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For information or to volunteer:
 Email us at newsletter@tenthdems.org
 Or visit our website at www.tenthdems.org
 Or call us at 847.266.VOTE (8683)
 Or write to Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Chair,
 Tenth Dems, P.O. Box 523, Deerfield, IL 60015

Editor: Barbara Altman

Editorial Staff:

Joan Attenberg, Susan Friedman,
 Adrienne Kirshbaum, Allan Sperling

Contributors:

Barbara Altman, Tom Boyd, Jacob G.
 Goodman, Lee Goodman, Bill Jenkins,
 Rabbi David Oler, Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

Design: Terry Wrem Jones

Distribution: Ravi Ganapathy, Glenn Stier

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A Pediatrician's Perspective on Gun Safety

by Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

We were all shocked and saddened by the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown last December. For the American public this is another horrible crime caused by weapons whose sole intent is to kill. We must say, "Enough is enough." It is time to stop the killing that has taken so many innocent lives. We need to come together as a community to keep our schools and homes safe. No child should be afraid to attend school. No parent should be afraid to send a child to school.

As a pediatrician, one of my most disturbing encounters was



when a young patient of mine was shot in the head by his friend who discovered a gun in the home. The parents had not considered that an antique gun was dangerous and had left it on display. But the two boys found a bullet to load into the gun.

From that time on, I began asking my patients' families whether there was a gun in the house. Surprisingly, many families had guns in their homes without realizing the potential harm to their children.

According to the American

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Tenth News

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Tenth Dems University Sponsors Panel on Gun Safety

by Barbara Altman

Tenth Dems University's first program for 2013, "Guns and Public Safety: Where We Stand after Sandy Hook," drew a standing-room-only audience to the Vernon Area Public Library on Monday evening, January 7. A panel of three activists against gun violence painted a compelling picture of the ongoing dangers to our society posed by the ready availability of guns in America.

The program was moderated by Mark Rosenberg, M.D., a pediatrician who understands better than most the post-traumatic stress youngsters experience after exposure to gun violence, whether as surviving victims, as witnesses, or as friends or relatives of victims.

Jodi Doane, a member of BradyPAC Illinois, focused on the Illinois state legislature's role in promoting gun safety. Doane talked about the surprising gaps in gun-safety legislation, even in our state. For example, even though merchants must subject gun buyers to a waiting period and background check, there is no regulation whatsoever of private, citizen-to-citizen sales of firearms. Doane also revealed that in most of our communities there is no authority to which a gun owner can report the loss or theft of weapons. Moreover, there is no repository where an individual can "turn in" guns that inadvertently come into his or



her possession, as, for example, following the death of a parent who was a gun owner.

Doane was followed by Bill Jenkins, a gun safety activist and the author of *What to Do When the Police Leave: A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss*. Jenkins knows about traumatic loss; in 1997 his 16-year-old son was shot to death by armed robbers.

With the aid of a fact-filled and emotionally compelling slide presentation, Jenkins set out to educate the audience about the meaning of the Second Amendment, the effects of gun ownership on the public health, the effects of gun safety legislation on

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crime statistics, current trends in gun ownership, and the nature and purpose of the NRA. Jenkins emphasized that the Second Amendment may protect ownership of guns by individual citizens, but it in no way prohibits regulation of that ownership. He pointed out that 20 percent of gun owners own 60 percent of the guns in private hands, which means that gun owners with arsenals are a small minority of the already small number of Americans who own any guns at all. Jenkins showed with graphs that there is no discernible correlation between the crime rate in a given state and its gun laws, debunking the myth that concealed carry laws reduce crime. He also cited statistics to show that documented use of guns defensively is miniscule, whereas there is a documented higher rate of suicide among gun owners.

Jenkins explained that gun ownership has been decreasing in the last decades and posited that this decrease has driven the NRA's efforts to frighten Americans into buying more guns (as in the recent claim that "good guys" need guns to stop crime). "It's all about the



money," Jenkins said. A small minority is driving the debate and "we're being played for suckers" by the NRA, whose leaders' overriding goal is to sell more guns.

Lee Goodman, a member of the Stop Concealed Carry Coalition, segued from Jenkins' fact-bound presentation to charge that the NRA "makes up its own facts," likening this group's spokesmen to the tobacco executives who for decades used physicians in advertising to support their claim that smoking was good for people's health.

In contrast to Jenkins, who identified himself as owning a gun, Goodman called for getting rid of private ownership of guns altogether. In his view, if the NRA succeeds in blocking reasonable regulation, the rest of us should start a movement to repeal the Second Amendment. Positing that emotions can be stronger than reason, Goodman suggested combatting the NRA's evocation of fear with an evocation of peace and organized the singing of "Kumbaya" during the event.

Although they did not agree about the wisdom of every proposed solution to the crisis they described, each of the presenters



Top and left: A standing-room-only crowd of citizens gathered to hear the Gun Safety panel; Second row: left, Bill Jenkins shares some statistics about gun ownership and gun safety; middle, Karen McCormick, Northfield Township Clerk, welcomes the crowd to the event; right, Lee Goodman, representing Stop Concealed Carry, listens to a co-presenter; Bottom: John Lesiotis, candidate for West Deerfield Township Trustee, closes the program.

shared personal stories both heartbreaking and frightening and cited statistics that help explain why gun deaths in the United States exceed the number of deaths to Americans in all our wars combined. And all of them shared the view that the NRA, which has dominated the politics of firearms regulation in the U.S., is no longer representative of citizen gun owners but, rather, is an arm of the weapons industry.

The program ended with exhortations to political action; audience members were urged to sign petitions and call their representatives. A question-and-answer session provoked some

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Mark Rosenberg, M.D., moderates the January program on gun safety.

Academy of Pediatrics, safe storage means that guns are unloaded and locked away separate from ammunition. (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/130/5/e1416.full.pdf>) Only one in three households that own guns and have children under 18 years of age report safe storage of the guns in their homes.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that in 2010 of

nearly 27,000 deaths in children and young adults, approximately 7,000 deaths were caused by gun-related injuries. The American Academy of Pediatrics cites gun deaths as the third highest cause of death among American youth. With mortality rates of that magnitude, the proliferation of gun-related violence should be considered a public health crisis. For that reason, many physicians question families about gun ownership and potential harm to children in the home, as we do about car seat safety and texting while driving. Safety should always be a consideration in a physician's examining room. Unfortunately, guns are subject to fewer consumer safety regulations than are teddy bears.

Buried within the Affordable Care Act of 2010, in section 2716, is a little-known clause entitled "Protection of Second Amendment Gun Rights." The clause was inserted by Montana Congressman Denny Rehberg and supported by Nevada Senator Harry Reid. (Incidentally, Rehberg, who in November lost his bid to become a U.S. Senator, voted against the Affordable Care Act and then voted multiple times to repeal it.) The Rehberg amendment states that no individual shall be required to disclose information relating to lawful use or storage of firearms during the course of a doctor visit. The collection of data relating to lawful possession and ownership of firearms and ammunition is also prohibited.

A Florida law, later permanently enjoined by the courts, subjected physicians to a felony charge and loss of their state licenses if they discussed information about firearms safety that was determined not relevant or "unnecessarily harassing." Clearly, the intent of the Florida legislation was to intimidate physicians from effectively pursuing valid safety concerns with a patient.

Laws like these add to our children's risk of serious harm or death from guns. What is needed is legislation that will protect our children.

Following the Sandy Hook shootings, Vice President Biden was appointed by President Obama to lead a commission to seek out opinions from various interest groups, including medical professionals, mental health professionals, educators, and the National Rifle Association, and report back to him by the end of January. It was widely expected that most of the following legislative recommendations would be included in this report:

- Reinstatement of the ban on the sale of military-style assault weapons to the general public
- A ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines to the public
- A ban on Internet sales of firearms
- Action against unregulated sales by dealers who sell large quantities of firearms to individuals
- Implementation of a mandatory waiting period before receipt of a purchased firearm
- Closure of the gun show loophole (i.e., requiring background checks and waiting periods for firearm sales at gun shows as are required at permanent retailers)
- Restoration of funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct firearm-related research

The NRA has called for further efforts at mental health screening as the sole response to the recent shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. As physicians, we do that as an important part of our regular well visits. As a corollary to that, we should be asking

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Risk Of An Unlocked Gun In The Home – Some Statistics

- An estimated 41 percent of gun-related homicides and 94 percent of gun-related suicides would not occur under the same circumstances had no guns been present.
- A firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide by a factor of three to five.
- Of youths who committed suicide with firearms, 82 percent obtained the firearm from their homes, usually a parent's firearm.
- Among gun-owning parents who reported that their children had never handled their firearms at home, 22 percent of the children said that they had handled the parents' firearms.
- For every time a gun injures or kills in self-defense, it is used:
 - 11 times for completed and attempted suicides;
 - seven times in criminal assaults and homicides; and
 - four times in unintentional shooting deaths or injuries.

Pediatrician's Perspective *continued from page 3*

whether there are guns present in the home, especially when there is risk of mental illness.

We will never know the mind and motive of the young man who tragically took the lives of those young children in Newtown, but what we do know is that he was at risk for mental instability and had guns readily available to him. If only someone had asked the question. **TD**

Editor's note: At a news conference on January 16 (after our newsletter's deadline), President Obama announced a plan that would include most of the items on the bulleted list on page 3. By executive order he has strengthened the existing laws requiring background checks and directed the CDC to research the causes of gun violence. And the President will ask Congress for legislation requiring universal background checks by sellers of guns – private as well as commercial, restoring the ban on military-style assault weapons, limiting ammunition magazines to 10 rounds, enhancing penalties for violations of gun-control laws, and putting more cops on the street. The NRA has expressed strong opposition to these executive actions and legislative proposals.

Tenth Dems Volunteer Rosenberg Spearheads American Academy of Pediatrics Petition for Gun Safety Legislation

Since the early 1990s, with the introduction of the Brady Bill in Congress, the American Academy of Pediatrics has supported a ban on assault weapons. Representing over 60,000 pediatricians in the United States, the AAP has responded to mass shootings over the years with calls to renew that ban, given the danger that our children face from weapons that are intended to kill. The AAP also has developed support materials to help the far-too-many pediatricians who have had to deal with grieving families in the face of fatal shootings.

Due to the persistence of Mark Rosenberg, M.D., a Tenth Dems volunteer who has taken a major role in advocating for gun safety, a petition calling on Congress to take action was circulated in late January to all AAP pediatricians. The petition reads:

By signing this petition, we stand in support of reasonable gun safety policies that ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines, and require universal background checks for gun purchases.

As child health advocates, we urge Congress to take action now on these policies.

Dr. Rosenberg hopes that with the introduction by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) of legislation that would ban assault-type weapons, as well as a number of other provisions advocated by President Obama, the support of thousands of pediatricians may help mobilize public attention to the problem of gun violence. **TD**

Not My Father's NRA

by Bill Jenkins

On December 21, 2012, the NRA lost its grip on America when it clearly demonstrated that it had lost its grip on reality. In the debacle that the NRA called a "press conference," the face and voice of the organization, Wayne LaPierre, showed us the real



NRA. Not the seemingly benign NRA that glad-hands gun owners and gives away franked swag at conventions and gun shows. No, in that half hour we saw the real NRA – the self-serving hydra of an organization now run by gun makers and gun dealers that is desperately trying to preserve profits in an era when guns are quickly losing their relevance.

I have been looking closely at the gun industry ever since my teenage son was shot and killed during a robbery at the fast food restaurant where he was working in Richmond, Virginia, in 1997. I have gone to their meetings, debated their representatives, and testified against them in Springfield; and I am convinced that today's NRA is not the NRA I grew up with in rural Maryland.

Today's NRA is paranoid, with a siege mentality that gives no quarter and complains bitterly and becomes belligerent when any mention of reasonable and necessary gun regulation is raised. Today's NRA hides behind a freely and wrongly interpreted Second Amendment that it uses solely to protect the financial interests of the gun industry, not the people of the United States. Today's NRA sacrifices our children on an iron altar, all the while crying crocodile tears for the victims and hoping we'll overlook its hypocrisy. And today's NRA actively fosters policies that protect a criminal's ability to purchase firearms at will because the shrinking legal market for guns is no longer able to support the industry in the manner to which it has become accustomed.

Not all NRA members are rabid individualists armed to the teeth and prepared to defend their "right to keep and bear arms" to their last breath. As many as 80 percent of NRA members don't agree with the NRA's leaders and their ideology. But the NRA does its level best to convert as many of them as possible, through fear-mongering and propaganda. When you become a member of the NRA, your mailbox quickly fills up with a steady stream of pleas, threats, and dire warnings.

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Declaring our Humanity by Singing “Kumbaya”

by Lee Goodman

At a recent program on gun violence sponsored by Tenth Dems University, I invited all present to sing “Kumbaya.” We were not frightened that the right wing would belittle us for naively thinking that compassion and love are more productive human emotions than fear, hatred, and anger. We joined hands and let our hearts find expression in song in a political forum.



Karen Singer, Tenth Dems volunteer extraordinaire, helps lead the audience in song, while Bill Jenkins provides guitar accompaniment.

For too long, we have pretended that human beings are wholly rational and that public policy can be formed without taking into account emotions and spirituality. We have let our legitimate concern about the separation of church and state isolate our party from the hope, comfort, strength, and meaning that some people find in religion and from the spiritual instinct that is present in most people, regardless of whether they adhere to a religious orientation. For too long, we have been afraid of labels like “liberal,” “progressive,” and “do-gooder,” and we have denied impulses, feelings, histories, and teachings that led us to take these paths.

The problem of gun violence in America will not be solved unless we allow ourselves to feel the pain of the families, friends, and entire communities who survive in the shadow of the slaughter. Nor will it be solved if we empathize but do not act. We will only

be able to free our world from the threat of guns if we have the courage to accept our humanity and the resolve to express it both in words and deeds. **TD**



NRA *continued from page 4*

Ironically, this propaganda has likely created the extremist cancer growing within the NRA’s own ranks. If the NRA had encouraged self-policing in the gun industry and promoted policies and legislation that would have led to responsible gun ownership and held gun owners more accountable, we would likely not be fighting it now; nor would we have suffered so many tragedies over the years.

Now, the NRA has finally reached too far. By suggesting, once again, that the only way to protect ourselves from dangerous people with guns is to enter an arms race that no one wins except the arms dealers, the NRA has enraged the public.

We are asking why we are bending over backwards to keep a small minority happy. We are no longer afraid of the bullying, the



lies, and the browbeating. And we will not let a mere 20 percent of the country control this discussion while the voices of the majority remain silent.

There was a point in the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, and the fight against big tobacco when the influence of deep pockets simply gave out in the face of public outcry. I believe, I hope, I pray that we are at that point in the gun safety movement. The victims of gun violence, the dead, the bereaved, and those living with horrific injuries, deserve better.

The gun industry must acknowledge the harm done by its products in the hands of those who should not handle them and come to the table to help us develop effective strategies that will curtail criminal access to firearms. The gun industry will lose money, certainly. It will have to downsize once criminals can no longer obtain illegal guns. But if there is any vestige of honor and humanity left, it is the only possible course, for all our sakes. **TD**

Gun Control - A Jewish Perspective

by Rabbi David Oler

Our country has become extremely violent, with the NRA, which is funded by, and actually led by, representatives of the gun manufacturing industry, now advocating that each school become an armed fortress to defend its students against potential attackers, after having advocated and accomplished a broad proliferation of assault weapons throughout America.

Our legislators, in the various states, and particularly in Congress, under pressure from the gun lobby, have made it possible for almost anyone to purchase an unlimited number of weapons, even automatic weapons which one would usually associate with the military.

The Second Amendment, which is used as the basis for legal gun ownership, is written in the context of the militia. Nothing is mentioned regarding individual ownership for self-protection or other personal purposes:

A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

Even Supreme Court rulings that the amendment does apply to the freedom of the individual to bear arms outside the context of militia service do not preclude strict laws to protect the citizenry from violent acts, such as a renewed ban on assault weapons, serious background checks, the prohibition of automatic weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. To “bear arms” does not mean the government has to allow weapons of any and every sort. The government controls the extent of emissions from automobiles and limits driving speed for safety purposes. Why should gun control be so difficult?

The United States has become the murder capital of the world. Once again, the populace is endangered because of the government’s catering to business interests, just as it does by not sufficiently protecting the environment.



The people must rise up and say: “Enough!” Representatives in government must listen to the will of the people, the majority of whom want gun control, in this and in other matters. We need to once and for all vote out of office those legislators and other officials who are under the undue influence of lobbyists. We need legislation to limit guns as well as lobbyist purchase of votes.

It is ironic that Australia, which was colonized with the settlement of British criminals, has, not long ago, successfully enacted very strict gun control, while the United States, which was colonized by religious groups seeking freedom from majority domination and which today continues to be much more religious than secular Western Europe, has such abhorrent, unbridled proliferation of guns throughout the land.

The Torah in Leviticus XIX:16 teaches: “Thou shall not stand idly by when the blood of your neighbor is being spilled.” We must work hard with those who will advocate for serious gun control. This is the time to write to the newspaper and to speak to others to galvanize support. This is the time to make your thoughts known to government officials in Washington and in Springfield. Only thereby will we do our part to bring about Isaiah’s vision of a time when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” (Isaiah II:4) **TD**

Armed and Dangerous

by Jacob G. Goodman

During this time of national tragedy following the Newtown shooting we have all heard people on the right shouting from the mountaintops that it shows we as a nation need more guns. We have heard them say that “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” We’ve been forced to witness news coverage of their goal – a constantly armed public – as if having little Johnny carrying an AR-15 to kindergarten isn’t absolute madness.

Ignoring the fact that America, already with the most heavily armed civilians on Earth, has the highest rate of gun homicides in the industrialized world, the idea that people being perpetually armed will actually stop shooters is not as clear-cut as they argue.

Back in 2011, when a madman shot Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, the crowd was filled with armed citizens. When asked after

the fact why none of them pulled out their guns to stop the shooter, you got a clear response. If anyone had pulled out a firearm on that day, it would have appeared to everyone else that there was a second shooter in the crowd, rather than a helpful vigilante.

Beyond the people immediately there, a local store owner heard the shooting and raced over with his own firearm to help. Arriving on the scene, he nearly shot at a man he saw holding a gun. That man? He had just wrestled said gun away from the shooter.

Instead of arguing that only good guys with guns can stop the bad guy with a gun, why not take the other logical step and stop the bad guy from ever getting his hands on a gun? **TD**

The author was a Tenth Dems intern in 2009.

A Gun Owner Reacts: One Man's Perspective on Gun Safety Legislation and the NRA

by Tom Boyd

I attended the Monday night event on guns. I observed there a good crowd, well-intentioned, and who I believe were just as horrified as I was when I learned of the shooting in the elementary school in Connecticut. Bill Jenkins' presentation was excellent, and although I consider myself quite knowledgeable about firearms and how the NRA has a stranglehold on the issue and our politicians, I learned a lot from Mr. Jenkins' presentation.

I know the NRA and its tactics and the ideology of its more vo-

ciferous members and supporters. I am a hunter and have been a gun owner for over 50 years and I've never, ever considered joining the NRA. Its existence and political influence is made possible by spreading paranoia among its members that somebody is going to take everyone's guns. What is needed is a measure, or measures, that will lessen gun violence and also weaken the NRA.

Please find below a letter I wrote to our state legislators that emphasized a measure that would save a few lives in the future and, at the same time, weaken the NRA's influence. The letter explains how my suggestion would weaken the NRA.

From the desk of... Tom Boyd

I am an Illinois resident and gun owner. Let me begin by saying how appalled and dismayed I have been recently by the dozens of victims of mass shootings in America over the last year. The Newtown massacre was one of the worst ever in that 20 of the victims were school children 6 or 7 years old. When I see children of this age at the local library, the grocery store, or the movie theater, I think of those victims of the Connecticut shooting. The reason I'm writing you is to help you understand just who is standing in the way of sensible gun legislation and how you can isolate this opposition and weaken them. Let's start with restricting the capacity of magazines to no more than 10 rounds. But also, your legislation has to be restricted to this measure and this measure only. Why? Because all of the other gun-related issues (background checks, "assault" weapons, gun show loopholes) are complicated and will be debated ad infinitum. Those who desire that 30-round clips for handguns or 100-round drum magazines for rifles be available to gun owners sound unreasonable and somewhat fanatical. This includes the NRA and the ISRA (Illinois State Rifle Association). Keep it simple - make these organizations defend their desire to have semi-automatic rifles with the capability of firing 100 rounds (as fast as the trigger can be pulled) available. One of their arguments will inevitably be that a potential mass shooter will just carry multiple 10-round clips with him and just reload in a matter of seconds for each clip. "A matter of seconds" ... In a matter of seconds, potential victims can run away, charge the shooter, hide behind something, call 911, and in "a matter of seconds" multiplied several times may provide time enough for law enforcement to arrive at the scene.

Being from a gun-owning and hunting family, I have owned and operated firearms for over 50 years and have seen what the NRA has become today, a magnet for fanatics who are so extreme that it seems they want every U.S. citizen to be perpetually armed and afraid that their rights are going to be taken away any minute.

Thank you,
Tom Boyd

Panel *continued from page 2*

audience members to share their own personal experiences with gun violence; several identified themselves as having lost friends and family members. One audience member spoke for many of the rest of us when he described his life to date as “bookended” by the fatal shooting nearly 50 years ago of President John F. Kennedy and last month’s slaughter in Newtown, Connecticut.

The importance and complexity of the issues discussed over the 90 or so minutes of the forum prompted us to invite participants to submit follow-up articles. And so we have devoted this issue of the *Tenth News* to a forum for those seeking to combat gun violence and find viable solutions to our national epidemic. **TD**



More photos from the Gun Safety panel: Top: left, Jodi Doane, representing BradyPac Illinois, talked about Illinois legislative initiatives; right, a member of the audience addresses the gathering. Bottom: The crowd pays rapt attention to the panel.



Tenth Dems Honor Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tenth Dems sponsored a table at the annual King Day breakfast in Waukegan, which was held on Saturday, January 19. Pictured: seated, Ilya Sheyman, State Rep. Rita Mayfield, Barbara Altman, Michelle Patino; standing: Chuck Gutman, Phil Carrigan, Juan Moncada, Vicki Bailyn, Larry McShane, Joe Dubaniewicz, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash. **TD**

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