

COMMENTARY *By* DR. DHANPAUL NARINE

The Politics of Gun Control:

Time for Action!

Here's why gun control legislation is difficult to pass: The gun lobby, that includes the National Rifle Association (NRA), spent \$135 million during 1998 to 2017 to oppose gun control laws. Gun control advocacy groups, on the other hand, spent a mere \$19 million. The politicians are in the hip pocket of the NRA and they dance to the tune of the gun lobby. Sen. Marco Rubio could not distance himself from the NRA at the recent CNN Town Hall meeting.

Those well-worn words, 'you are in our thoughts and prayers' mean little to parents who must bury their children after another senseless shooting. But the sales of guns increase after every mass killing. People feel that there is a need to protect themselves or that the government will pass laws to restrict the purchase of guns.

When the cameras leave and the glare of publicity is dimmed it becomes business as usual. The site of the massacre reverts to a footnote in history. The debate between the gun owning lobby, and those that advocate gun control, is left for another day. There is too much at stake to rock the boat. Inaction rules the day.

A November 2017 poll has shown that 3 in 10 gun owners believe that restricting the legal sale of guns would lead to fewer mass shootings. When the non-gun owners were asked about restricting the sale of guns a total of 56 percent responded that it would lead to less crime. But 54 percent of gun owners stated that there would be less crime if people owned more guns.

Clearly, there is no consensus and the discussion has seen an America that is polarized on the question of guns. President Trump wouldn't even mention the word 'gun' in his message to the families in Florida. It was a prob-

lem of mental health and not guns, according to the President.

In the case of Florida,

MI, Oxon Hill MD, Benton KY, Philadelphia PA, Denison TX, San Bernardino CA, Mobile AL, Winston-Salem NC, Italy TX, Sierra Vista AZ, Marshall TX, Gentilly LA, Parkland FL and the latest in the Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.

There were statements from former President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden about the shootings. Mr. Obama called for common-sense gun safety laws while Mr. Biden said that, 'Congress has

help, any help.'

Despite the desperation, no help was forthcoming. Then came Las Vegas. A gunman killed 55 people at a concert last October. Surely, this would lead to gun control legislation. A bipartisan group in Congress introduced legislation to ban the sale of bump fire stocks. It was found that this device made it possible for semi-automatic rifles to fire faster.

The bill is stalled in Congress. The Republicans have referred the matter to the Bureau of

since December 2017. Speaker Ryan stated that steps were taken to catch the bad guys while law-abiding citizens had the right to buy guns. Despite his assurances 18 shootings have occurred in the first two months of 2018.

Why is it difficult, if not impossible, for America to control guns? The sheer number and types of guns make it hard for control measures to be effective. The Harvard Injury Control Center states that 'there's a gun for every



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from Florida has called the Parkland shooting 'a terrible day' but Rubio has received \$3,303,355 in campaign contributions from the NRA. Rubio later said on Fox News that we should know all the facts before jumping to conclusions. This mirrors closely the position of the NRA. But Rubio is not the only recipient of NRA's money.

The person that heads the list is President Trump. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Trump was given a whopping \$30 million by the NRA to defeat Hillary Clinton. Trump said that he would give the Parkland community whatever they want. How about getting assault weapons away from the streets?

Senator John McCain received \$7.7 million from the NRA while Sen. Mitch McConnell and Sen. Joni Ernst received \$1.3 and \$3.1 million, respectively. Shannon Watts is the founder of 'Moms Demand for Gun Sense in America.' She says that the victims deserve more than thoughts and prayers. She wants real action by the lawmakers.

The best hope for real action appears to be in the hands of the young. They are fed up with the usual excuses and want change. Marches, peaceful demonstrations, and rallies will increase. Carly Novell hid in a closet for two hours on the day of the shooting. She said, 'this IS about guns and this is about all the people who had their lives abruptly ended because of guns.' Is Washington listening?

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A vigil in Florida calls for gun control in the wake of the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School.

the shooter was home-grown, did not express Islamic views and could very well have belonged to a white extremist group. Isn't it ironic that Nikolas Cruz wore a 'Make America Great' cap so beloved by President Trump? How was Cruz able to buy multiple guns? As politicians give their spin on the Florida mass shootings they would do well to realize that there have been 18 shootings since January 2018.

There were school shootings in Seattle WA, Maplewood MN, Dearborn MI, Bronx NY, Los Angeles CA, St. Johns

a moral obligation to take action and spare more families from this violence.' It was Mr. Obama and Mr. Biden that went to Florida in June 2016 and placed flowers at a memorial for the Orlando shootings.

There were calls at that time for action. Mr. Obama reminded the nation that it was too easy 'for someone to get their hands on a weapon that lets them shoot people in a school, or a movie theater, or in a nightclub.' The Orlando shootings prompted Harry Reid to state that 'the American people are desperately looking for help, some

Firearms and Explosives for a ruling; legislation in Congress would create problems with their base. A month after Las Vegas, a gunman entered a church in Texas and killed 26 people. The Air Force did not contact the Criminal Background system that could have prevented the criminal from buying a gun. In the case of Florida the FBI did not follow up with the information it received about Cruz.

Speaker Paul Ryan referred to a bill that is sitting in the Senate that would speed up the background checks but that bill has been stalled

man, woman and child in America, around 300 million of them.' After San Bernardino, gun sales went up by 50 percent.

Apart from numbers there is political pressure. There is little doubt that the greatest pressure comes from the National Rifle Association. At a rally in Florida, young survivors of the latest shooting called for tighter gun controls. One student, Emma Gonzalez, attacked President Trump, and other politicians, for taking donations from the NRA. How valid is this claim?

Sen. Marco Rubio