

# Editorial: Social Workers Must Carry a Gun

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Every morning from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m., I meet with a highly diverse group of men at the gym. Our diversity includes: Race, socioeconomic status, religion, politics, and most importantly – attitudes toward gun control. In fact, we share only one life experience: Heart surgeries and strokes forced all of us to look into the eyes of death. Flirting with death has a strange impact on one's definition of social reality. With our diverse views but shared social reality, we meet for coffee and watch the morning news. The June 12, 2016, massacre in Orlando became the centerpiece of our morning discussion of current events.

One member of our group is a retired Special Forces sniper. He is a kind man with a seemingly gentle soul. In response to the Orlando massacre, he commented, "If everyone in the bar was required to carry a gun, there would have been many more survivors and the shooter would have been neutralized much sooner." I have heard people make such a comment only on Fox News and was surprised to hear a real human being utter such a statement. He followed up with: "Teachers and social workers should be required to be armed." At that point, I had to speak up: "Some people are too grossly incompetent to have a gun." He was extraordinarily surprised to hear such a statement. Firing a gun with great accuracy is second nature to him, but not to me.

Here is my embarrassing story. I became interested in social work as a result of volunteer work with legally blind teenagers during my high school years. Although I was never legally blind, I did have serious depth perception problems. This information lays the foundation for my story about a camping trip with a legally blind teenager

and a teacher who specialized in teaching visually impaired students. We had a .22 rifle with us and planned to shoot targets, which consisted of soda cans sitting on a log. The blind teenage never missed his target. As for me, I missed every single can. The blind boy was a better shot than the sighted boy!

This is nothing to brag about, but I am grossly incompetent with a gun. In fact, I think there should be a law prohibiting gun ownership for people like me. Marksmen and members of the National Rifle Association (NRA) do not understand that many people cannot develop the skill to successfully aim a gun. The experience of gross gun incompetence is clearly out of their element. Frankly, I believe that if the president of the NRA and I went target shooting, he would be so shocked with my gun incompetence that he would pee in his pants for fear that someone like me could legally be on the streets with a loaded gun. Gun advocates simply do not understand that many people cannot handle guns.

Within the arena of politics and gun legislation, I propose that we are asking the wrong question. It is not a constitutional question. With our Constitution, there is no such thing as an absolute right. The question we must ask is: What type of error do we want to make? The options are best illustrated in the figure on the following page.

There are two types of people; those who are good with guns and those who are not. There are two governmental options: to allow gun ownership and to prohibit gun ownership. The cells represent the possible outcomes.

In cells A and D, the correct policy decisions are made. That is, in cell A people who are good with guns have their guns, while in cell D, people who are bad with guns may not have them. The fact

is simple: The type of gun regulation we have is irrelevant. There will be unavoidable error.

The ultimate truth can be found in the troublesome B and C cells. They represent policy or statutory errors. Cell B suggests that people who should not own guns have them; while cell C represents people who have been prohibited from owning a gun but should own guns. Cells B and C are symbiotic. That is, as a policy or statute increases the number of people in cell B, the number of people in cell C decreases. The inverse is also true. As C increases, B decreases. Thus, the correct gun policy question to ask is: "As Americans, what type of error do we want to make?" When

we calibrate our laws to decrease gun ownership among "bad" people, there will be a corresponding number of "good" people who will not have access to guns. When we calibrate our laws to increase gun ownership among "good" people, there will be a corresponding number of "bad" people who will not have access to guns. The policy decision is an issue of balance. All gun legislation will produce one of these errors. We must ask, "Which error is worse?"

As for me, I belong in cell D. Email [smarson@nc.rr.com](mailto:smarson@nc.rr.com) and let me know what cell you belong in!

**What type of error do you want?**

Type of Gun Law	Types of people	
	Good with guns	Bad with guns
Allow	A) Correct Decision	B) INcorrect Decision
Prohibit	C) INcorrect Decision	D) Correct Decision