



The Anderson County Democrat

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Climate Prayer Vigil at Melton Hill Park on October 11th

Editorial: Pat Fain

The shooting at Umpqua Community Collage last week was the 45th shooting this year at a school in the United States. I have heard it said that in order to defeat evil, we must first name the evil. So I am going to give it a name.... Domestic Terrorism.....

What is the relevance, then, of the Homeland Security laws vis-à-vis our tolerance of arming the terrorists who kill our children? The NRA appears to have convinced the Republicans in Congress that somehow we need to pretend there is no connection between gun ownership and terrorism even when it comes to killing children, while simultaneously blocking funding to investigate any connection. *I strongly believe that the NRA is facilitating domestic terrorism.*

The majority of Americans are on record as supporting laws that limit gun ownership. I agree with the President that it is time to take our country back from domestic terrorists and the NRA.

The breakdown, the weak link, is the unlimited arming of America. The NRA has worked very hard to focus the public attention on the mental health of the shooters. It is a clever distraction and redirection, but it is simply that: *a redirection that lacks viability*. It is against the law to release (even to the FBI) any medical record without the consent of the individual or a court order. So, it is nearly impossible to actually know the mental health of anyone either before they commit a crime or after. It is not legally possible, even if our mental health system were not in shambles, to create a watch list of disturbed people in order to deny them access to or ownership of guns, without probable cause. Seeking a solution that uses our laws dealing with domestic terrorism presents a viable possibility.

The cost in children’s lives is incalculable. *Nothing will undermine the morale of a nation like the random killing of its children.*



On October 11th, Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light held a prayer vigil and free concert at the pavilion at Melton Hill Park in Oak Ridge. This was made possible in part due to the efforts of local Democrat and climate activist Todd Waterman.

Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light is a state affiliate of a network of faith communities working together to combat climate change from a spiritual perspective. In conjunction with the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church, they had a prayer session with a few moments of silence. Afterwards, many climate related organizations including Mom’s Clean Air Force and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy had booths with information about how to get involved with their climate action. The vigil ended with a free concert by musicians Sparky and Rhonda who played songs that had a climate theme.

Climate action needs immediate attention. In the words of Mr. Waterman, *“Complaining to each other accomplishes nothing”*. So let us not complain so much to each other, but let our elected officials feel the heat (pun intended)!

Upcoming Fall Events

<p>October 23rd, 6PM CST</p> <p>Jackson Day Dinner</p> <p>Hosted by Tennessee Democratic Party in Nashville</p> <p>Keynote speaker:</p> <p>DNC Chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz</p>	<p>October 26th, 6PM</p> <p>Panel Discussion on Climate Change.</p> <p>Mary Headrick will facilitate discussion</p> <p>Clinton Community Center</p>	<p>November 11th, 11 am</p> <p>DEET (Democracy for East Tennessee) Veterans Day event.</p> <p>Oak Ridge Civic Center, Room A/B</p>
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Editor: Pat Fain
 Asst. Editor: Scott Julius
 Consulting: Catherine Denenberg
 Contact us: patfain.acdp@gmail.com

A word about the tragic mass shooting in Oregon this month from Scott Julius.

On October 1st, a shooter armed with six guns entered a classroom at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon and killed 10 people, injuring nine more. Among the dead were an assistant professor, students fresh out of high school starting their college career, and adults going back to college.

We have had places the likes of Aurora, Newtown, Blacksburg, Charleston, and now Roseburg etched in our minds, memories of avoidable tragedies. If logic and reason would have prevailed after these shootings something would have been done to see this doesn't happen again. Indeed, President Obama said in his speech about the Roseburg shooting "*We are the only advanced country on Earth that sees these kinds of mass shootings every few months.*" Perhaps, we would expand access to mental health services to help treat those with mental health problems. Maybe we would pass common sense gun control legislation closing loopholes and re-instating the assault weapons ban.

Sadly, all of these seemingly good ideas and possible solutions to these mass shootings seem to be an utopic dream. Our elected officials in both Nashville and Washington have little interest in

any solution that involves gun control and access to mental health services. With the NRA pouring money like a waterfall into officials that "represent" us in the Republican Party a policy of doing nothing is the order of the day. Instead of common sense gun control policy, we get nothing but fearmongering about "protecting the Second Amendment" and that "Obama is coming after your guns" (he's been in office since January 2009, I'm still waiting for that to happen). None of the gun control legislation infringes on your Second Amendment rights. Arm everyone is the solution the NRA panders. That is the policy of lunacy, not common sense.

This issue looks at gun control and access to mental health services. We shall explore where our Democratic candidates for President stand on these issues. Additionally, we will look at what our state officials have (or have not) done to address this. The list of communities scared by mass shootings continues to grow. It needs to stop, lest we end up with another town name to this already long list.

Protected right or domestic terrorism?

On October 6th, the NRA Tweeted : "*There is no so-called "gun show loophole".*" This is false. Since gun show sales are considered "private sales" the buyer doesn't have to undergo a background check or waiting period. The sale can also occur over the internet. Not gun "#gunfacts"... this is **#gunfiction**.

Ben Carson (R) reply: "*As a Doctor, I spent many a night pulling bullets out of bodies. There is no doubt that this senseless violence is breathtaking – but I never saw a body with bullet holes that was more devastating than taking the right to arm ourselves away.*"

Hillary's response:

"It is just beyond my comprehension that we are seeing these mass murders happen again and again and again. And as I have said, we have got to get the political will to do everything we can to keep people safe. You know, I know there is a way to have sensible gun control measures that help prevent violence, prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands and save lives".

Bernie's response:

"We need sensible gun control legislation. And by the way, we need to significantly improve mental health services in the United States of America. And I pledge to do everything that I can in both of those areas. I don't know that anybody knows what the magic solution is. What we do know is the current situation is not tenable"

It is not difficult to google the federal definition of "domestic terrorism." { <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition> } The FBI website on protecting Colleges and Universities is https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2009/august/campussecurity_080409 . The FBI site on school shootings is <https://leb.fbi.gov/2014/january/active-shooter-events-from-2000-to-2012> . It is most interesting that the site itself is titled "Active Shooter Events" and it states that such events are escalating.

Where do they stand? Hillary Clinton versus Bernie Sanders on gun control.

Hillary Clinton

1. Supports universal background checks.
2. Co-sponsored legislation as Senator to close the gun show loophole.
3. Co-sponsored legislation as Senator to extend and re-instate the assault weapons ban.
4. Supports cracking down on illegal gun trafficking.
5. Wants to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers.

{www.hillaryclinton.com}

Bernie Sanders

1. Voted for universal background checks and closing loopholes.
2. Voted for and supports the assault weapons ban.
3. Very pro-Second Amendment, believes in the need to bridge the divide on this issue between rural and urban America.
4. Believes in the need to significantly improve mental health services.
5. Voted against the Brady Bill.

{www.npr.org}

The "Guns in parks bill"

Our state leaders have no interest in curbing gun violence. The NRA's lobbying team won a victory in the Volunteer State when they got the awful "Guns in Parks Bill" passed earlier this year. A spokesperson for the NRA called this a "Victory for the Second Amendment".

Like anyone's Second Amendment rights were being threatened. Instead of bravely standing up to the NRA and keeping our parks free of deadly weapons, Governor Haslam chooses to make us less safe. Instead of listening to the police, school boards, mayors, city councils, and concerned citizens of our state a lobbyist written bill was allowed to become law.

{www.tennessean.com}

They say guns make us safer?

Gun-related homicides

The rate of gun-related homicides in the U.S. is far higher than that of other large and affluent countries.

Homicide by firearm, rate per 100,000 population



NOTE: List includes countries with a per capita GDP of more than \$30,000 and a population of 20 million or more; all data for the most recent year available
Source: U.N., CIA World Factbook

*Does not include Northern Ireland
Graphic: The Sacramento Bee
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Light reading for the political junkie

1. President Obama on gun control and the NRA's power. A good read in support of responsible gun owners and the need for gun control legislation: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2015/10/02/president-obama-just-identified-the-one-thing-that-could-make-real-gun-reform-possible/>
2. A good read about a smart way to do gun control with some mistakes made by all sides trying: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-a-new-way-to-tackle-gun-deaths.html?smid=fb-share&r=1>
3. Article about how Republicans vote against the Affordable Care Act that expanded mental health parity rules, yet claim increasing access to mental health services is the key: <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2013/01/17/1460601/republicans-claim-mental-health-gun-violence-solution/>