

# Please Take the “Need” Factor Out of the Gun Control Debate

☒ In the wake of the horrific school shooting that took place last week in Newtown, Connecticut, we’ve heard a common question asked by supporters of increased gun controls: *Why does anyone need the type of guns used by the shooter?*

For me, it’s a simple question to answer: The average citizen probably *doesn’t* need them. What I don’t understand is how that answer is relevant to the debate.

It irritates me whenever I hear someone begin a legal argument with, “Why does anyone need…” In a free society, it’s not up to me or anyone else to be the arbiter of what someone *needs*. It’s an extraneous question. The legality of private ownership shouldn’t be tied to necessity.

Let’s face it…Most of us own plenty of completely unnecessary things. A lot of those things are even dangerous. We buy cars that are built to reach speeds that far exceed safe, legal limits. We buy samurai swords and large knives at shopping malls. We buy propane tanks and rat poison at supermarkets. We buy alcohol.

Whether or not we *need* these things isn’t a determination that should be made by the government or anyone else who isn’t involved in the purchase. They’re not our spouses, parents, or whoever holds the purse-strings on our family budget. Consumers shouldn’t be compelled to defend to society or the government their reasoning behind buying products, even when those products are firearms.

If someone likes to shoot at cans or paper targets in the woods with a semi-automatic firearm, or feels safer in their home with one, it’s not my place to say that they can’t own it because I don’t think they “need” it. It’s none of my

business.

If the argument is truly about a public safety concern (and it certainly is to many), let's just come out and say that. *That* should be the debate. Imposing a legal limitation on property by playing the *need card*, on the other hand, is nothing more than a self-affirming, symbolic mechanism for penalizing people who are simply enjoying their freedoms.

When peddlers of class warfare target rich people for tax hikes, they often ask the question, "Who *needs* that much money?"

When a city mayor feels compelled to dictate the dietary habits of his citizenry, he asks questions like, "Who *needs* to drink more than 16 ounces of soda pop?"

The only answer that such questions warrant, in the United States of America, is: "It's none of your business."

If the government is not the entity providing the product or service, it's not their role to cast judgement over our rationale for consuming it. It's certainly not their role to create legislation based on it.

There are real arguments to be made for how we can best protect our children from people like Adam Lanza. The "need" factor isn't one of them.