

# Gun Laws Do Not Inhibit Gun Violence

*Jordan Carleo-Evangelist*

*In the following viewpoint, Jordan Carleo-Evangelist highlights statistics showing that despite vast differences in gun control laws, many states have similar records on gun violence. While a ban on firearms is highly unlikely, the evidence that such a ban would reduce gun violence seems inconclusive. Jordan Carleo-Evangelist is a staff writer for the Times Union in Albany, New York.*

Jack Buttman can sell a 9 mm Glock pistol in less time than it takes to order breakfast in a diner. It's even faster, he says, if the buyer is familiar with the one-page form for the federal background check and doesn't stop to read the questions.

Buttman, owner of Butt's Gun Sales in Billings, Mont., says he can send a buyer out the door in 12 to 20 minutes.

At any gun shop in the Capital Region [of New York state], the same sale can take as long as six months. New York is one of 12 states that require some form of permit to buy a handgun, and even permit holders wait a week to 10 days to add another gun.

Earlier this year [2004], New York state's strict gun control laws earned a solid B+ from The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. The same report by the nation's best-known gun control advocacy group, billed as a tool to educate Americans "about how their state's leaders are doing on laws and policies that promote a reduction in gun violence," gave Montana an F.

But does it mean citizens of the Big Sky State are more at risk of gun violence?

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According to a University at Albany [State University of New York at Albany] publication of 2001 FBI statistics, the most recent available, the percentage of violent crimes committed with guns in New York state was virtually the same as in Montana—17.7 percent in New York and 17.4 percent in Montana.

## **Gun Laws Seem Questionable**

The same is true for other states: Colorado and Connecticut, for example, have gun laws as different as New York's from Montana's, but they have about the same percentage of violent crime committed with guns.

Statistics show no clear relationship between strict gun laws and the rate of gun crimes—a fact that raises questions about the politically charged debate over gun control as a means of combating crime.

Buttman says he knows why states with diametrically opposite gun control laws have such similar crime statistics.

“There are no evil guns,” Buttman said, sounding a bit exasperated over the telephone. “There are only evil people. And when you can figure out how to stop all the evil people, sir, you'll be the next Messiah.”

The Sept. 13 [2004] expiration of the decade-old federal assault weapons ban once again focused attention on one of the nation's most polarized debates.

Each year about 30,000 Americans die from gunshot wounds, and another 40,000 to 50,000 are wounded. Most of the deaths result from suicides and accidents, but about a third are homicides, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC].

All told, gunshot wounds and deaths cost more than \$100 billion a year in medical treatment, lost income and other costs, according to the Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins University.