

and dictatorship.

Today, many citizens still see their right to bear arms as an important means of self-defense; they also fear that gun control would be the first step towards the people's rights being removed little by little. You can't carry your guns around in public.

Now you can't own these specific guns. Now your guns need to be under lock and key at all times. Soon you can't have any guns at all—time to amend the Constitution. That's an exaggeration, but you get my point. You give an inch and the government could take a mile.

Reason #3: Mass shooters don't follow the law. Studies show that most criminals come by their guns illegally, often by theft or underground purchases. This allows them to completely bypass stringent background checks and other regulations. For example, Connecticut has one of the nation's most strict gun laws. Gun owners must be 21 or older, apply for a local permit, be fingerprinted for a background check, wait for a 14-day period, and take a gun safety course.

But that didn't stop Adam Lanza from simply stealing guns and killing 20 children and six adults at the Newtown shooting. Additional gun regulations would not have done anything to prevent the tragedy. Additional gun laws would also be difficult to enforce. Even Vice President Joe Biden admitted that the administration lacks the time to enforce existing gun laws on background checks, saying to an NRA representative, "We simply don't have the time or manpower to prosecute everybody who lies on a form, that checks a wrong box, that answers a question inaccurately."

Reason #4: Getting rid of guns does not get rid of violence. Some people think that if we just get rid of guns, violence will lower dramatically. Those people are naive, especially when only 2.6 percent of all murders are committed with some type of rifle.

Thomas Jefferson once quoted criminologist Cesare Beccaria on the dangers of disarming citizens. He said, "Laws that forbid the carrying of arms... disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. ...Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man."

Criminals would continue finding ways to illegally acquire guns while robbing and attacking law-abiding citizens who suddenly have no means of self-defense.

Reason #5: The cause of mass shootings isn't guns; it is mental health. "Guns don't kill people, people kill people" at first seems like a stupid pro-gun argument. It sounds juvenile, and it is much too easy for liberals to counter with, "Well, people need the guns to kill people," which is true.

The point is, we need to target the source of the problem, not the tools used. We need to talk about mental illness and how we can help provide services, resources and other support to those who need it. One mother posted her struggles with her mentally ill son onto her website titled "The Anarchist Soccer Mom." She writes about how her son transitions between a sweet boy who loves Harry Potter and a terrifying, screaming boy who threatens to kill her. She pleads for people to realize the real problem behind mass shootings:

"I am sharing this story because I am Adam Lanza's mother. I am Dylan Klebold's and Eric Harris's mother. I am James Holmes's mother. I am Jared Loughner's mother. I am Seung-Hui Cho's mother. And these boys—and their mothers—need help. In the wake of another horrific national tragedy, it's easy to talk about guns. But it's time to talk about mental illness."