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ARTICLE
Guns, Gun Laws, and Liberty

Gun Ownership Is Not the Problem
AUGUST 01, 2000 by LAWRENCE W. REED

The heart of virtually every citizen of America went out to the family of little Kayla Rolland after a classmate took her life with a .32 caliber revolver on February 29 in Mt. Morris, Michigan. As with the Columbine High School shootings in Colorado last year, we all feel pained and distraught about such senseless violence, and we wonder what has gone wrong and what can be done to prevent any recurrences. In the wake of these tragedies, legislators in every state are taking up the issue of gun control.

The challenge is to express appropriate grief and concern about these things without allowing hyped emotions, rhetorical window-dressing, or futile "quick fixes" to rule the day. Political jockeying to prove who is most outraged by violence must not overwhelm facts, logic, and experience.

One superficial but unfortunately popular reaction to school shootings is summarized this way: "Guns are bad; more laws are good." The facts are more complicated. Guns are *not* bad when they are not misused, not accessible to people who misuse them, and used harmlessly in sport or recreation; they are good when they thwart crime. Laws are *not* good when they injure the rights, property, or lives of the innocent; when they are ineffective or unenforceable; or when they act as cheap political substitutes for a problem's real cure.

Do more equal less crime?  **the real impact of gun availability**



43% of American households report owning firearms.¹

The umbrella protection of mass gun ownership

Even the unarmed can benefit from a general umbrella of protection due to criminals often being deterred by not knowing beforehand who is and who isn't armed.

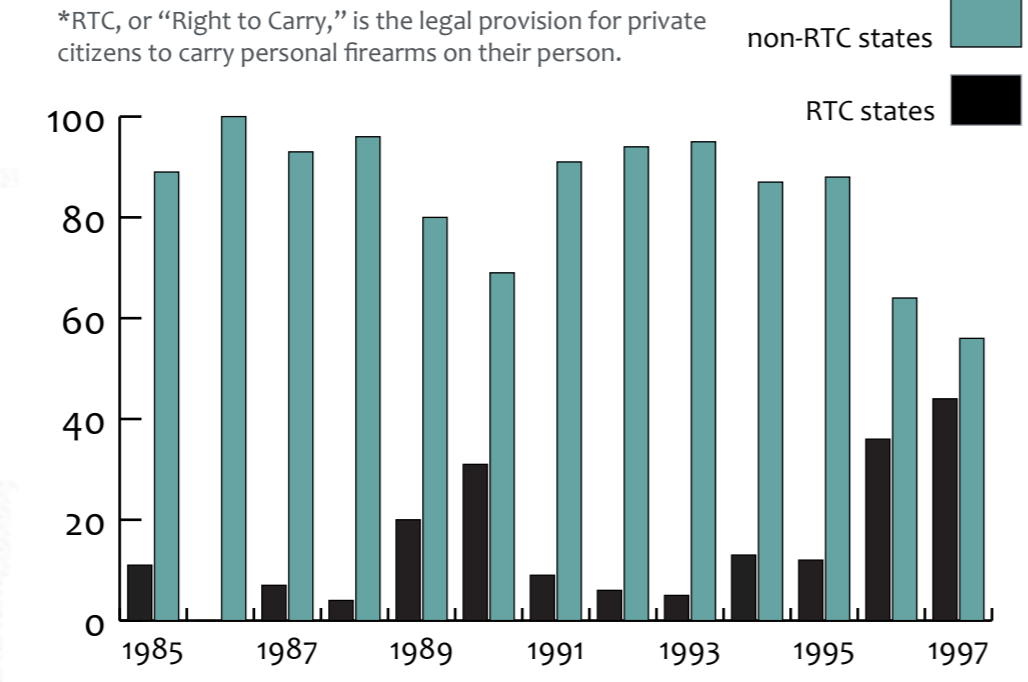


1997 studies showed that firearms were used defensively in the U.S. up to 1.5-2.5 million² times per year.³

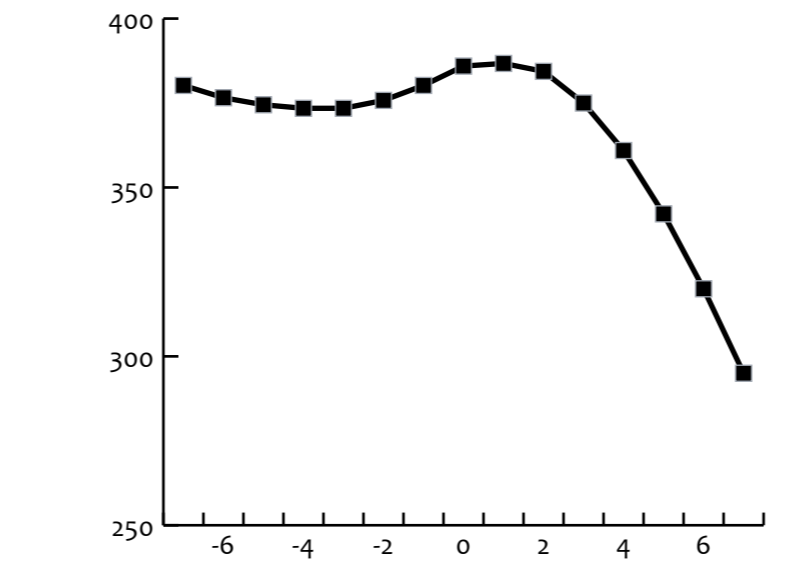
In a 1982 survey of felons in 11 state prisons,⁴

- 34%** had been "scared off, shot at, or captured by an armed victim."
- 40%** didn't commit a crime because the victim was thought to have a gun.
- 69%** knew a criminal who had been deterred by defensive gun use.

Percentage of public shooting deaths for RTC* vs. Non-RTC states from 1977-1997⁵
*RTC, or "Right to Carry," is the legal provision for private citizens to carry personal firearms on their person.



Violent crime per 100k population in years before and after passing of concealed handgun laws⁶



¹ "Guns." Gallup.com. 2012. ² "Guns in America: National Survey on Private Ownership and Use of Firearms." National Institute of Justice. 1997. ³ Kleck, Gary and Marc Gertz. "Armed Resistance to Crime: The Prevalence and Nature of Self-Defense With a Gun." Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (Northwestern). 1995. ⁴ Wright, James D. and Peter D. Rossi. "Armed and Considered Dangerous: A Survey of Felons and Their Firearms." 1986. ⁵ Lott, John. "More Guns, Less Crime." Third Edition. Univ of Chicago Press. 2010. ⁶ Lott, John and William M. Landes. "Multiple Victim Public Shootings." Social Science Research Network. 2000.

Proliferation of Laws

Nationwide, according to John R. Lott, Jr., there are more than 20,000 gun-control laws that regulate everything from who can own guns and how they can be bought to where a person can possess or use them. "The biggest problem with gun-control laws," writes Lott, "is that those who are intent on harming others, and especially those who plan to commit suicide, are the least likely to obey them."¹¹

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CURRENT ISSUE



July/August 2014
The United States' corporate tax burden is the highest in the world, but innovators will always find a way to duck away from Uncle Sam's reach. Doug Bandow explains how those with the means are renouncing their citizenship in increasing numbers, while J. Dayne Girard describes the innovative use of freeports to shield wealth from the myriad taxes and duties imposed on it as it moves around the world. Of course the politicians brand all of these people unpatriotic, hoping you won't think too hard about the difference between the usual crony-capitalist suspects and the global creative elite that have done so much to improve our lives. In a special tech section, Joseph Diedrich, Thomas Bogle, and Matthew McCaffrey look at various ways these innovators add value to our