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Weakening gun laws will only mean more bloodshed | Commentary

By DEVIN HUGHES AND PO MURRAY
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In a Dec. 10 [commentary](#) published in the Sentinel, State Representative Anthony Sabatini and pro-gun pundit [John Lott](#) urged the Florida Legislature to take up the mantle of “Constitutional Carry,” which will allow gun owners in Florida to conceal-carry without a permit. They argue that “predictions of doom and bloodshed” are overblown, refusing to acknowledge the bloodshed and violence that guns have already brought to Florida. In 2016, a gunman killed 49 innocent people at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. In 2018, another gunman killed 17 students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

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Devin Hughes is the founder of GVPedia, a nonprofit that provides access to data and research about gun violence. - Original Credit: Courtesy photo (Courtesy photo)

Gun violence has increased in Orlando. According to the [Gun Violence Archive](#), in the three years since Sabatini was elected, the firearm homicide death rate in his district rose 93%, even though the national rate increased by only 19% during the same time.

Sabatini and Lott are wrong. The academic literature is clear: weaker gun laws increase crime. [Homicide data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that states with permitless carry laws have seen a 5.1% increase in gun homicide rates annually, compared with a 1.2% annual increase for states without such laws. Kansas, Mississippi, and Missouri saw large surges in gun homicides after passing permitless carry.

Lott concluded that permitless carry and weakening concealed-carry laws will help reduce crime based on his own analysis that is **filled with errors**. He misclassified at least two studies and padded the results with studies that aren't about concealed-carry laws. He included studies with severe errors, relied on heavily outdated research, and failed to include 23 national level studies analyzing the impact of concealed-carry laws.

FEEDBACK

The truth is that out of the 65 national-level academic studies on concealed carry laws, a plurality find that weakening concealed-carry laws increases crime. Of the 35 most recent academic studies (since 2005) on this topic, 23 (66%) find that weakening concealed-carry laws increases crime. Only five studies since 2005 (14%) show a decrease in crime.



Po Murray is the chairwoman of Newtown Action Alliance, formed after her neighbor killed 26 children and educators in Sandy Hook, and lives in Orlando and Sandy Hook. - Original Credit: Courtesy photo (Courtesy photo)

In 2005, Florida stood at a similar legislative crossroads when debating whether to weaken its existing gun laws by passing a Stand Your Ground (SYG) measure. History has shown that SYG has aided and abetted vigilantism rather than protecting Floridians.

A recent literature **review** of 25 studies examining SYG laws found that: “The existing evidence contradicts claims that expanding self-defense laws deters violent crime across the United States. In at least some contexts, including Florida, stand-your-ground laws are associated with increases in violence, and there are racial inequities in the application of these laws.”

A **2013 analysis** by the Urban Institute uncovered that SYG laws exacerbated racial discrepancies. Specifically, “the odds a white-on-Black homicide is found justified is 281 percent greater than the odds a white-on-white homicide is found justified.”

Further, an in-depth 2012 Tampa Bay Times [investigation](#) of Florida's SYG law revealed that defendants who invoked self-defense after shooting a black person were more likely to go free than those who shot a white person. As the Times [reported](#), the SYG law was used "to free gang members involved in shootouts, drug dealers beefing with clients, and people who shot their victims in the back."

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Of the more than 100 fatal SYG cases the Times [analyzed](#), 60% of those invoking the SYG defense had been arrested previously and more than 30% had been previously accused of violent crimes. A [large majority](#) of the victims were unarmed, most victims were not committing a crime before the incident was initiated, and most of the defendants could have retreated to avoid the conflict.

The governor and the state Legislature should disregard disinformation and instead turn to [comprehensive policies](#) that have been shown to save lives. Public policy must be based on accurate, peer-reviewed data and not industry marketing tactics disguised as academic research.

The evidence is clear: weakening the state's gun laws will only exacerbate the bloodshed in Florida.

Devin Hughes is the founder of GVPedia, a nonprofit that provides access to data and research about gun violence. Po Murray is the chairwoman of Newtown Action Alliance, formed after her neighbor killed 26 children and educators in Sandy Hook, and lives in Orlando and Sandy Hook.

VN host Laura Berman's son dead at 16 from overdose after buying drugs on Snapchat

› 16-year-old son of OWN host and therapist Laura Berman has died from an apparent overdose after he

ight drugs on Snapchat.

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ma Wahlberg, mother of actors Mark and Donnie Wahlberg, and a regular on a reality show 'Wahlburgers,' dies at 78

ma Wahlberg, the mother of entertainers Mark and Donnie Wahlberg and a regular on their reality series "Wahlburgers," has died, her sons said.

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'The Talk' cancels shows amid investigation surrounding Sharon Osbourne comments

'The Talk' will go on a brief hiatus, canceling its live shows for Monday and Tuesday, Variety has confirmed. The news comes after CBS announced that it would be launching a probe into an episode earlier this week.

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'Gilligan's Island' star Dawn Wells, who played Mary Ann, dies of COVID at age 82

Dawn Wells of "Gilligan's Island" is dead from COVID-19.

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'Captain Underpants' spin-off pulled for 'passive racism'

The book under scrutiny is 2010's "The Adventures of Ook and Gluk" by Dav Pilkey, who has apologized, saying it "contains harmful racial stereotypes" and is "wrong and harmful to my Asian readers."

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Woman arrested in violent robbery of Lady Gaga's dogs

The woman who returned Lady Gaga's stolen French bulldogs was among five people arrested in connection with the theft and shooting of the music superstar's dog walker, Los Angeles police said Thursday.

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CBS cancels more 'The Talk' episodes as Sharon Osbourne probe continues

CBS is extending its hiatus of "The Talk," canceling its live shows for the rest of the week until March 23, as it conducts an investigation related to a recent heated exchange between hosts Sharon Osbourne and Sheryl Underwood.

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Justin Tumlin, 'Talladega Nights' child actor, dies at 28

Justin Tumlin, known for his role in "Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby" as a young actor, has died. He was 28.

Orlando Sentinel

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