

POLICY FOCUS

The Second Amendment Improves Women’s Lives

RECIPES FOR RATIONAL GOVERNMENT FROM INDEPENDENT WOMEN’S FORUM

By Jenn Jacques, Visiting Fellow, Independent Women’s Forum

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In the wake of the Hollywood sexual assault scandal, thousands of women publicly shared their tragic and life-changing stories of sexual harassment, abuse, and rape on social media and promoted the hashtag “#MeToo” to encourage other victims to come forward.

Yet, despite this positive and much-needed campaign of awareness, a concerted and coordinated effort by the media, Hollywood, and the political elite is actively working to discourage women from owning a firearm and/or becoming a concealed carry permit holder—the very things that can help women who find themselves in a dangerous situation with a violent assailant. In addition, women who are already gun owners and who promote the preservation of the Second Amendment are being silenced through online harassment and threats of violence.

Women who defend the Second Amendment know that a firearm is a power equalizer—making it possible for a woman of any size to defend herself against or escape from a physically more powerful attacker. Our forefathers understood this and in a prescient move, during the crafting of the Bill of Rights, actually instructed future generations that the right to bear arms “shall not be infringed.”

Women have the most to lose in relinquishing their right to bear arms, yet women are particularly vulnerable to the messages that anti-gun activists promote. It’s therefore important that women understand the myths surrounding firearms and gun ownership so that they can make informed decisions about their right to bear arms.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

All Americans, particularly women, should be concerned with the effort to restrict access to firearms because:

- **It's unconstitutional.** The Second Amendment specifically says that the right to bear arms “shall not be infringed.” The Framers understood that a powerful government would one day try to limit the citizenry’s ability to defend itself and sought to guard against the attempts we see today.
- **It leaves women at a disadvantage.** Like it or not, men are bigger, stronger, and capable of overpowering a woman unless she has the means to defend herself. Guns level the playing field and allow women to fight back.
- **It won't reduce gun violence.** Criminals, by definition, don't follow the law; so adding more laws does nothing to stop them.
- **It disarms good citizens.** Rendering good, law-abiding people defenseless does nothing to improve civil society. People should be allowed to legally defend themselves against those who illegally obtain guns.
- **It's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.** Having a personal protection plan (a well-practiced, disciplined course of action in the event of a personal attack) is just like having a storm shelter for severe weather or a fire extinguisher for your home.

MORE INFORMATION

Understanding the myths associated with firearms helps everyone—especially women, who are often the targets of misinformation campaigns—feel more confident about owning a firearm and better able to defend their constitutional right to bear arms. Here are the top myths about owning and using firearms:

MYTH: Gun violence is on the rise in America.

Thankfully, the opposite is true: Violent crime has plummeted in recent years. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) all violent crime has declined during the last five years, and according to the Pew Research Center, gun violence had fallen by nearly 50 percent since its 1993 peak.

Yet, despite this good news, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' **National Crime Victimization Survey**, in 2015, an estimated 5 million Americans age 12 or older were still the victims of violent crimes. According to the same survey, rapes and sexual assaults rose significantly in 2015, going from 284,350 in 2014 to 431,840 in 2015. The same survey found that over a million individuals were involved in a domestic violence incident.

These grim figures raise the question: why are organized and well-financed activists—like Moms Demand Action, Michael Bloomberg's Everytown for Gun Safety, the Brady Campaign, and The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence—working to limit a person's right to protect themselves against violent attackers?

FACT: While we can and should continue to work to reduce crime, gun violence has actually declined in recent years.

MYTH: Common-sense gun laws will make us safer!

When a violent gun incident, like the murders at Newtown or Las Vegas, happens, it's natural to want limits on firearms. But, we need to examine if these limits actually do anything to reduce gun violence. Sadly, they do not.

Consider the case of gun limits in Maryland. In 2013, the Maryland legislature **passed the nation's most restrictive gun-control measures**, which required the fingerprinting of gun buyers, new limits on firearm purchases, bans on certain weapons, and a limit on magazines that hold more than 10 bullets. Yet despite this effort to curtail violent gun crime, four years later, Baltimore, Maryland reported the highest homicide rate in the country. Other cities—like Chicago and San Francisco—have also seen gun crime rise after the passage of extremely restrictive gun laws.

This illustrates two important realities: 1) criminals don't care about laws, and 2) law-abiding citizens are finding it harder to defend themselves against violent criminals.

FACT: Just because you have laws on the books doesn't mean crime will go down.

MYTH: Anyone Can Own a Gun!

President Obama famously freaked out moms in 2016 by tweeting, "A violent felon can buy the exact same weapon over the internet with no background check, no questions asked."

Happily, the President's tweet isn't true. First, **the National Firearms Act of 1934** made it illegal for felons convicted of a violent crime to own a gun, and the **Gun Control Act of 1968** expanded the prohibition to include anyone convicted of a felony (even a nonviolent felony). It's also illegal to sell a gun to a convicted felon.

Those convicted of domestic violence, even a misdemeanor charge, also receive a lifetime ban on owning or operating a firearm. Those who are convicted of marijuana possession are banned for life, as are those **who use marijuana for medical purposes—even in states where the use is legal**. The Gun Control Act of 1968 also bans gun ownership of anyone who has been adjudicated as having a mental disorder or has been committed to any mental institution.

FACT: You have to have a squeaky clean record to legally own a gun.

MYTH: It's Dangerous to Have Guns Around Kids!

As any parent will tell you, curiosity can get the best of even the most well-behaved child. That's why teaching children to respect firearms is so important.

Sadly, tragic accidents do occur. In 2016, there were **117 incidents** in which a child under the age of 18 gained access to a loaded firearm outside their residence. So whether you have firearms in the house or not, firearm safety is a conversation that every parent should initiate.

Several programs exist to help teach children about firearms. Since 1988, the NRA's Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program has equipped **more than 30 million children** with the knowledge of what to do if they come across a firearm: Stop, Don't Touch, Run Away, and Tell an Adult.

FACT: Families who teach their children to respect firearms and the rules of gun safety are less likely to experience tragedy.

MYTH: Women Are Often Harmed By their Own Guns!

Every woman should be free to choose how to protect herself, whether she chooses to attend self-defense classes, to arm herself with mace, a tactical knife, stun gun or whistle, or to own and train in the safe use of a firearm.

Sadly, there are cases where a woman's own gun has been used against her during a violent attack, but there are also a vast number of women who have been able to defend themselves against or safely escape a potential attacker.

In fact, according to the 2013 study **"Priorities For Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence,"** conducted

by the Centers for Disease Control and commissioned President Obama, guns used in self-defense are an important crime deterrent. The research found that "Studies that directly assessed the effect of actual defensive uses of guns (i.e., incidents in which a gun was 'used' by the crime victim in the sense of attacking or threatening an offender) have found consistently lower injury rates among gun-using crime victims compared with victims who used other self-protective strategies."

FACT: Women should have a variety of self defense methods to access. The government shouldn't limit women's choices.

MYTH: No One Needs to Own a Semi-Automatic Rifle!

There are two common refrains from those who object to gun ownership: "No one needs a big scary assault rifle," and "The Founders meant muskets and hunting, not modern firearms."

The Founders understood that weaponry, like all things, would continue to change and modernize. They intended for the right to bear arms to pass the test of time and include the very weapons to which government authorities have access.

One such weapon—the AR-15, which is often called the "modern musket"—is used by both the military as well as by hunters, sportsmen, and for civilian protection. Today, women are

the fastest growing demographic in the shooting sports, and the AR-15 is popular with women because of its soft-recoil (or kick).

FACT: The Second Amendment was designed to allow the citizenry to protect ourselves using the same type of weaponry used by a more powerful foe (like the government).

MYTH: Guns Don't Stop Mass Shootings

Actually they do. The problem though is that mass shootings often happen in “Gun Free Zones” so citizens who are licensed to conceal carry don't have access to their own guns. But when those with a conceal carry license are on hand and have their firearms ready, they are often able to stop the shooter from turning the already violent incident into a mass shooting incident.

FACT: When allowed to carry their weapons, concealed carriers regularly put an end to crimes involving guns and often prevent mass shootings from developing.

Conclusion

Myths about firearms are common today and pushed by a very vocal group of anti-gun activists, Hollywood stars (who employ bodyguards and

live in gated communities) and a coterie of constitutionally illiterate media elite who fail to properly inform the public about guns.

But women deserve facts, not myths.

Americans must work to maintain their constitutional right to bear arms. Legislators shouldn't make it harder for law-abiding citizens to protect themselves. Women deserve choices in the marketplace when it comes to their own self-defense.

Women Gun Ownership on the Rise

While Hollywood cranks out movies with heroines who display strength and self-reliance on screen with firearms, the actresses who portray these characters often speak out against the right to keep and bear arms and suggest guns are inherently dangerous.

Yet, these aren't the only women speaking about guns and gun ownership. With the increasing popularity of national organizations like The Well-Armed Women, NRA Women, and A Girl and A Gun, as well as the increasing popularity of hunting and shooting sports among women, there is no shortage of mentors for women interested in becoming proficient with a firearm. Whether it's for self-defense or an interest in the shooting sports, millions of women are choosing to become **gun owners and concealed carry permit holders** each year, which is sparking productive discussions on reasonable options to curtail gun violence.

Adding more women to the ranks of responsible, law-abiding citizens who embrace the right to keep and bear arms will only serve to improve the political landscape and help gun rights and gun control groups find a sensible response to issues surrounding the Second Amendment.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Get Informed:** Learn more about your right to bear arms. Visit:
 - **National Rifle Association's Women's Leadership Forum**
 - **Doctors For Responsible Gun Ownership**
 - **National Shooting Sports Foundation**
 - **NRA's Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program**
- **Talk to Your Friends:** Help your friends and family understand these important issues. Tell them about what's going on and encourage them to join you in getting involved.
- **Become a Leader in the Community:** Get a group together each month to talk

about a political/policy issue (it will be fun!). Write a letter to the editor. Show up at local government meetings and make your opinions known. Go to rallies. Better yet, organize rallies! A few motivated people can change the world.

- **Remain Engaged Politically:** Too many good citizens see election time as the only time they need to pay attention to politics. We need everyone to pay attention and hold elected officials accountable. Let your Representatives know your opinions. After all, they are supposed to work for you!

ABOUT INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

Independent Women's Forum (IWF) is dedicated to building support for free markets, limited government, and individual responsibility.

IWF, a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) research and educational institution, seeks to combat the too-common presumption that women want and benefit from big government, and build awareness of the ways that women are better served by greater economic freedom. By aggressively seeking earned media, providing easy-to-read, timely publications and commentary, and reaching out to the public, we seek to cultivate support for these important principles and encourage women to join us in working to return the country to limited, Constitutional government.

We rely on the support of people like you! Please visit us on our website www.iwf.org to get more information and consider making a donation to IWF.

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