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## American Gun Violence: A Cause to Combat the Epidemic

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Providence College

American Gun Violence:  
A Cause to Combat the Epidemic

Colin Fonseca

Undergraduate Craft of Research Award

Dr. Robert Hackey & Dr. Todd Olszewski

December 16, 2021

The presence of gun violence in America has grown rapidly in recent years. As a result of the Dickey Amendment, which forbade the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from using money to ‘advocate or promote gun control,’ research on gun violence has declined significantly (Zhang). For more than twenty years, Congress has prohibited federal funding for this necessary research resulting in the rise of misinformation and ignorance. Gun reform remains a highly partisan issue as Democrats and Republicans maintain their radically opposing beliefs. Recent mass shootings in Atlanta, GA and Boulder, CO have sparked further discussion of background checks and assault weapons bans, although “public health officials believe that a new round of research will finally pave the way for gun policies that avoid partisan gridlock” (Stolberg). Legislators must act now. High-capacity magazine and assault weapons bans are crucial for preventing mass shootings and homicides in Rhode Island; while controversial, its implementation will ensure the safety of American citizens.

The deadliest mass shootings have included assault weapons with high-capacity magazines. According to Rep. David Cicilline, “assault weapons are designed for a single purpose: to kill as many people in as short amount of time as possible...they are weapons of war and do not belong in our communities.” Cicilline’s assertion indicates that a shooter’s intent in carrying out a mass shooting is to achieve as high a death toll as physically possible; one could argue that this would not be possible without access to a firearm with the ability to hold higher than ten rounds. Daniel Victor of *The New York Times* states that “in the last five years, there have been at least 29 shootings with four or more fatalities.” He writes that “in one of the deadliest mass shootings in American history, a gunman perched on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas and shot at 22,000 people killing 58 and wounding 411.” Most noteworthy, however, is the fact that “[the shooter’s] arsenal included

fourteen AR-15 rifles, twelve of which had 100-round magazines” (Victor). The reality that the shooter was aided by assault weapons and high-capacity magazines is undeniable. One can observe the fact that the shooter was able to obtain this number of firearms without any question from sellers, demonstrating the feasibility and likelihood that this type of event could occur again. As of June 2021, the United States has already recorded 296 mass shootings putting it on pace to be the “deadliest year in the last two decades” (CBS News). Gun violence is clearly only increasing.

Rhode Island Legislators recently rejected efforts to ban assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazine gun clips. In March of 2021, “a hearing on 21 different gun control bills stretched over 10 hours before the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee. The most debated bills included those to ban the purchase, sale, or trade of assault weapons along with magazines with 10 or more rounds” (Kennedy). In reference to this hearing, Rep. David Bennett of Warwick, RI asserts that “we cannot pass laws that are going to affect thousands of law-abiding citizens.” Bennett implied that any ban on such weapons will violate the rights of the citizens who are responsibly using their weapons. This way of thinking is evident in a recent ruling by U.S. District Judge Roger Benitez, who recently overturned California’s longtime ban on assault weapons. His ruling likened the AR-15 to a Swiss Army knife and wrote that “the assault weapons ban violated the Second Amendment’s right to bear arms and deprives Californians from owning assault-style weapons commonly allowed in other states” (Meeks). This action further portrays the partisan nature of gun reform. While some individuals feel that the availability of high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons is a threat to safety, others feel that their absence is a threat to constitutional rights. Several states including Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Vermont banned the sale of high-capacity magazines (with

higher than 10 rounds of ammunition) (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence). This reality emphasizes the relevance of party affiliation when enacting gun reform. Each of these states are predominantly Democratic, speaking to the progressive nature of banning assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Recent public opinion data shows that Rhode Islanders and other Americans support a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons. In a poll conducted by the *Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence*, “71.5% of Rhode Islanders favored a 10-round limit” while “more than twice as many Rhode Islanders [said they] would vote for a candidate who supported a limit on magazine capacity.” Additionally, “70.5% favored banning assault weapons” while “63% said owning an assault weapon for the home is unnecessary.” One can note that the majority of Rhode Island citizens favor such a ban and believe it is necessary to preserve the future safety of citizens. Notably, 63% of Americans do not believe in the need for having an assault weapon in the home. In reviewing this data, one must remain cognizant of the fact that this ban would not apply to firearms in general, but instead, targets assault-style weapons, specifically. This implies the notion that citizens believe a standard handgun could suffice in an event that requires self-defense. In a similar way, Rep. Justine Caldwell feels that “reducing access to the most lethal weapons, taking needless high-capacity magazines out of circulation and requiring safe-storage are all ways we can save lives.” Her belief that assault-style weapons are “lethal” and “needless” is paralleled in the poll as Rhode Island citizens attest to the weapon’s futility. In a broader view, “53% of Americans say gun laws should be stricter than they currently are, a view held by 81% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents but just 20% of Republicans and Republican leaners” (Doherty). One can observe the significant difference in support of this notion between Democratic and Republican voters. The distinction

conveys their contrasting prioritization of gun reform; it outlines the Democratic effort to alleviate a public health crisis and Republican indifference to the matter.

Democrats believe that gun violence is a public health emergency that must be aided with reform and government-funded research. According to the Democratic National Committee, “no child should be afraid to go to school or walk around their neighborhood. No spouse should be afraid to come home at night. No American should be afraid to go to work or their place of worship. And no human should be afraid to go to a shopping mall or baseball field, nightclub or movie theater, concert or college campus” (“Preventing Gun Violence”, 2021). One can note the Democratic emphasis on fear and quality of life for American citizens regarding the availability of assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines. As a result of so many shootings, one could understand how anxiety erupts from the stress and uncertainty of what is yet to come.

The DNC continues, saying that “they believe gun violence [should be treated] as the deadly public health crisis it is.” Without research and collected data, it becomes difficult to analyze the severity of an existing problem. Zhang writes that “while motor vehicle deaths are tracked in minute detail in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, no such comparable database exists for gun deaths.” With such an extensive number of American shootings, Democrats feel it is unfathomable and unethical that greater research has not yet been conducted to decipher commonalities between shootings and shooters alike. Such research would allow for better policies to combat gun violence, yet this only occurs when individuals recognize that a problem exists at all. President Joseph Biden believed that “the rising gun deaths in the nation is an ‘international embarrassment’” and “[urged] both Congress and the states to take comprehensive action to combat the public health crisis” (Seddiq). Gun violence in America is seen as a public health crisis by Democratic leaders. Biden specifically referenced the notion that the United

States' current circumstance is shameful, demonstrating that this behavior is not normal in other countries. Public opinion data, courtesy of the Pew Research Center, shows that "83% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents strongly or somewhat favor banning high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds while only 41% of Republicans and Republican leaners favor it" (Schaeffer). This stresses the fact that most Democrats are in favor of progressive measures to combat the public health crisis while the majority of Republicans are not.

While the Democratic Party agrees that gun control policies must be reformed, leaders have expressed different approaches. According to Alexander Bolton of *The Hill*, "Centrist Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) says a background checks bill passed by the House goes too far while other colleagues such as Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Ben Cardin (D-Md.) are pushing for an assault weapons ban and restrictions on high-capacity magazines." In 2017, Sens. Feinstein, Cardin, and Van Hollen introduced legislation that would ban the sale, transfer, manufacturing, and importation of military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines (Cardin). However, such legislation did not pass. In March of 2021, an updated bill was introduced by Feinstein and Rep. David Cicilline- the result remained the same. The bill did not pass the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, and, to become law, it would have to pass in both the House and the Republican-controlled Senate, with a presidential signature (Stellino). While the Senate is currently made up of 50 Republican seats, 48 Democratic seats, and 2 Independent seats, the progressive spectrum among Democrats is vast- but not enough for a majority. For Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), "background checks have the benefit of being the most politically popular and practical from a policy standpoint" and "[he] thinks it makes sense to start with fixing the background checks system" (Bolton). It is clear, however, that other

Democratic leaders like Feinstein believe in a more aggressive approach. This difference in opinion contributes to legislators' difficulty in decision-making. The first priority for Democrats should be to unify their own party; if Democrats unite in a more practical manner, they will be better suited to tackle the Republican Party. This unification is paramount to achieving any type of significant reform.

Republicans believe that lawmakers must preserve citizens' Second Amendment rights and uphold their individual freedoms. It can be understood that "Republicans oppose gun control because conservative political identity is today inseparable from guns...many Republican politicians (and voters) see any kind of gun control – whether background checks or a ban on assault rifles – as an existential threat" (Berlatsky). This existential threat can be perceived as a threat to Republican identity, freedom, and livelihood. One can note that Republicans strongly believe that their firearms are an essential part of their being. However, one can also observe a degree of selfishness present within the Republican party; there is no acknowledgment of gun violence being a public health problem in America nor awareness of the role assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines play in almost all mass shootings. Republicans advocate more for individual rights rather than the safety of society as a whole.

This indifference is said to be attributed to financial contributions from the National Rifle Association (NRA) to those affiliated with the Republican party. This occurs as "the NRA consistently contributes money to the Republican party and Republican Congresspeople, who then turn around and support NRA positions. The conclusion is obvious; Republicans are listening to contributors, not to their voters. They block gun control legislation because they've effectively been bribed" (Berlatsky). One can note the profound impact this has most likely had on Republican decision-making, although it cannot be concluded to be the foundation of



Republican ideology on gun control. During the first half of 2019 alone, “the NRA spent \$1.6 million lobbying Congress against passing gun safety legislation” (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence). Individually, Sen. Mitt Romney has received the most of all U.S. Senators- collecting \$13 million in campaign contributions over his career (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence). In a recent interview, Romney asserted that “[he] will not be voting for new federal legislation related to guns” and that “it is more appropriate for these decisions to happen at the state level” (Rodgers). One can argue that Romney’s position on gun reform has been formed by the financial support he has received from the NRA. In notoriously conservative states like Utah and Wyoming, it is apparent that stricter gun legislation will not be coming to fruition anytime soon; this reality is what the NRA hopes for. The National Rifle Association “staunchly opposes most local, state, and federal legislation that would restrict gun ownership. The NRA has lobbied for guns confiscated by the police to be resold, arguing that destroying the weapons is, in effect, a waste of perfectly good guns” (BBC). One could argue that the NRA is more concerned about the buying and selling of guns than the dangers associated with them. Their allegiance to the Republican party is understandable as both entities share similar values.

In recent years, the NRA chose not to extend funding to Democrats. The Center for Responsive Politics found that “nearly 99% of the \$1 million in NRA contributions to congressional candidates in 2016 went to Republicans. The few Democrats who did get money – Reps. Sanford D. Bishop Jr. of Georgia, Henry Cuellar of Texas, Collin C. Peterson of Minnesota and Tim Walz of Minnesota – all have A ratings from the group” (Lee). The NRA gives members of Congress a grade ranging from A to F that reflects their voting record on gun rights. Those receiving an A are typically a “solidly pro-gun candidate...with a demonstrated record of support on Second Amendment issues” (Bloch). One can note the profound distinction

between the NRA's treatment of Democrats and Republicans. If legislators are not in support of the NRA's agenda, they can certainly count on receiving nothing from the organization.

Interestingly, when the Federal Assault Weapons Ban was passed in 1994, "in the two-year period leading up to the vote on the issue, the NRA increased its contributions to Republicans by about \$675,000 while reducing contributions to Democrats by nearly \$200,000. It was the group's largest single-cycle – or two-year – dip in donations to Democrats" (Lee). One can recognize the connection between the NRA's conservative interests and funding. It is evident that the organization uses money to ensure their ends and withholds it when their needs are not being met.

"Republicans inevitably prefer greater liberty for gun owners, arguing that even modest restrictions infringe on a fundamental right of self-defense and hobby ownership guaranteed by the Second Amendment" (Pearce). The preservation of the Second Amendment, guaranteeing a citizen's right to keep and bear arms, is arguably the most influential aspect of the Republican position. Many Republicans feel that the government should never regulate a citizen's access to weaponry despite its potential implications on society. One can note the fact that both the Democratic and Republican parties favor two opposite extremes in regard to gun control; most Democrats advocate for an absolute ban on assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines, while most Republicans argue to maintain the status quo. These partisan differences present a major obstacle to overcoming gun violence and implementing reforms; such contrasting views make it less probable that any compromise will soon be reached. Bolton asserts that "any gun control measure [in the Senate] would need 10 Republican votes to pass." This highlights the need for ideological openness between parties and outlines the pragmatic obstacle of gaining Republican support to execute necessary reforms.

Data proves that the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban was effective in preventing gun violence. The United States Department of Justice found that following the implementation of the ban, “a number of cities and jurisdictions reported declines in the number of assault weapons recovered from crime scenes; those declines ranged from 17% to 72%.” One can acknowledge the profound extent to which the finding of assault weapons decreased over time. Even with the circulation of existing assault weapons in a city, it is apparent that their appearance becomes more rare as the ban remains in effect. In a similar way, a 2019 study conducted by the National Center for Biotechnology Information examined mass shootings from 1981 through 2017 and analyzed the risk of fatalities in those incidents. The study found that “during the 10-year period the federal ban was in effect, mass shooting fatalities were 70% less likely to occur than either before or after the ban.” Legislators should consider the fact that the ban was able to reduce gun violence in the relatively short amount of time it was in place. It is noteworthy that fatalities were 70% less likely to occur than what existed both before *and* after the ban was put in place; this notion eliminates any other variables contributing to the improvement.

If this type of ban were to be put into place again today, similar effects would be recorded. Subsequent to the ban being lifted in 2004, researchers from Stanford University found that in the decade following, “mass shooting deaths increased by 347%.” While it is important to acknowledge outside factors such as societal impacts and other active gun control measures of the time, the immense increase can be attributed to the nullification of the 1994 ban. This result affirms the notion that a ban is valuable in mitigating gun violence. Legislators should learn from our past success.

While assault weapons and high-capacity magazines are more prevalent in mass shootings, their involvement in individual homicides is notable. In 2020, “the number of people

shot in Providence, Rhode Island more than doubled from 25 in 2019, to 73 in 2020” (Machado). This increase is said to be attributed to heightening tensions between individuals because of COVID-19 and the economic impacts of the pandemic. More recently, in May of 2021, “six men [faced charges] for their alleged involvement in what prosecutors call a gang-related shooting in Providence...police said they recovered 51 shell casings of varying sizes from the scene” in addition to “12 pistol and rifle magazines, four of which were large-capacity magazines able to hold more than 30 rounds” (Faiola). This shooting wounded nine individuals. One can acknowledge the concerning reality that these high-capacity magazines are readily available on the streets despite current regulations.

While citizens argue that the banning of assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines impedes freedom, it becomes necessary to assess the benefits and consequences of existing policies. These weapons are a threat to the public and aid in the occurrence of dangerous gang activity. In a similar manner, in May of 2020, “a drive by shooting occurred in Pawtucket, Rhode Island as an SUV [pulled] past a boy and [shot] 22 rounds in just 6 seconds.” Attorney General Peter Neronha declared that “the bullets went through the back window and windshield demonstrating their massive firepower” (Rhode Island Government). Although no one was killed in this particular incident, it is evident that assault-style weapons equipped with high-capacity magazines are being used in efforts to commit individual crimes. The appeal of assault-style weapons for shooters remains consistent with those involved in mass shootings. Increased output yields a greater likelihood of death in a brief timeframe. The weapon’s efficiency affords perpetrators a more opportune window for escape.

Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines pose an extreme threat to law enforcement personnel. According to Giffords Law Center, “because shooters with [high-capacity] magazines

can fire at large numbers of people without taking the time to reload, those in the line of fire do not have a chance to escape [while] law enforcement does not have the chance to intervene.”

Most American police officers are armed with a Glock pistol while on duty, holding a standard of 15 rounds (Britannica). When attempting to neutralize a shooter with a firearm holding upwards of 30 rounds, police officers are at a distinct disadvantage. As a result, police officers are unable to protect themselves or civilians alike. In the context of criminal activity in Rhode Island, law enforcement has recovered “more than 16 high-capacity magazines – magazines containing as many as 30 rounds – [throughout] 2020 and 2021” (Rhode Island Government). This emphasizes the serious risk police officers take every time they arrive to do their job; the fact that such an abundance of magazines is present in various criminal situations shows that these weapons are a preferred staple for offenders.

According to *The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence*, “the high rate of sustained fire puts law enforcement at an increased risk of injury or death. 40% of police officers murdered from 2009-2013 were murdered by a firearm equipped with a large capacity magazine including 13% of police officers murdered by an assault weapon.” Although 40% is not a majority, it is substantial. An individual could be confident in asserting that if these high-capacity magazines were not sold daily, the number of police officers losing their lives in the line of duty would be much less extensive. Peter Neronha contends that “these weapons threaten our law enforcement, they threaten our children, they threaten us.” He reaffirms the notion that it is not merely the public that is in danger but also those entrusted to protect the public. His thoughts call to question the future security of all American citizens if current policies are not amended.

It is evident that high-capacity magazine and assault weapons bans are critical for preventing mass shootings and homicides in Rhode Island; while this is a highly controversial

proposal, its implementation will enhance public safety. The frequency of mass shootings and homicides in America is tragic but preventable. While the presence of assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines is currently rampant, legislators can pass the necessary reforms to eliminate all circulation of such firearms. Moving forward, it is imperative that the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives reach a unified position on gun reform. Considering they are already facing the monumental task of overcoming Republican opposition, Democrats must reach an agreement to expedite the process. Americans deserve to live in a society free from fear and uncertainty. Freedoms can be upheld while protecting the security of all citizens. Partisan conflict is minimized when the value of human life is called into question; enacting these reforms will make certain that lives are preserved. The time to act is now.

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- This text is necessary as it discusses the attempts of legislators to pass a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons at the federal level. The text**

**specifically references how in 2017, Sens. Feinstein, Cardin, and Van Hollen introduced legislation that would ban the sale, transfer, manufacturing, and importation of military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. However, it also mentions how such legislation did not pass in the Senate or House of Representatives. This text allows me to evaluate why legislation did not pass and propose a solution as to how future legislation could be established. The text is from Senator Ben Cardin’s campaign website, making it a reputable and fact-checked source.**

“Cicilline, Feinstein Introduce Assault Weapons Ban.” *Congressman David Cicilline*, 11 Mar. 2021, <https://cicilline.house.gov/press-release/cicilline-feinstein-introduce-assault-weapons-ban>.

**This source is relevant as it comes from a representative for Rhode Island’s 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District and offers a credible opinion as to why assault weapons should not be open to public/consumer use. David Cicilline is a respected politician and the former Mayor of Providence, implying his great care for the State of Rhode Island. It strengthens my argument and research having a well-known political figure supporting my position and establishes a stable foundation for those who once voted for Cicilline to support the cause as he does. Additionally, Cicilline calls assault-style weapons “weapons of war [that] do not belong in our communities,” alluding to their brutal nature.**

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<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30188421/>.

**This source is relevant and useful as it discusses the data and effectiveness of the 1994 high-capacity magazine ban. Charles DiMaggio is a faculty member in the New York University Langone Medical Center. He is an injury epidemiologist who has worked with the NIH and CDC on a variety of related public health issues including bioterrorism preparedness and health disparities. DiMaggio supports my argument by providing significant evidence that a ban can be successful in lowering the rate of gun violence. It is necessary to include because it provides concrete data that indicates a connection between a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons and a reduction in American gun deaths.**

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**This source is relevant to my research as it discusses the role of high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons in individual homicides. While such firearms are more commonly associated with mass shootings, one must remain cognizant of their presence in other forms of crime as well. This article specifically mentions an incident in Providence, Rhode Island, where six men were facing charges for their**

**alleged involvement in a gang-related shooting. At the scene of the crime, law enforcement officials found 51 shell casings as well as 12 pistol and rifle magazines, four of which were large-capacity magazines holding more than 30 rounds. My intention in referencing this incident is to acknowledge the prevalence of high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons on the streets and the fact that they are readily available for individuals despite current regulations. Josh Faiola is a respected reporter at WPRI and a graduate of Rhode Island College.**

Kennedy, Danielle. "Hearing on 21 Gun Bills Stretches More than 10 Hours in RI House Judiciary Committee." *WJAR*, 20 Mar. 2021, <https://turnto10.com/news/local/hearing-on-21-gun-bills-stretches-more-than-10-hours-in-ri-house-judiciary-committee>.

**This source is helpful as it presents the various reasons why most Republicans are opposed to the notion of a high-capacity magazine ban. Danielle Kennedy is an esteemed journalist at WJAR and is a graduate of Syracuse University. The article goes into greater depth discussing why gun violence and assault weapons are such a controversial topic and allows the reader to experience an opposing argument. This enables the reader to think for themselves, considering my argument against the popular contentions held by many Republicans. One must always be aware of differing thoughts on an issue as the best arguments are ones that acknowledge all points of resistance.**

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*1994. Here's Why*. Los Angeles Times, 3 Mar. 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-pol-nra-spending-20180303-story.html>.

**This source is relevant to my research as it explains how the National Rifle Association “rates” politicians according to their beliefs on gun control. The article specifically discusses how Reps. Sanford D. Bishop Jr. of Georgia, Henry Cuellar of Texas, and Collin C. Peterson of Minnesota all have A-ratings. Lee then continues, discussing how the NRA generally only donates to politicians who are highly conservative with regard to gun control policies. Kurtis Lee is a national correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times* and was a member of the Post staff that won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news coverage of the Aurora theater shooting. He is also a graduate of Temple University. His article allows the reader to recognize that the NRA’s financial support of politicians is wholly dependent on their gun control ideologies.**

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**This source is helpful as it offers a local perspective on the topic in question. Steph Machado is a respected WPRI-12 journalist and is a graduate of the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. She is educated and**

**qualified to be reporting on the crisis. The article offers relevant statistics regarding the recent uptick in Providence crime, as well as the suspected reasons for said increase. It discusses how individuals are often more apt to commit a crime after increases in stress, which can be most recently attributed to COVID-19. It is necessary for my research as it acknowledges the overall increase of gun violence in Providence and the United States as a whole.**

“Magazine Capacity.” *Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence*,

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Meeks, Alexandra. “Federal Judge Overturns California's Ban on Assault Weapons and Likens AR-15 to Swiss Army Knife.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 6 June 2021,

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/05/us/california-gun-ban-overturned/index.html>.

**This source is crucial to having a greater understanding of most Republicans on gun control measures. Meeks describes how U.S. District Judge Roger Benitez likens an AR-15 to a Swiss Army Knife. His analogy undermines the severity of assault-style weapons and belittles the dangers associated with such firearms. However, his ruling also speaks to the commonly held Republican position that any firearm should be permitted for one’s self-defense or for leisure activities. The source mentions how Judge Benitez overturned a ban on high-capacity magazines in California and explains his reasoning in doing so. This reality further supports my argument that political affiliation plays a principal role in one’s attitude toward gun control policies. Alexandra Meeks is a respected and reputable reporter for *CNN*, and a graduate of both Loyola Marymount University and the University of Southern California.**

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**This article is relevant to my research as it emphasizes the reasons why Republicans are opposed to a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons. Pearce discusses the notion that Republicans especially value their freedom to possess firearms and defend themselves. Additionally, the article mentions the need many individuals feel to possess firearms for hobby/hunting purposes. Matt Pearce of *The Los Angeles Times* is a respected reporter who graduated from the University of Missouri. He previously covered the 2020 presidential election and spent six years on *The Los Angeles Times*' national committee, writing stories about violence, disasters, and civil liberties. The article references Donald Trump and Joseph Biden, two well-known politicians with greatly contrasting views on gun control.**

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Rodgers, Bethany. “Utah Sen. Mitt Romney Said He Will Not Vote for New Federal Gun Laws.” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2021, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2021/03/29/utah-sen-mitt-romney-said/>.

**This source is relevant to my research as it speaks about Senator Mitt Romney’s position on gun control. Romney asserts that he is in support of states enforcing their own laws on gun control as opposed to the federal government doing so.**

**Bethany Rodgers of *The Salt Lake Tribune* is a respected and credible reporter who graduated from the University of Maryland. This article is especially crucial to my argument as it portrays how the NRA’s financial contributions play a significant role in determining an individual’s political view. The article allows me to adequately preface how the NRA funds Republican politicians more than Democrats.**

Schaeffer, Katherine. “Key Facts about Americans and Guns.” *Pew Research Center*, 13 Sept. 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/13/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/>.

Seddiq, Oma. *Republicans Criticize Biden's Gun Safety Executive Actions as an 'Infringement' of Second Amendment Rights*. Business Insider, 8 Apr. 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/republicans-criticize-bidens-gun-actions-as-unconstitutional-2021-4>.

**This article specifically asserts the Democratic position that gun violence is a public health crisis in America. It references President Joseph Biden, calling the gun**

**violence epidemic in America an “international embarrassment” while “[urging] both Congress and the states to take comprehensive action” to combat the current state of affairs. Oma Seddiq is a politics reporter for *Business Insider* and a graduate of Northwestern University, making her an educated and reputable writer. This article also discusses the Republican position that Democrats are disregarding the rights of American citizens by enforcing a ban on high-capacity magazines; this, in turn, allows me to accurately assess the divide between the two political parties.**

Stellino, Molly. “Fact Check: Would a U.S. House Bill Ban Assault Weapons?” *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 6 Apr. 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/04/06/fact-check-would-us-house-bill-ban-assault-weapons/2943913001/>.

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay. *Can New Gun Violence Research Find a Path around the Political Stalemate?* *The New York Times*, 27 Mar. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/27/us/politics/gun-violence-research-cdc.html>.

**This source is relevant to my research as it references the connection between gun violence research and political positions on gun control. The article makes a point of discussing how federal funding for gun violence research has been significantly reduced due to President Trump’s administration. It also emphasizes the notion that if more research were to be conducted on gun violence in America, there would be a greater sense of urgency for American voters. Additionally, it proposes that if citizens were better educated on the prevalence of gun violence in America, stricter legislation, such as a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-style weapons, would not be so threatening. Sheryl Gay Stolberg is a Washington Correspondent**

**covering health policy. In more than two decades at *The New York Times*, she has also covered the White House, Congress, and national politics. She is also a graduate of the University of Virginia.**

*US Gun Control: What Is the NRA and Why Is It So Powerful?* BBC, 6 Aug. 2020,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35261394>.

**This source is necessary as it discusses the origin and nature of the National Rifle Association (NRA). It makes a point of examining the role the NRA has played in political campaigns and explains their interest of preserving the Second Amendment for American citizens. It is relevant to my research as it demonstrates why the NRA would be such a staunch supporter of the Republican party. The article is from a reputable source and uses valid, factual information throughout the text.**

Victor, Daniel. *A List of Recent Mass Shootings in the United States*. The New York Times, 23 Mar. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/23/us/us-mass-shootings.html>.

“What Are Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Magazines?” *Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence*, <https://www.bradyunited.org/fact-sheets/what-are-assault-weapons-and-high-capacity-magazines>.

**This source is useful as it describes how several states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, have already enacted a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence is a well-known nonprofit organization that actively advocates for gun violence prevention. The statistics shown on their website have all been fact-checked and collected from reputable organizations. It is relevant to my paper as it will allow me to introduce the failure of legislators to enact a ban in Rhode Island and the reasons for why no**



**bills have passed. The inclusion of this article implies a sense of urgency and would promote legislators to act because of what similar nearby states have already done.**

“Which Senators Have Taken the Most NRA Money?” *Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence*, <https://elections.bradyunited.org/take-action/nra-donations-116th-congress-senators>.

**This source is relevant to my research as it delves deeper into the specific amounts of financial support the National Rifle Association (NRA) has given to Republican politicians over time. The text specifically states that during the first half of 2019 alone, “the NRA spent \$1.6 million lobbying Congress against passing gun safety legislation.” In a similar way, it states that Senator Mitt Romney of Utah has accepted the most money from the NRA over his career, totaling \$13,647,676 to date. This text is helpful in my argument as it speaks directly to the notion that NRA funding determines a politician’s opinion on gun control. Most notably, Mitt Romney’s opinion, declaring that it should be up to the states to determine gun control procedures; yet it is evident that in most southern, conservative states, no significant gun reform will ever come to fruition. This text comes from the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, which is a credible and fact-checked source.**

Zhang, Sarah. “Why Can't the U.S. Treat Gun Violence as a Public-Health Problem?” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 15 Feb. 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/02/gun-violence-public-health/553430/>.