies must be mandated with the obligation to ensure that their customers have safes to store their weapons to minimize access by unauthorized people such as children or teenagers at home. Third, the gun industry must be held accountable for the sales of firearms and ammunition. They must ensure a code of conduct by refraining from selling guns used in crimes. The state can also implement laws that require sellers to gain state licenses, maintain records of sales, work with the law enforcement to run background checks for their buyers, and submit to inspections.

These recommendations can be implemented through the establishment of law or Act for gun regulations by the government listing the requirements for gun sellers, gun access prohibition, and background checks. Implementation of the law may cost the government an average of $700. The positive results of the regulations may be viewed after three years of application, which will include minimized gun-related crime, homicides, suicides, and injuries among others.

References

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