

Why We Must “Politicize” Guns

Every time there’s a mass shooting, or even a particularly well-publicized single homicide, all of America’s political factions go directly to battle stations on the question of whether or not the violence can be reduced or eliminated with “gun control” legislation. As the debate rages on, the calls begin to ring out from different corners that whatever else we do, we must avoid “politicizing” the issue.

Have you ever noticed that the “let’s not get political” talk always seems to emanate from the side that perceives itself as on the losing end of the argument at the moment?

Right after the incident that opens the latest “gun violence” news cycle, Michael Bloomberg, the Brady Campaign, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, and other openly and unabashedly political actors roll around in the blood, jump on top of the caskets and start doing the funky chicken for “gun control.”

While that’s happening, pro-gun and pro-civil-rights organizations issue somber condolences to the families of the dead and argue against “politicizing” things.

Later, as the tide turns against the idea that a bunch of new laws will reduce the body count, the anti-gun groups shower off the blood, don mourning black, and urge us to stop being so darn political about the lives they’re trying to save, while the pro-gun/pro-rights groups jump on the political stage and start making practical suggestions (permitless open and concealed carry, armed teachers, etc.) to actually save those lives.

Why bother pretending that this issue is ever beyond, or apart from, politics? Does anyone really buy that?

Politics is, according to the most applicable definition from the 1913 edition of *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language*, “the conduct and contests of parties with reference to political measures or the administration of public affairs.”

Support for or opposition to “gun control” legislation is by definition political. It can’t be anything else. We’re not sitting around the dining room table talking about the weather, baseball, or little Bobby’s upcoming piano recital. We’re in each others’ faces over proposed or opposed use of force by government.

There’s certainly a right side and a wrong side here.

One side continues to back legislation that is clearly unconstitutional, that inherently violates human rights, and that as a practical matter increases homicide rates everywhere and every time it’s tried (including but not limited to the Gun-Free School Zones Act).

The other side — unfortunately not always consistently — points out that the right to keep and bear arms is not just a basic human right that is clearly and unambiguously protected by the US Constitution, but that it has consistently proven to be the best way of reducing violent death among the innocent.

But both sides are hypocritical when they retreat to a “don’t politicize this” position. And not just hypocritical, but careless. If we stop discussing political issues, all that’s left is to start shooting each other over those issues. And as Winston Churchill once said, “to jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war.”