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Mass Shootings

To the outside world, the United States once appeared as a vast area of opportunity, prosperity, and most importantly, safety. Simply put, that is no longer the case. In today's America, people are no longer safe in their schools, places of worship, or offices. According to a report by CBS, as of November 15th, there have been nearly 370 mass shootings in the United States, where a mass shooting is defined as an event where four or more people are shot, excluding the shooter. On average, there is more than one mass shooting every day in the United States. Regardless of your stance on gun control, there is an issue in this country, one which has served to further strengthen the political divide afflicting our government.

In the upcoming election, gun control is one of the most significant issues faced by candidates. According to npr.org, there is a near consensus by Democratic Candidates on solutions regarding gun control, with unanimous support for an assault rifle ban, red flag laws, universal background checks, and gun buyback programs. Of the mass shootings which have the largest number of casualties, assault rifles are responsible for nearly all of them. Infamous 2019 shootings such as the El Paso shooting, the Midland-Odessa rampage, the Dayton Ohio shooting, and the Gilroy Garlic Festival shooting all saw gunmen which used semi-automatic assault-style weapons. Of these shootings, all of the gunmen showed prior signs of violence, racist beliefs, or mental illness which should have prevented them from having access to a firearm in the first place. Universal background checks would also serve a similar purpose, but could also notify police of suspicious activity such as the rapid purchase of large numbers of

firearms. Precautionary measures such as these could have prevented some of the deadliest shootings in US history, such as the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, or dozens of other mass murders that occur every year in the United States.

Regarding the issue of gun control, and thus mass shootings, there has been a constant debate between all sides of the political spectrum. Colorado, which has been the victim of mass murders like Columbine and the Aurora Theater shootings, tried to pass a red flag law which would allow suspicious persons to have their firearms seized by the police. Initially, this bill had been rejected by the majority conservative state legislature. In response, Colorado residents elected a liberal majority into the state government in the last election, and the red flag law was subsequently passed. As a mass shooting survivor stated, "People don't know what gun violence is like until they've become a victim of it themselves." This is why the government has been slow to implement gun control reforms, and why the public is responsible for causing these reforms by electing officials who share their mindset. Unfortunately, most politicians have never found themselves in a mass shooting, so efforts to increase gun control have been slow.

As the recent shooting at a Santa Clarita high school has sparked up the gun control debate once again, the question remains as to if legislation will be passed to try to reduce future mass shooting incidents. The easiest and most straightforward way to reduce the number of mass shootings per year is to simply remove how these shootings can occur. Most importantly, a ban on the sale of semi-automatic assault weapons would serve to reduce the amount of gun-related deaths by lowering the rate at which a gunman could fire. Similarly, background checks and red flag laws could reduce these shootings before they even begin by removing guns from people who exhibit suspicious behavior. Lastly, a restriction on the amount of ammunition that could be held by a gun owner at any given time could reduce gun casualties, especially when police are unable to respond to an active shooter quickly.

The solution to the problem is simple, yet these measures have yet to be implemented. This is simply due to the politicians who are hesitant to implement legislation which would save the lives of thousands of Americans annually. Americans are frustrated with the lack of action taken by the government to solve what should be a simple problem, and this is likely to show in the results of the upcoming election.

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