

Obama gun grab based on false assumptions

One-size-fits-all approach not the solution

By Jeff Moran | February 8, 2013 | Washington Times

GENEVA — On Jan. 16, President Obama put forward his 15-page plan to “better protect our children and our communities from tragic mass shootings like those in Newtown, Aurora, Oak Creek, and Tucson.” The plan’s titular theme was “now is the time” for action. The top two priorities: universal background checks for gun purchases and a categorical rifle ban.

Setting aside the troubling facts that the White House sales pitch had significant omissions and/or exaggerations, that other experts say mass shootings are not any more prevalent today than they were in the past, and that rifles account for approximately 3 percent of all homicides, Mr. Obama’s two priorities are simply misguided and off-target, especially if he wants to move the needle with respect to American gun homicides and suicides. This is because his top two priorities, as well as the rest of his plan, are based on the false assumptions that lethal gun abuse is a large and growing problem, and that it impacts Americans equally, making one-size-fits-all solutions appropriate.

My analysis of data within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System reveals 10 empirical and interrelated reasons why Mr. Obama’s assumptions are false and why his top two priorities are dead wrong:

1. The rates of gun-related homicide, suicide and accidental death have decreased by 44 percent, 19 percent and 69 percent respectively since 1993 (for all races and ages).
2. After declining substantially over 10 years, gun suicides rates have significantly increased each year since 2006 (for all races and ages).
3. Since 1993 the rate of gun suicides has been higher than both gun homicides and accidental gun deaths combined (all races and ages).
4. The ratio of gun suicides to gun homicides for white Americans is 3.1 to 1 and is the highest across all races, with whites aged 15 to 34 being most at risk.
5. Americans aged 15 to 24 are the most at risk for gun homicide, but the ratio of gun homicides to accidental deaths for this group was just 1 to 3 (all races).
6. The majority of American gun homicides (54 percent) take the lives of black Americans, who constitute just 14 percent of the total population.

7. Homicide is the leading cause of death only for black Americans aged 15 to 34, with 87.4 percent of all homicides for this group caused by guns.

8. The ratio of gun homicides to gun suicides for black Americans is over 6.1 to 1, but for non-black Americans it is just 1 to 3 (a difference of nearly 20 times).

9. The ratio of gun homicides to deaths from flu/pneumonia for black Americans is 1.1 to 1, for non-black Americans, it is just 0.1 to 1 (a difference of 10 times).

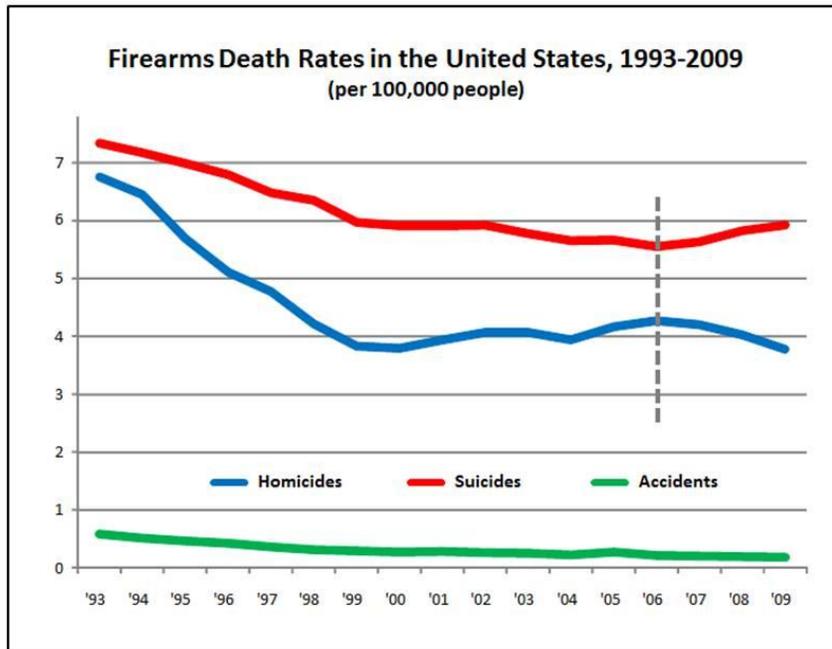
10. The ratio of gun homicides to accidental death not due to firearms for black Americans is .50 to 1. For non-black Americans, it is just .05 to 1 (a difference of 10 times).

These 10 take-aways suggest that Mr. Obama and his policy advocates seem to be ignoring the giant black and white elephants in the room, and this is shameful. The “black elephant” is the disproportionately large problem of gun homicides for black Americans. There is clearly a cause for grave concern with respect to blacks aged 15 to 34 years. Because black Americans are such a small percentage of the total population and tend to live in certain high-density areas, customized and targeted policies, outreach, civic organizing and engagement of at-risk individuals seem quite feasible and more likely to make substantial impacts.

The “white elephant” in the room is the fact that whites face a comparatively serious but distinctly different problem of gun related suicide, especially for people aged 15 to 34. In this context however, and from a quantitative point of view, this white elephant is secondary in importance to the black elephant in two important respects. First, gun suicide is not the leading cause of death for whites aged 15 to 34, accidents are. Second, the black elephant is 20 percent bigger in terms of the numbers of deaths it represents, compared to white homicides. That being said, given the nature of suicide and the sensitivity of the topic, customized and targeted policies, outreach, civic organizing and engagement of at-risk individuals seem the most prudent and effective course of action.

Mr. Obama and his gun policy supporters say “now is the time” for action. What America needs is focused action to move the needle on reducing gun deaths. Unfortunately, the president’s call for universal background checks and categorical gun ban priorities are unfocused, one-size-fits-all solutions that will likely have little if any impact on gun deaths. They are misguided and off-target because there is no rational connection between them and the giant elephants in the room. Background checks and gun bans are not only completely inappropriate top priorities, they strongly indicate the president’s actions are arbitrary and capricious, and that he is misusing his power in addition to wasting a golden humanitarian opportunity.

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Data: CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, as of 6/12. Presentation: Jeff Moran, The Geneva Academy.

Firearms Deaths in the United States, 1993-2009

Year	Homicides		Suicides		Accidents		Population
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	
1993	18,253	6.75	18,940	7.34	1,521	0.58	259,918,595
1994	17,527	6.45	18,765	7.18	1,356	0.51	263,125,826
1995	15,551	5.69	18,503	6.99	1,225	0.46	266,278,403
1996	14,037	5.1	18,166	6.79	1,134	0.42	269,394,291
1997	13,252	4.77	17,566	6.48	981	0.36	272,646,932
1998	11,798	4.21	17,424	6.34	866	0.31	275,854,116
1999	10,828	3.82	16,599	5.96	824	0.29	279,040,181
2000	10,801	3.79	16,586	5.9	776	0.27	281,421,906
2001	11,348	3.93	16,869	5.9	802	0.28	285,081,556
2002	11,829	4.06	17,108	5.91	762	0.26	287,803,914
2003	11,920	4.06	16,907	5.77	730	0.25	290,326,418
2004	11,624	3.93	16,750	5.65	649	0.22	293,045,739
2005	12,352	4.16	17,002	5.66	789	0.27	295,753,151
2006	12,791	4.27	16,883	5.54	642	0.21	298,593,212
2007	12,632	4.19	17,352	5.63	613	0.2	301,579,895
2008	12,179	4.02	18,223	5.82	592	0.19	304,374,846
2009	11,493	3.77	18,735	5.92	554	0.18	307,006,550
Change '93-'09	-37%	-44%	-1%	-19%	-64%	-69%	18%

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