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# Gun Expert Lott: Let Teachers Carry Arms, Ban Gun-Free Zones to Halt Mass Shootings

By David A. Patten | Saturday, 15 Dec 2012 06:52 PM

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Banning gun-free zones and allowing teachers to carry concealed weapons could help eliminate mass shootings at schools, John R. Lott, one of the nation's leading gun experts, tells Newsmax in an exclusive interview Saturday.

Lott, an author and college professor, told Newsmax that gun-free zones become "a magnet" for deranged killers who hope to burn their names into the history books by running up a big body count.

Lott's landmark book "More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws" is in its 3rd edition. He told Newsmax there is a "very good chance" the Connecticut school shooting could have been averted, if teachers there were permitted to carry concealed handguns.

It is no accident, he said, that mass shootings repeatedly have occurred in designated gun-free zones, which attract lunatics looking to murder as many souls as possible before they turn their guns on themselves.

**Newsmax:** Dr. Lott, your work suggests people are more secure, rather than less so, when firearms are readily available in society.

**Dr. Lott:** Simply telling them to behave passively turns out to be pretty bad advice . . . By far the safest course of action for people to take, when they are confronting a criminal, is to have a gun. This is particularly true for the people in our society who are the most vulnerable.

**Newsmax:** The media typically spins these mass shootings as an American phenomenon. They suggest we ought to be more like Europe, with strong gun control, because then we would not have these problems. Is

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that true?

**Dr. Lott:** No. Europe has a lot of multiple victim shootings. If you look at a per capita rate, the rate of multiple-victim public shootings in Europe and the United States over the last 10 years have been fairly similar to each other. A couple of years ago you had a couple of big shootings in Finland. About two-and-a-half years ago you had a big shooting in the U.K., 12 people were killed.

You had Norway last year [where 77 died]. Two years ago, you had the shooting in Austria at a Sikh Temple. There have been several multiple-victim public shootings in France over the last couple of years. Over the last decade, you've had a couple of big school shootings in Germany. Germany in terms of modern incidents has two of the four worst public-school shootings, and they have very strict gun-control laws. The one common feature of all of those shootings in Europe is that they all take place in gun-free zones, in places where guns are supposed to be banned.

**Newsmax:** Can you give readers an example of an incident where a teacher or authority-figure with a gun was able to thwart a violent shooting?

**Dr. Lott:** There was the university case in the Appalachian law school. You had the K through 12 in Mississippi and the one in Edinboro, Pa. You had New Life Church [in December 2007] — you had 7,000 parishioners there when the person broke into the church with about a thousand rounds of ammunition.

But there was a woman there, a former Chicago police officer who had gotten a concealed handgun permit because she was being stalked by her ex-husband. She had asked permission from the minister there to be able to carry a concealed handgun. She was worried if she couldn't carry it at the church there, that she would be vulnerable going to and from the church. She shot at him 10 times, wounding him, and he committed suicide . . . These types of cases occur all around us, and they usually don't get much attention, especially if they are stopped before people are injured or killed.

**Newsmax:** How can society prevent such mass shootings, or are they avoidable at all?

**Dr. Lott:** About 75 percent of the time when these attacks occur, the killers themselves die at the scene. Even the times when they don't die, it seems pretty clear their intent was to die, but they just couldn't bring themselves to commit suicide, pull the trigger, and shoot themselves at the last moment.

But in their warped mind, what they want to do is commit suicide in a way that will get them attention, so people know who they were when they were here. It's a pretty sick idea, but if you read the documents that they leave, the diaries and the video tapes, it is pretty clear that these guys know that they get more attention the more people they can kill.

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So their goal is to try to kill as many people as possible. So there are two issues here. One is focusing on the attention. And I think it's pretty clear that . . . if people stopped mentioning their names — I'm not saying that's possible — that's one thing that would reduce their incentive to go and commit these crimes.

The second thing is to give people the option to protect themselves. One of the things I've written about recently is the attack at the Aurora, Colorado movie theater. There, you have seven movie theaters that were showing the Batman movie when it opened at the end of July.

Out of those seven movie theaters, only one movie theater was posted as banning permit-concealed handguns. The killer didn't go to the movie theater that was closest to his home. He didn't go to the movie theater that was the largest movie theater in Colorado, which was essentially the same distance from his apartment as the one he ended up going to. Instead, the one he picked was the only one of those movie theaters that banned people taking permit-concealed handguns into that theater.

The problem is, whether it is the Portland shooting earlier this week, or the Connecticut shooting Friday, or the Sikh temple attack in Wisconsin, time after time these attacks take place in the few areas within a state where permit-concealed handguns are banned. It's not just this year, it's all these years in the past. And at some point people have to recognize that despite the obvious desire to make places safe by banning guns, it unintentionally has the opposite effect.

When you ban guns, rather than making it safer for the victims, you unintentionally make it safer for the criminals, because they have less to worry about. If you had a violent criminal stalking you or your family, and was really seriously threatening you, would you feel safer putting a sign up in front of your home stating, "This home is a gun-free zone."

My guess is you wouldn't do that. And I've never run into any gun-control proponents who would do that either. And the reason is pretty clear: Putting a sign there saying this is a gun-free home isn't going to cause the criminals to say, 'Oh, I don't want to break the law, so I'm not going to go in and attack these people.' It encourages them to do it. It serves as a magnet for him, if he's going to engage in this attack, that that's the place where he is going to engage in, because he finds that it is going to be easier to do it there.

Yet every time we have one of these mass shooting incidents, it renews the call from the media and the left for banning guns.

I believe that the people who are pushing for these gun controls are well intentioned. I think they're wrong. I think the things they're going to make life more dangerous. But it's understandable. If you see something bad that happens, and it happens with a gun, the natural reaction is: 'Well, if I take the gun away, bad things won't happen anymore.' The problem is you have to realize that when you go and ban guns, you may only take them away from good law-abiding citizens and not the criminals. And to disarm good law-abiding citizens . . . you just make it easier for crime to occur, not

harder.

You also have to think about self defense. They say bad things happen with guns. But the news rarely covers people using guns defensively to stop crimes from happening. And that has a huge impact on people's perceptions about the costs and benefits of guns.

**Newsmax:** So can you give us a correlation between crime rates in jurisdictions that try to ban concealed guns and the crime rate in those that do not?

If you look over past data, before everyone that was adopting [concealed carry laws], you find that for each additional state that adopted a right-to-carry law . . . you'd see about a 1.5 percent drop in murder rates, and about 2 percent drop in rape and robbery . . . Just because states are right-to-carry doesn't mean they've issued the same number of fees. You have big differences in states' training requirements.

The bottom line seems to be when you make it costly for people to get permits, fewer people get permits. You particularly price out people who live in high-crime urban areas from being able to get permits, and those are the ones who benefit the most from having the option to defend themselves.

**Newsmax:** Do gun free zones invite these attacks?

**Dr. Lott:** Yes, they're magnets for these attacks. They make them more likely. These gun-free zones are really tiny areas within a state, and yet that's where these attacks occur time after time.

Whenever you see more than a few murders taking place, the odds are almost a hundred percent that they are going to occur at a place where permit-concealed handguns are banned. And they were doing it, ironically, in an attempt to try and make people safe. But the problem is it is law-abiding citizens who obey those bans, not the criminals.

Look at Virginia Tech, for example, where we had 32 people killed. If you were an adult with a concealed handgun permit, you could take your permit-concealed handgun virtually anyplace in the state, except for universities and a couple of other places. There are hardly any gun-free zones in Virginia. And yet, if you were a faculty member and you accidentally carried your permit-concealed handgun onto university owned property there, and you got caught, you were going to get fired and your academic career would be over.

You're not going to get an academic job anyplace in the country. Same thing with the students: If you get expelled for a firearm-related violation, your academic career is over. Those are real penalties. Those people's lives are going to be dramatically changed. But if you take somebody who is a killer . . . you would be facing 32 death penalties or 32 life sentences, plus other charges. And the notion that somehow the charge of expulsion from school would be the key penalty that would keep them from doing it, not 32

ceain penalties, is absurd. It just doesn't make any sense . . . It represents a much bigger real penalty for the law-abiding good citizens than it does for the criminals there.

So we have to think about who is going to be obeying these laws. And it's true for gun-control laws generally. One of the things I try and do in "More Guns, Less Crime" is show what happens to gun rates when guns are banned. It would be nice if things were that simple, that going and banning guns would eliminate crime.

But what you find happening is murder rates and violent crime rates go up. And the question is why. It's a pretty simple answer: Because the law-abiding citizens are the ones who turn in their guns, and not the criminals.

**Newsmax:** Would it be a good idea to have teachers who have concealed carry permits in the schools, to better protect kids?

I'm all for that. I've been a teacher most of my life. I've been an academic. I have kids in college still, and kids below that. It's not something that I take lightly. But it's hard to see what the argument would be against it.

People may not realize this, but we allowed permit-concealed handguns in schools prior to the ironically named Safe School Zone Act. And no one that I know has been able to point to a single bad thing that occurred, not one.

We changed the law, and we started having these public-school shootings. So I don't think they got the intended result that they were hoping for with that type of ban. Right now, [some jurisdictions] allow you to carry concealed-permit guns in the schools. There are not a lot of them. But there are no problems that have occurred with any of those states, either.

**Newsmax:** Could arming teachers and getting rid of gun-free zones have averted a tragedy such as we saw in Connecticut?

Well, I think two things would happen. One is, we see the way these killers search out places where people can't defend themselves. So I think there's at least a very good chance that if it is known teachers and others there would have permit-concealed handguns, it would have dissuaded the attack from occurring to begin with. Secondly, even if he did attack, it would be by far the safest course of action.

The amount of time that elapses between when the attack starts and when someone can get to the scene with a gun is very important in determining what the carnage is going to be. The faster you can get somebody [there], the more you can limit it. If you could get the police there in 8 minutes, which would be record time, that would be an eon for people who are there helplessly having to face the killer by themselves with no protection.

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