

Letter: Gun rights vs. gun control: both sides appeal to fear

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In Daniel Schmidt's June 10th Editorial, he expressed concerns regarding the future of the United States Constitution's Second Amendment. His stance aligns with the concerns of many arms enthusiasts I've spoken to over the years.

Honestly, most average folk I know are getting a little tired of the parroted narratives coming from both sides. Liberals and Conservatives alike are guilty of leaning into fear mongering and emotional manipulation to push their talking points.

The right wing loves to stoke fears about outright weapons bans & forced confiscation -- desperately shielding wealthy special interest groups from any semblance of regulatory oversight. Meanwhile, the left insists on amplifying the trauma of these horrific events by jumping to exploit the tragedies over and over again in the 24-hour news cycle.

When you realize that both sides are preying on the emotional reactivity of potential voters, the current mental health crisis starts to make a bit more sense.

In truth, the American gun safety discourse is much more nuanced than either side likes to admit.

Firearms ownership often carries contrasting connotations to city folk than it does for us out here in rural spaces. Similarly, guns represent something entirely different to working class folk than they do to people in positions of power and authority. This repeatedly leads to communication failures, with two sides shouting past each other while the problem only gets worse.

Yes, there is a gun violence problem. At this rate, it would be obscenely ignorant to deny this fact. This is a uniquely American dilemma, and it's more than a little embarrassing that this is what we have come to be known for.

Is it a mental health problem? Is it a cultural problem? Is it a gun problem? Is it a corruption problem? Yes! It's not just one or the other; it's all-of-the-above, and then some!

Unfortunately, the public discourse consistently falls into the same false dichotomy trap that we've been sold through decades of conditioning from political strategists & conglomerated media messages. This manner of thinking has gotten us nowhere.

It appears as though Mr. Schmidt too fell into this trap. Much of his column seemed focused on the sanctity of the almighty gun, while continuing to perpetuate public fears about weapons bans. In my view, living in fear of gun confiscation is just as ludicrous as living in fear of guns themselves.

Vehicular homicide is frequently referenced in debate every time mass shooting discourse is revived. All too often the discussion ends there, and I feel this is a missed opportunity for differentiating discourse.

Did licensing and insurance requirements completely eliminate car crashes? Of course not. Unlicensed drivers still get behind the wheel. However, statistics consistently demonstrate measurable decreases in automobile fatalities after the implementation of various traffic safety, drivers education, and licensing regulations.

If we are ever going to reduce the frequency and severity of gun violence in our country, we must abandon this all-or-nothing mentality. There is so much unexplored middle ground to be found when we stop mindlessly repeating the talking points we've been spoon-fed by our political teams of choice.

I do wish to commend Mr. Schmidt's point pertaining to the value of properly trained armed citizens. The key phrase being "properly trained". Every responsible gun owner I've ever met strongly supports the gospel of gun safety. Why can't we start there?

Conservative gun owners have the opportunity to lead the way, by introducing tangible safety training policies that align with their values. There are already some models in place within the military, as well as those found in some state and local jurisdictions.

It's time to stop shouting past each other, and actually bring a plan to the table.

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