



It's the right time to discuss change

Six days after two children and a young adult were murdered at the Gilroy Garlic Festival, I texted my son-in-law to find out if his family and friends were safe after the mass shooting in his hometown of El Paso where 22 people died and dozens more were wounded. Within hours, nine more people were killed and 27 wounded in another shooting in Dayton, Ohio.

It was a horrible week of mass murders in random public places at the hands of unstable young white men with hateful, radical views. Why do we continue to allow these angry young men to have access to weapons that slay our loved ones in mere seconds? While many of us would enact gun safety laws in an instant if we had the power, we instead watch helplessly on the sidelines as our politicians acquiesce to the gun lobby and those who insist their right to own weapons of war is more important than the people gunned down to fulfill some dark fantasy of a disturbed mind.

As the Ohio governor tried to comfort Dayton residents after the murders, his words were drowned out by frustrated and angry chants of "Do Something!" Republicans quickly blamed Democrats calling for gun reform for "politicizing" the tragedies and were quick to fault everyone but themselves for the slaughter. Ohio legislator Candice Keller blamed President Obama, video games, fatherlessness and "the breakdown of the traditional American family (thank you, transgender, homosexual marriage and drag queen advocates)" for the mass shootings.

Nevada received much deserved criticism in regard to the Gilroy murders as the 19-year-old gunman purchased his AK-47-type assault rifle from Fallon firearms dealer Big Mike's Guns and Ammo. The owner posted his anguish over the sale on social media, saying "We feel so very sorry for the families, I am heartbroken this could ever happen. ... I have always said we will sell to good people and have done everything we can to make

sure this happens. ... I would never ever sell any firearm to anyone who acted wrong or looks associated with any bad group like white power." Apparently Big Mike's system for separating good from evil wasn't functioning that fateful day.

California's Governor Gavin Newsom was understandably furious at Nevada's lax gun laws which allow the purchase of assault weapons by minors under 21. After visiting victims at the hospital, he told reporters "You can't put borders up to a neighboring state where you can buy this damn stuff legally. ... I have no problem with the Second Amendment. You have a right to bear arms, but not weapons of goddamned mass destruction."

Nevada's legislators did pass gun safety legislation this year (voter-approved universal background checks, a bump stock ban, stricter gun storage requirements, and a "red flag" law to allow a court to take away guns from an unstable person), but they could have done more to protect us. Legislators refused provisions

allowing local communities to enact stronger gun safety laws, caving to union leaders who claimed gun shows might take their business elsewhere. We should be so lucky.

Sadly, Gov. Steve Sisolak quietly abandoned his own campaign promise to ban assault rifles, forgoing even the introduction of a bill, much less a concerted effort to pass it.

In a state so eager to call special legislative sessions whenever a millionaire promises jobs in return for taxpayer-funded subsidies, there's no excuse for shrugging off the reforms that are considered "too hard" or too contentious to debate. Nevada Democrats control state government. They should be leaders in banning the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. They should raise the minimum age for purchasing any firearm to 21. They should do these things now, in a special session, with a laser focus on preventing additional tragedies. □

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