**Right-to-carry laws lead to more violent crime: Isn’t that a huge surprise? – 1/29/18**

One of the most contentious arguments within the larger gun control debate is over whether right-to-carry laws that make it legal for gun owners to carry loaded weapons in public, usually concealed on their person, make people safer. Gun rights advocates argue that packing heat is a prevention against crime and violence, invoking slogans like, "An armed society is a polite society." Gun control proponents, however, argue that a proliferation of loaded weapons is bound to lead to more violence, if only because people have easier access to the means to harm others.

[John Donohue](https://law.stanford.edu/directory/john-j-donohue-iii/), a legal researcher who works for Stanford Law School, has been working on this question for the better part of two decades. "Turns out it’s a tricky question to answer through statistical means," he told Salon. But now "this data [has] become complete enough, and some of the new statistical techniques have been implemented," he continued.

The correlation between the passage of right-to-carry or RTC laws and violent crime has long been documented, Donohue explained, but as anyone with even the most basic knowledge of statistics understands, correlation is not causation. Now, with a combination of sophisticated statistical analysis techniques, Donohue and his team believe they have been able to document a *causal* relationship.

"Ten years after the adoption of RTC laws, violent crime is estimated to be 13-15 percent higher than it would have been without the RTC law," explains the paper, [published at the National Bureau of Economic Research](http://www.nber.org/papers/w23510).

There are a number of different reasons why violence has apparently increased under right-to-carry laws, which is why the negative effects of these laws tend to be compounded over time.

 “The most obvious problem is people get into disputes that, without guns, would at the most lead to a bloody nose," Donohue explained. If one or both parties are carrying guns, such conflicts "can now lead to death."

A high-profile killing in Minnesota last week offers a good example. [A 25-year-old man named Alexander Weiss](http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-man-charged-with-killing-teen-in-clash-over-crash/469826913/), who had a bumper sticker on his car that read "Gun Control Means Hitting Your Target," was arrested for allegedly shooting 17-year-old Muhammed Rahim to death after a traffic accident. [Witnesses describe the two young men as confrontational](http://www.citypages.com/news/witnesses-dispute-alexander-weiss-self-defense-story-in-shooting-of-teen-driver/469774653), and Weiss has claimed he was acting in self-defense. But it's hard to imagine the incident would have ended in death if Weiss hadn't been carrying.

While impulsive violence is an issue, Donohue said, perhaps the bigger problem is that  "when you start carrying guns, you make them much more likely to be stolen," which means that right-to-carry laws offer a steady supply of guns to people who are already inclined to commit crimes.

"American gun owners, preoccupied with self-defense, are inadvertently arming the very criminals they fear," [explained Brian Freskos at The Trace](https://www.thetrace.org/features/stolen-guns-violent-crime-america/), kicking off his November investigative report on the way stolen guns have become a major component of the gun crime problem.

More than 237,000 guns were stolen from legal gun owners in 2016 alone, though Freskos believes that is a drastic underestimate, [as many gun owners never report thefts to the police](https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/reports/2017/07/25/436533/stolen-guns-america/). One reason gun theft is so common is because right-to-carry laws and NRA propaganda encourage gun owners to have their firearms accessible at all times: in their cars, in their homes or on their person. If people kept guns locked up (as responsible firearms owners did for generations), this problem largely wouldn't exist. But when guns are on coffee tables, in glove compartments or carried in holsters, they become easy targets for thieves. Reliable estimates [suggest as many as 3.5 million stolen guns have](https://injepijournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-017-0109-8) entered the black market over the past decade.

The gun [industry profits from all those stolen guns](https://www.salon.com/2017/10/03/americas-big-problem-with-guns-our-gun-industry-profits-from-fear-and-death/), since many people who have a gun stolen are back in the store the next day, buying a replacement. So the NRA has every incentive to encourage people to carry guns or otherwise store them in places where they can easily be stolen. That ends up boosting profits for manufacturers, whom the NRA represents first and foremost.

Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that the NRA has been eagerly pushing "permitless carry" laws. Getting a concealed carry license is already laughably easy. It [took NBC News reporter Mike Stuckey less than 22 minutes](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/35839541/ns/us_news-life/t/minutes-concealed-weapon-permit/#.Wmjc4UtG2fQ) to successfully complete the application. [More than half of American states](https://www.thetrace.org/2016/02/live-fire-training-not-mandatory-concealed-carry-permits/) let someone get a concealed carry permit without spending any time at a gun range to make sure they can fire the damn thing safely. But even those barriers are considered too high for the NRA, which [has](https://www.nraila.org/articles/20170324/nra-backed-permitless-carry-law-enacted-in-north-dakota) [aggressively lobbied](https://www.nraila.org/articles/20170503/permitless-carry-advances-in-south-carolina-senate) [to lift even even minor permit requirements](https://medium.com/%40NRA/why-you-dont-need-to-freak-out-over-permitless-carry-1a3709355897). Such a change opens up a new market for the gun industry: People who want to feel tough and walk around strapped, but can't be bothered to learn to shoot the thing or answer a few simple questions first.

On Wednesday, the Indiana General Assembly will have a committee hearing on just such a proposal, [HB 1022](https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2018/bills/house/1022), introduced by state Rep. Jim Lucas, which would repeal the law requiring any permit whatsoever in order to carry a handgun in the state. Gun control activists, who have testified previously against this proposal, plan to show up in force at the hearing.

"Our handgun licensing requirement helps law enforcement prevent people with histories of violent or emotionally unstable behavior, weapons offenders and people who have never passed a criminal background check from carrying a loaded handgun in public," Rachel Guglielmo, the volunteer leader of the Indiana chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, told Salon.

"The state is forcing innocent people to fill out lengthy forms," [Rep. Lucas told the IndyStar in October](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2017/10/12/after-vegas-tindiana-lawmakers-postpone-permit-less-firearm-carry-discussion-following-vegas-shootin/739649001/), defending his bill.

But most reasonable people don't see filling out a form, as one must do to renew a driver's license or file a tax return, as some kind of outrageous punishment. Instead, it's viewed as a common-sense regulation to ensure some amount of control over who has guns on the street. A [survey commissioned by Everytown for Gun Safety](https://everytown.org/documents/2017/02/indiana-polling-on-gun-policy.pdf) found that 90 percent of Indiana residents surveyed supported mandatory licenses for those who carry handguns in public. This is in a state [where 16 percent of adults have a carry permit](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3004915), the second-highest rate in the nation.

The reality is that carrying guns may make people *feel* safer, but all the available evidence suggests that it makes society less safe. Having guns everywhere makes lethal violence more likely, and also has a psychological effect, making it seem more socially acceptable — desirable, even — to resolve conflicts with violence instead of diplomacy. We all need to heed [the immortal words of Johnny Cash](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTAZ7xzZKAw): "Don't take your guns to town, son/ Leave your guns at home."

# Pope says fake news is satanic, condemns use in politics

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis on Wednesday condemned fake news as satanic, saying journalists and social media users should shun and unmask manipulative “snake tactics” that foment division to serve political and economic interests.

“Fake news is a sign of intolerant and hypersensitive attitudes, and leads only to the spread of arrogance and hatred. That is the end result of untruth,” Francis said in the first document by a pope on the subject.

The document was issued after months of debate on how much fake news may have influenced the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign and the election of President Donald Trump.

“Spreading fake news can serve to advance specific goals, influence political decisions, and serve economic interests,” the pope wrote, condemning the “manipulative use of social networks” and other forms of communication.

Called “The truth will set you free - fake news and journalism for peace”, the document was issued in advance of the Catholic Church’s World Day of Social Communications on May 13.

”This false but believable news is ‘captious’, inasmuch as it grasps people’s attention by appealing to stereotypes and common social prejudices and exploiting instantaneous emotions like anxiety, contempt, anger and frustration,” Francis said.

False stories, the Pope said, spread so quickly that even authoritative denials often could not contain the damage done and many people run the risk of becoming “unwilling accomplices in spreading biased and baseless ideas”.

He called for “education for truth” that would help people discern, evaluate and understand news in order to recognize the “sly and dangerous form of seduction that worms its way into the heart with false and alluring arguments”.

Francis compared the use of fake news to the Bible story of the devil, who, disguised as a serpent, persuaded Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. He said she was fed wrong information by Satan, who told her the fruit would make her and Adam as all-knowing as God.

“We need to unmask what could be called the ‘snake-tactics’ used by those (purveyors of fake news) who disguise themselves in order to strike at any time and place.”

Vatican spokesman Greg Burke, a former reporter for U.S. outlets, told Reuters Television: “The Pope is not saying that all journalists are snakes but he is certainly acknowledging that they can be.”

The pope said the role of journalists was “not just a job, it is a mission” and they had particular responsibility to stem fake news.

“Amid feeding frenzies and the mad rush for a scoop, they must remember that the heart of information is not the speed with which it is reported or its audience impact, but persons.”

Francis said journalism should be “less concentrated on breaking news than on exploring the underlying causes of conflicts ...a journalism committed to pointing out alternatives to the escalation of shouting matches and verbal violence.”

### Mississippi Dem Tries to Force School Kids to Recite Ten Commandments

The Mississippi State Legislature is at it again. This time, instead of legislating [state-sanctioned discrimination](https://lawandcrime.com/high-profile/mississippi-gov-signs-anti-lgbt-religious-liberty-bill-into-law/) against LGBT people, it is turning public schools into religious institutions. Check out [House Bill 100](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2018/pdf/HB/1100-1199/HB1100IN.pdf):

“Principals and teachers in each public elementary and secondary school of each school district in this state shall display on an appropriately framed background with minimum dimensions of eleven (11) inches by fourteen (14) inches, the Ten Commandments in each classroom and the following motto of the United States of America in each classroom, school auditorium and school cafeteria under his or her supervision: ‘IN GOD WE TRUST.’

The school board of each school district shall require the teachers in that school district to have the Ten Commandments recited aloud at the beginning of the first hour of class each day that school is in session.”

Bet you thought I was exaggerating a bit. But no, Mississippi actually just wrote a law that would force students to recite the Ten Commandments every day at school.   And even that’s not enough. The bill also turns every corner of every school – from the auditorium to the lunchroom – into a little sanctuary of Christian goodness; Kids and teachers can now gaze upon giant (mandatory) postings of the Ten Commandments while they engage in their (also mandatory) daily moments of silence. And before you start complaining that the GOP is at it again, this bill was proposed by **Credell Calhoun,** a Democrat – further proof that neither party has cornered the market on stupidity.

Putting aside the pure insanity of this entire idea (please picture first-graders chanting about coveting thy neighbor’s wife in between learning phonics and struggling with juice boxes), let’s talk about the unadulterated illegality of it all. The First Amendment forbids government from ramming religion down the throats of Americans. In more refined legalese, the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment is violated when legislation involves religion without some legitimate secular or legislative purpose. The government may not establish an official American religion, nor may it take action that unduly favors one religion over others. If you’re thinking, “reciting the Ten Commandments in school sounds a lot like favoring Christianity,” you’d be getting the point.

Don’t just take my word for it. The Supreme Court clarified all this back in 1980 in case called [Stone v. Graham](https://www.oyez.org/cases/1980/80-321). Back then, Kentucky tried to legislate the posting of the Ten Commandments in classrooms. Kentucky thought it was being clever in arguing that because the posters were privately purchased, the law didn’t violate the First Amendment. SCOTUS said exactly what you’d expect; classrooms are public, commandments are religious, the statute was unconstitutional.

There have been several other cases involving government postings of the Ten Commandments, most of which have been struck down (including one in Alabama where former chief justice, **Roy Moore**, defied a federal order to dismantle a Ten Commandments monument in the rotunda of the State Supreme Court). In 2005, Justice **David** **Souter** [argued](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/27/AR2005062700416.html) that government should be neutral toward religion in order to minimize contemporary culture wars:

“We are centuries away from the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre and the treatment of heretics in early Massachusetts, but the divisiveness of religion in current public life is inescapable. This is no time to deny the prudence of understanding the [First Amendment] to require the Government to stay neutral on religious belief, which is reserved for the conscience of the individual.”

I get that in Mississippi Bible Country, Credell Calhoun thought it was a spectacular idea to add a little more Jesus into the school day. As obnoxious and exclusive as it is for a state legislator to attempt to impose his religious beliefs on everyone, I’m far more disturbed that lawmakers out there are this unfamiliar with the Constitution and Supreme Court precedent. A quick Google search would’ve told Calhoun that his idea was a no-go; his brand of bratty and sloppy legislating, willfully blind to context or consequences, and without respect for the very principles on which this country was founded, is profoundly disrespectful to both church and state.

# Gay couple sues US after one twin son born to surrogate denied citizenship

A gay couple is taking legal action after only one of their twin sons was recognised as a United States citizen.

The family is suing the US State Department after 16-month-old Ethan Dvash-Banks, whose biological father is Israeli citizen Elad Dvash-Banks, was refused the same rights as his brother Aiden, whose biological father is Andrew Dvash-Banks - an American citizen.

Andrew and Elad, who met while Andrew studied in Israel, are both listed on the birth certificates of the children, who were born in Canada via a surrogate using donor eggs and sperm from each father.

Their latest battle comes after they moved to Canada to get married as they were unable to do so in either Israel or the United States. They filed their case after moving to Los Angeles and Ethan's tourist visa expiring last month.

Elad, 32, said: "What we're trying to do is pursue justice for Ethan and correct a wrong that the State Department is continuing to pursue that might affect other couples."

LGBTQ immigrants rights group Immigration Equality, which filed the case, said the children of US citizens who marry abroad are entitled to citizenship at birth, regardless of where they are born - and even if the other partner is foreign.

The organization said the policy was designed for children born out of wedlock and was wrongly being applied to married same-sex couples.

Immigration Equality executive director Aaron Morris said: "If a mother and father walk into a consulate and have a marriage certificate and birth certificate, they're never asked any questions about the biology of the child.

"But the converse is also true and every same-sex couple will be asked that."

The State Department said it would not comment on an ongoing case but gave directions to guidance on its website which said a biological connection to a US citizen was necessary for a child to become a citizen at birth.

The couple knew who the boys' biological fathers were but planned on keeping it secret. However, they were made to take a DNA test or risk both being rejected citizenship.