

Candidate 4 evidence

The Case for Gun Control in the USA is Irrefutable



Image Credit [How gun control might be seen 100 years from now](#) | [Learn Liberty](#)

Word count 4929

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Introduction

Whoever it was that said, "The American Revolution was fought—and won—with guns, and the weapons have become ingrained in U.S. culture,"¹ certainly had the right idea. This is very apparent to anyone who has studied the USA for any length of time, as the United States has firearms ingrained into its culture on almost every level. But it is not just a historical fascination with the time period that these weapons are from. To this very day, firearms are very accessible across the nation. And not even just sidearms such as pistols, weapons such as the AK47 are quite easy to access, even by civilians. This is all due to the United States sacred written constitution, established in the 18th century. This was the second attempt of unifying the United States and it is still used to this day. The second amendment, which was introduced to Congress by future president James Madison in 1791 as part of the Bill of Rights, gives citizens the right to bear arms. This Bill of Rights is still in effect to this day. As a result of this law, people are getting hurt. People are dying. People are scared. The constitution and some people are unwilling to change. But the question is, should they?

Chapter 1 shall investigate the harm guns are causing to Americans with regards to why so many Americans own and love guns, due to the culture and history of the nation. It will also look at other nations to see if this gun problem is a uniquely American issue. Chapter 2 shall then investigate the response to events involving the combination of firearms and children, and how the UK reacted to similar events. Chapter 3 shall investigate why no new legislation is being introduced in the US, due to the issue of gun control moving away from crime and

¹ History.com Editors (2018). *Firearms*. [online] HISTORY. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/firearms> [Accessed Sep. 2023].

safety of the people towards a political issue. Due to the increasing polarisation of the political parties unfolding in the United States, as evidenced by the most recent president from each party, the issue of gun control continues to be divisive.

Word count 352

Research Methodology

To come to a conclusion if the case for gun control is insurmountable, I shall look through statistics, articles and books to find out facts on what guns can do, who they impact and what can be done. Given the distance between myself and the subject of the dissertation, I've had to use a range of books, news articles and videos to come to a conclusion about the pros and cons of gun control and to find out if the case for gun control really is insurmountable.

Gun control is as much a political issue as an issue of crime and public safety, so I will investigate the political response to serious gun crimes in the USA and other nations.

A variety of sources will be used, ranging from transcripts from the House of Commons to books published a century apart; from speeches by world leaders to news articles, historical articles and even facts about a certain cougar.

After a detour to the Wild West, the main source used in chapter 1 is "Gun Control: Guns in America- The Full Debate" by Christopher Street, along with the video series, "Guns and Public Health" by Healthcare Triage. Chapter 2 will use the transcript from the House of Commons from shortly after the Dunblane massacre, along with a documentary on the impact of the massacres on the communities after both Dunblane and Sandy Hook in America. Chapter 3 will use speeches from US presidents on the issue of gun control, ranging from the time of Ronald Reagan and the birth of the new right, to the modern era of Trump and Biden. The book "Political ideology today, Second edition" by Ian Adams will also be used to research why the political parties believe what they do about gun control,

along with news articles to find out the political response to events involving guns and their aftermath.

Word Count 314

Chapter 1 A Culture and the Consequences of Firearms

Guns were a critical part of the American revolution, as it allowed the Colonists to rebel against the British Empire. In the years after, guns became ingrained in US culture but were also used as a general tool for everyday life in points of US history, such as the era of manifest destiny. This was the belief originating around 1845, that it was the will of the mighty Lord to expand democracy and capitalism across the entire continent of North America.² Due to Settlers effectively going into a wild, untamed no man's land, it was wise to carry firearms to protect oneself from wild animals, outlaws, bandits, native Americans and other threats faced by the settlers. Guns were also used to hunt animals to gain provisions. However, the thing most people miss is that most frontier towns had some level of firearm control. By the 1880s, there were calls for gun control as the leaders of frontier towns had experienced lawlessness and the trouble that guns could bring. One response to this was thought up by the leaders of Miles City who wanted to ban guns in the town boundaries³ This isn't some revisionist idea as a book by Andy Adams, thought to be the most historically accurate account of life on the frontier had this to say; "Dodge is one town where the average bad man of the West not only finds his equal, but finds himself badly handicapped. The buffalo hunters and range men have protested against the iron rule of Dodge's peace officers and nearly every protest has cost human life."⁴ This shows that even in the 19th century people saw the potential destruction guns could cause, and they were people protesting it. However, obviously this was

² HISTORY.COM EDITORS (2010). *Manifest Destiny*. [online] HISTORY. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/manifest-destiny> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2023].

³ Collins, R. (1999). *Gun control in the Old West*. [online] www.ndsu.edu. Available at: <https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/~rcollins/scholarship/guns.html>.

⁴ Adams, A. (2023). *The Log of a Cowboy*. BERGENLINE Press

centuries ago. The days of guns being a necessary survival tool for nearly every person are gone ².

As, arguably, the days of supposed lawlessness are long gone.

However, the cultural impact is still significant. To this day, firearms are used for sport, protection and hunting. However, in most urban areas such as towns and cities there is extraordinarily little threat from predators. In the frontier, one such predator was the cougar, also known as the mountain lion. However, in the 21st century in the state of California, there is a small population of approximately two dozen mountain lions near the city of Los Angeles, the most populated city in the state. In fact, there are so few mountain lions near a populated area, that the media was captivated by one mountain lion by the name of "P22" for a decade. ⁵ The main take away from this article is that getting randomly attacked by a mountain lion or other predator, while living your everyday life in an urban environment, is close to impossible.

However, the biggest case for greater restrictions on firearms is always linked to crime and violence, and those who could potentially misuse them. The main thing those who want greater gun control point to is how easy it is to access a firearm, which results in a concerning number of firearms being unregistered. This obviously brings in numerous concerns for public safety. Several reports have found that the USA has more guns than people, as there is approximately 120 guns for every 100 people. ⁶ This concurs with the high level of homicide rates found in the USA compared to other nations. A 2016 study found that the USA had 25 times the number of firearms compared to the

⁵ Sather, P. (2023). Remembering P-22 The Famous Los Angeles Mountain Lion that Stalked Celebrity Backyards. Available at: <https://a-z-animals.com/blog/remembering-p-22-the-famous-los-angeles-mountain-lion-that-stalked-celebrity-backyards/>.

⁶ Black, T. (2022). Americans Have More Guns Than Anywhere Else in the World and They Keep Buying More. *Bloomberg.com*. [online] 25 May. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-25/how-many-guns-in-the-us-buying-spree-bolsters-lead-as-most-armed-country> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2024].

other nations looked at. In 2022, there were 6.3 homicides per 100,000 people or 63 per 1 million people.⁷ In 2022/23 England and Wales had 10.1 homicides per million people.⁸ One of the biggest differences between the nations mentioned are laws on guns and this will be explored in chapter 2.

This isn't an extremely recent thing either, as in 2011 for every 100,000 UK residents, 0.06 were victims of gun homicide. In 2014 in the USA, there were 3.43 dead out of 100,000 people due to gun homicide. This shows that from an identical sample size there was over 57 times the amount of gun homicides in the USA. A 2016 study by the United Nations found that the USA had 112.6 guns per 100 people (which has since risen to 120 in the most recent survey, as previously stated). The UK had 6.6 per 100 people.⁹ This shows that at greater access to guns increases gun ownership, and consequently, increases the rate of crime.

Therefore, the USA is firmly at the top in terms of gun ownership. The USA has 148% more guns than its closest rival Switzerland.⁹ The USA's culture has a strange combination of people obsessed with liberty, but also the right to have guns, even though the days of conscription in the USA ended over half a century ago in 1973.¹⁰ Around 85 other nations still have some form of conscription or basic

⁷ Buchholz, K. (2023). *Infographic: U.S. Homicide Rate Comes Down From Pandemic Peak*. [online] Statista Daily Data. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/31062/us-homicide-rate/#:~:text=A%20new%20report%20from%20the> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2024].

⁸ Clark, D. (2024). *Homicides in England and Wales 2023*. [online] Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283093/homicides-in-england-and-wales/#:~:text=There%20were%20602%20homicides%20recorded>.

⁹ Street, C. (2016). *Gun control : Guns in America: The full debate*. Christopher Street Page 72

¹⁰ Selective Service System. (n.d.). *History and Records*. [online] Available at: <https://www.sss.gov/history-and-records/#:~:text=From%201948%20until%201973%2C%20during>.

training such as North Korea, Turkey and Egypt.¹¹ Another nation with conscription is Switzerland, where the majority of Swiss men undergo rifle training amongst other things, and they can keep the weapon at the end of their service. As of 2016, about 50% of the population is in possession of a gun. However, to acquire anything other than a single shot hunting rifle, there is a minefield of paperwork, and automatic weapons are banned for home use. There are also rules on how the guns are stored.⁹

There is undoubtedly some correlation between the number of guns and the number of homicides in the USA. For a more direct, geographically closer comparison, we can look at Seattle in the USA and Vancouver in British Columbia in Canada. After a 1988 study, it was discovered that 12% of people in Vancouver owned firearms compared to 41 % of those in Seattle. This is over three times as many. However, gun-related homicide were 5 times as prevalent in Seattle. This shows that the abundance of guns in the hands of the average citizen causes greater loss of life.¹² This is further substantiated by looking at the top ten states in terms of gun ownership and homicide rates. In 2013 six out of ten of these states were also in the top ten states for homicides, of which 70% were carried out with guns.¹³ However while there is undoubtedly some correlation there isn't exactly a smoking gun to say

¹¹ Zubova, X. (2021). *Which countries still have conscription?* [online] Forces Network. Available at: <https://www.forces.net/world/which-countries-still-have-conscription>.

¹² Homicide and Firearms: Guns and Public Health Part 2. (2017). *YouTube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mh5mMm7IECU> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2024].

¹³ Street, C. (2016). *Gun control : Guns in America: The full debate*. Christopher Street. Page 69.

that guns alone are the sole cause of increased violence as some nations such as Norway have higher rates of gun ownership compared to the UK, but have lower homicide rates (0.10-gun homicides a year per 100,000 residents). However, it needs to be acknowledged that the USA has a unique cultural practice of borderline obsession with guns and other weapons, which means the collection of guns is more widespread compared to similar nations such as Canada. As a consequence, guns are easier to acquire, as evidenced by the aforementioned 'more guns than people' statistic.

However, one of the biggest issues regarding access to guns is suicide. In 2012 there were 33,363 firearm related deaths in the USA and 62% were the result of suicide. Suicide by other means often takes some level of planning. A rope must be positioned. A building must be climbed. All a gun needs is to be shot. To see the difference in effectiveness the statistics show that attempts with poison or overdose succeed about 2% of the time. With guns its 85% of the time¹⁴. This shows how effective guns are as a means of suicide. One of the biggest issues is how youths can make impulsive decisions to end their life. Guns in general also pose significant dangers to other young people, as shall be explored in chapter 2.

However, guns don't have to end the life of the shooter or their victim to pose a threat and cause damage. Other offences that involve guns such as assault and robbery affect hundreds of 1000s every year. For example, in 2011, 467,321 Americans were victims of gun crime including those aforementioned examples¹⁵ indicating that this issue has been on-going for a considerable length of time. It should also be noted that the second amendment was introduced to congress in the 18th

¹⁴ Firearms and Suicide: Guns and Public Health Part 3. (2017). *YouTube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75aYIGCecc> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2024].

¹⁵ National Institute of Justice. (2019). *Gun Violence in America*. [online] Available at: <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/gun-violence-america> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2024].

century.¹⁶ The most powerful firearms in that time were muskets. They had very little threat to people in terms of range and ammo capacity compared to the modern-day assault rifles such as the AR-15, which has at least 9 times the range of the musket from the time the second amendment was written.¹⁷ This shows that when the second amendment was ratified, firearms posed less threat to citizens compared to the modern era. The law has not changed as guns have advanced and become more deadly. Due to the culture that has developed over the centuries, imposing any restrictions on firearms will be very difficult to convince some Americans to do.

Word Count 1326

¹⁶ The White House (n.d.). *The Constitution*. [online] The White House. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-constitution/> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2024].

¹⁷ www.youtube.com. (2016). *Musket vs. AR-15: How Do They Compare? | Tech Guts | WIRED*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM3vIPPNFVM> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2024].

Chapter 2 US & UK Response to Gun violence in schools

The abundance and availability of guns in the USA means that shootings are commonplace. There is a ratio of 1.20 Guns to 1 person as of 2024 as stated in chapter 1. By the time 2023 ended there had been 656 mass shootings in The United States of America.¹⁸ That is almost two every day for a year. One of the places that has seen the most gun violence is schools. By the end of 2023 there were 348 incidents involving both a school and a firearm.¹⁹ One of the most devastating shootings to occur in the USA regarding school was the Sandy Hook massacre which occurred on December 1, 2012, in which 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 children of the ages of six & seven. Six teachers also died during the shooting. The shooting at Sandy Hook was rightfully condemned. On the same day POTUS at the time, President Barack Obama, gave a speech from the White House where he gave condolences to Connecticut Governor Malloy and proclaimed the shooting as a tragedy. President Obama then said "As a country, we have been through this too many times. Whether it's an elementary school in Newtown, or a shopping mall in Oregon, or a temple in Wisconsin, or a movie theatre in Aurora, or a street corner in Chicago -- these neighbourhoods are

¹⁸ Gun Violence Archive (2023). *Gun Violence Archive*. [online] Gunviolencearchive.org. Available at: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].

¹⁹ Riedman, D. (2023). *K-12 school shooting database*. [online] K-12 School Shooting Database. Available at: <https://k12ssdb.org/> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].

our neighbourhoods, and these children are our children. And we're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics."²⁰

This showed that the issue of guns was prevalent across the entire union along with a willingness by President Obama to work across the political spectrum for the greater good, while he was commander in chief. A month after the Sandy Hook massacre, the assault weapons ban of 2013 was proposed by Senator Diane Feinstein. However, it was defeated 60/40 in the Senate. The bill would have made it mandatory for background checks from online retailers and at gun shows. This shows that even then, this was a highly contentious issue. Another bill, named the Manchin-Toomey proposal, was proposed. This bill did get majority support at 54/46 but didn't reach the 3/5th majority agreed upon, so the bill also failed at the federal level. However, the principle of the bills found success in a few states including New York, which had a Democratic Governor, Andrew Cuomo, at the time. Another state which adopted these proposals was Connecticut - the state where the Sandy Hook massacre took place.²¹ The then Governor Dannel Malloy was also a Democrat. It is important to note that these governors and President Obama belonged to the Democratic party, as

²⁰ President Obama Makes a Statement on the Shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. (2012). *YouTube*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIA0W69U2_Y [Accessed 8 Dec. 2023].

²¹ www.britannica.com. (n.d.). *Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting - The aftermath of Sandy Hook and the legislative response* | *Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sandy-Hook-Elementary-School-shooting/The-aftermath-of-Sandy-Hook-and-the-legislative-response#ref1258399> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2023].

they are the party who see gun control as a pressing matter²² Even to this day, very little has been done at the federal level in terms of Gun Control legalisation.

On the other hand, the UK has not had a school shooting since before the turn of the millennium. The last shooting was in Dunblane in 1996. This one shooting rocked the nation and made it reconsider the legality of firearms. All high calibre firearms were banned. This was then expanded upon by the next parliament led by Labour party leader Tony Blair who stated, "It is clear that only the strictest firearms laws can provide maximum safety. The Conservatives failed to offer the protection required." Labour led the call for an outright ban on all handguns in general civilian use. "There will be legislation to allow individual MPs a free vote for a complete ban on handguns". The Secretary of State Jack Shaw was quoted as saying in response to that tragedy that, "the previous Parliament passed the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 which banned all higher-calibre handguns. We supported it, but, in our view, it did not go far enough." This shows the left leaning party of the UK expanding the work of the previous right-wing Government, which would be an unthinkable idea in the USA. There was also a quote from the House of commons from June 11th, 1997, from Jack Shaw which reads as follows "For only one indication of the extent of public support for a complete handgun ban, I draw the attention of the House to the results of an opinion poll in The Daily Telegraph last Friday, which showed that 83 percent of those 1161 polled approved of the Government's proposed ban on all handguns."²³

²² democrats.org (2019). *Preventing Gun Violence - Democrats*. [online] Democrats. Available at: <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/preventing-gun-violence/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2023].

²³ Anon, (1997). *Firearms (Amendment) Bill*. [online] Available at: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1997-06-11/debates/a2bd789e-98b1-4ece-88ac-4365c24e6705/Firearms\(Amendment\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1997-06-11/debates/a2bd789e-98b1-4ece-88ac-4365c24e6705/Firearms(Amendment)Bill) [Accessed 14 Dec. 2023].

After a national tragedy that occurred solely in Scotland, the entire sovereign State of the UK supported a gun control bill. There was then a buy-back scheme costing £150 million in which people could be reimbursed after surrendering their weapons to law enforcement at designated police stations.²⁴ "The Secretary of State shall, in accordance with a scheme made by him, make payments in respect of firearms and ammunition surrendered at designated police stations in accordance with the arrangements made by him under section 15 above." This shows the government was willing to spend its money, taxpayers' money, on removing guns (in this case 162,000 guns and 700 pounds of ammunition) out of the homes of the general populace. After the Sandy Hook massacre, a short documentary was made about how the communities of Sandy Hook and Dunblane dealt with their respective tragedies. The documentary ended with a statement saying "Following the 1996 Dunblane massacre the United Kingdom passed some of the toughest gun reform legislation in the world. Since the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre, while some states including Connecticut passed tougher gun laws, little has been done in the United States"²⁵The documentary was more about the impact on the local community than the actual legislation passed, and it showed how shockingly similar the two tragic shootings were. Both were terrible events that put the unknown Dunblane and Sandy Hook in the minds of their country and the world. This should have paved the way for similar measures to the UK being put into action in the USA. However, that obviously was not the case as on a federal level nothing has happened. And a key difference is that

²⁴ Solly, M. (2021). *How the 1996 Dunblane Massacre Pushed the U.K. to Enact Stricter Gun Laws*. [online] Smithsonian Magazine. Available at: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-1996-dunblane-massacre-pushed-uk-enact-stricter-gun-laws-180977221/> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2023].

²⁵ *Notes from Dunblane: Lesson from a School Shooting*. (2018). [Streamed] Netflix.

Dunblane was the outlier. A freak tragedy that should never happen again. In the USA, Sandy Hook was tragically just another school shooting. To some people in the USA, school shootings have become accepted as something that could happen statistically. And the fact remains is that change has to come from the government the people choose. In the UK at the time of Dunblane, both main political parties (Labour and Conservative) believed in some degree of gun control. In the United States, the issue is becoming more entrenched along party lines. Any decision on gun control by either side will indisputably be reversed when the other side achieves election success.

Word Count 1164

Chapter 3 The Politics of the Problem

Despite all the recent tragedies that have unfolded, gun control has become a huge political issue in the USA as the two main parties, the Republican Grand Old Party (GOP) and the Democrats are polar opposite in the matter. The GOP is the right-wing party of the USA. They believe in the ideology of conservatism. This ideology means that they want to keep things as they are as much as possible. In the USA, due to firearms having such a deep cultural tradition, Republicans are opposed to legislation that would make it harder to acquire guns. In contrast, the Democratic party follows a branch of liberalism which in simplest terms is open to new ideas. In regard to US Gun control, this means they are open to the idea of change.

This means compromise is near impossible, especially as the GOP moves further and further right, meaning they oppose any control on weapons even more stringently. The drastic shift to the right occurred as a consequence of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s, which resulted in POTUS 37 Richard Nixon resigning. By the end of the Carter Administration, the GOP had been taken over by the new right with the old left-wing shrivelled. The New Right GOP found their champion in Ronald Reagan who was elected President. A relevant decision he made was to put America in serious government debt due to his determination to

massively increase expenditure on defence.²⁶ It could be argued that this laid the groundwork for the GOP's current views on gun control. Ironically at a speech at the University of Southern California in 1989, Reagan is quoted saying "But I do believe that an AK-47, a machine gun, is not a sporting weapon or needed for the defence of the home."²⁷

Another factor is that the NRA (National Rifle Association) have considerable influence in lobbying. Starting in the 1970s, the focus shifted from using guns to defending the right to bear arms as granted by the second amendment. The NRA often fund Republican candidates' campaigns for offices such as the Presidency.²⁸ In April 2023 several hopeful GOP Presidential Candidates including Trump's VP Mike Pence went to the NRA's national convention to show support for the second amendment.²⁹ This shows how much power they have. In contrast, the Democratic party wants to strengthen background checks and

²⁶ Adams, I. (2001). *Political ideology today*. Manchester Angleterre: Manchester University Press.

²⁷ www.youtube.com. (1989). *Ron Reagan on Gun Control - Feb 6, 1989*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG4V_6pCLVo [Accessed 28 Nov. 2023].

²⁸ Rushe, D. (2018). *Why is the National Rifle Association so powerful?* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/17/nra-gun-lobby-gun-control-congress>.

²⁹ Ulmer, A. (2023). *Pence booed at NRA gathering even as he seeks to move right of Trump on guns*. [online] Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-other-2024-hopefuls-look-nras-blessing-amid-spate-shootings-2023-04-14/> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2023].

strongly disapprove of how much power the NRA has.³⁰ A piece of evidence to support this is the 2023 State of the Union Address from POTUS 46 Joe Biden. During this speech he yelled "Ban assault weapons ban them now!"³¹ This was further displayed in the 2024 State of the Union Address where President Biden demanded for assault weapons and high-capacity magazines to be banned. He also demanded universal background checks.³²

This is in great contrast to Trump's last State of the Union address where he said, "Just as we believe in the First Amendment, we also believe in another constitutional right that is under siege all across our country. So long as I am president, I will always protect your Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms."³³ This shows the contrast between the views of the most recent GOP and Democratic presidents on gun control. It is near impossible to get a bill to restrict gun ownership passed as there is a GOP Majority in the

³⁰ democrats.org (2019b). *Preventing Gun Violence - Democrats*. [online] Democrats. Available at: <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/preventing-gun-violence/> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2023].

³¹ www.youtube.com. (2023). *Watch President Biden's full 2023 State of the Union address*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFxDFq-Cd1Y> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2023].

³² NBC News (2024). *Watch President Biden's full 2024 State of the Union address*. [online] www.youtube.com. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=al7ont2noYA> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2024].

³³ Washington Post (2020). *Watch Trump's full 2020 State of the Union speech*. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xb1xHhGJjK> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2023].

118th congress. A bill is unlikely to make it as far as President Biden, and even if it did it wouldn't be a bill that restricted very much. A New York times article from March 2023 claims that after mass shootings, Republican law makers are expanding access to guns³⁴. A bill working its way through the 118th congress at this moment, H.R.1508, known as the Travellers Guns Rights seeks to grant more access to firearms for individuals who don't reside in any state.³⁵ This was, as expected, introduced by a Republican. Any form of gun control would require some type of bipartisanship from all branches of government, which is near impossible given the current political climate of the United States. However there may be some hope. In June 2022, after yet another school shooting this time in Uvalde, Texas, negotiations occurred. After some negotiations, a bill about gun control made it through congress after near three decades of inaction. With a 41-vote majority, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was passed. This bill had increased mental health checks amongst potential gun owners. This is far from what the Democratic party have been demanding, but it is a start.³⁶ However, this was the 117th congress so anything further is unlikely in the current 118th congress due to the Republican majority.

³⁴ Baker, M., Kovalski, S.F. and Thrush, G. (2023). After Mass Shootings, Republicans Expand Access to Guns. *The New York Times*. [online] 30 Mar. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/29/us/nashville-gun-laws.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2024].

³⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/>. (2023). Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1508> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2024].

³⁶ Cochrane, E. (2022). Congress Passes Bipartisan Gun Legislation, Clearing It for Biden. *The New York Times*. [online] 24 Jun. Available at:

This all comes down to interpretation of the Second Amendment. In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled at a 5-4 split during the case of District of Columbia V Heller that the second amendment is to be interpreted as the individual right rather than collective right.³⁷ This means that the amendment gives rights to individual citizens to have guns, if necessary, to form a militia, but not for state armies. But there is still on-going debate over if it meant all firearms, since as previously stated when the second amendment was written, the most powerful firearm was a musket. They absolutely pale in comparison to what a civilian could access today. An AK47 or AR-15 is far beyond what the founding fathers imagined in terms of the damage it could do. While getting handguns out of the hands of all civilians would be close to impossible, as the chances of Americans voting to outlaw civilian use of all guns is unfeasible, there is slightly more chance of banning more destructive firearms such as the AK47 or AR-15. There is a sizeable proportion of people in the USA who want some form of gun control, meaning shouldn't it be possible to get something meaningful passed? This is not as simple as it sounds, as people can't agree on what gun control means. Does it mean restricting what guns are sold, who buys the guns, how to store the guns? Americans can't even agree on what the second amendment means, let alone what kind of gun control they desire. The second amendment is part of the reason guns are such a polarising political issue. Some more radical people may suggest

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/24/us/politics/gun-control-bill-congress.html> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2024].

³⁷ Duignan, B. (2018). District of Columbia v. Heller | law case. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/District-of-Columbia-v-Heller> [Accessed 21 Mar. 2024].

repealing the second amendment³⁸ as there is a precedent due to the 18th amendment being repealed by the 21st amendment.³⁹ However this wouldn't be feasible for several reasons. When it was repealed, the 18th amendment (prohibition) was 14 years old and was always seen to be a failure, as drinking was still widespread across most of the nation, with staggering amounts of gang violence. It also got repealed to help with the Great Depression. With the assistance of POTUS 33 Franklin D. Roosevelt's campaign and the Democratic party, the 21st amendment was passed before Roosevelt took office.⁴⁰ The second amendment is 233 years old and has been upheld during all of that time. The 18th was ignored by the majority of the population. While in theory the 21st amendment should set a precedent for the repeal of the second amendment, the two issues are so different many would argue it doesn't set a precedent. The constitution is incredibly difficult to amend as it requires a 2/3 majority from both houses of congress or a request from 2/3 of state legislators to call a national convention. Then a 3/4 majority of all states must vote for

³⁸ Press, B. (2022). *Opinion: There's no way to fix the Second Amendment. Let's just get rid of it.* [online] CNN. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/09/opinions/gun-reform-second-amendment-repeal-uvalde-shooting-press/index.html> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].

³⁹ Constitution Annotated (1933). *U.S. Constitution - Twenty-First Amendment | Resources | Constitution Annotated | Congress.gov | Library of Congress.* [online] constitution.congress.gov. Available at: <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-21/>.

⁴⁰ Greenspan, J. (2019). *How the Misery of the Great Depression Helped Vanquish Prohibition.* [online] HISTORY. Available at: <https://www.history.com/news/great-depression-economy-prohibition> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2024].

it.⁴¹ Given the divide on the issue of gun control the chances of that happening are slim to impossible. There is a clear need for gun control, yet can the GOP and Democrats work together for the betterment of the nation? Only time will tell.

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⁴¹ Paccone, P. (2016). *Why is the US Constitution so hard to amend? - Peter Paccone. YouTube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwREAW4SIVY> [Accessed 27 Mar. 2024].

Conclusion

The Issue of gun control is arguably one of the most complex issues facing the United States of America. The issue has many points both for and against, but evidence suggests that greater gun control is a necessity. Therefore, the case for gun control is irrefutable.

Firstly, the United States has the highest rates of firearms ownership in the entire world, based on a firearms law developed in the 18th century. This is a very dangerous combination as shown by the hundreds of thousands who became victims of gun related crime and the suicide attempts and success. These laws may have been helpful in the untamed frontier, where something as simple as cheese was a luxury and every day was a battle against nature, but this just isn't the case anymore. The frontier changed. The USA changed. The world changed. It's time the USA's gun laws did too.

Secondly the United States leads the world in school shootings by a tragically huge margin. These have happened nation-wide time and time again. Other nations such as the UK have had school shootings happen rarely, yet have passed some of the most drastic legalisation in the world while the USA has done very little, especially considering the number of children that have tragically died.

Finally, it is clear that the main reason that little is changing is due to politics. As a result of the extreme polarisation that is spreading through the entire nation, the Republican party and the Democratic party are completely split on the issue of gun control. Consequently, there is very little progress, and this shall remain the case until both parties can come together. Unfortunately, as things stands it seems likely the case for gun control will be debated till the end of mankind. An outright ban on all firearms would do more harm than good due to the cultural significance of guns in the United States. But having strong

background checks and removing the ability to acquire military-grade weapons as a civilian would still improve things drastically. But with the GOP and Democrats fundamentally disagreeing on the issue, little can be done.

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¹ Homicide and Firearms: Guns and Public Health Part 2. (2017). *YouTube*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mh5mMm7IECU> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2024].

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