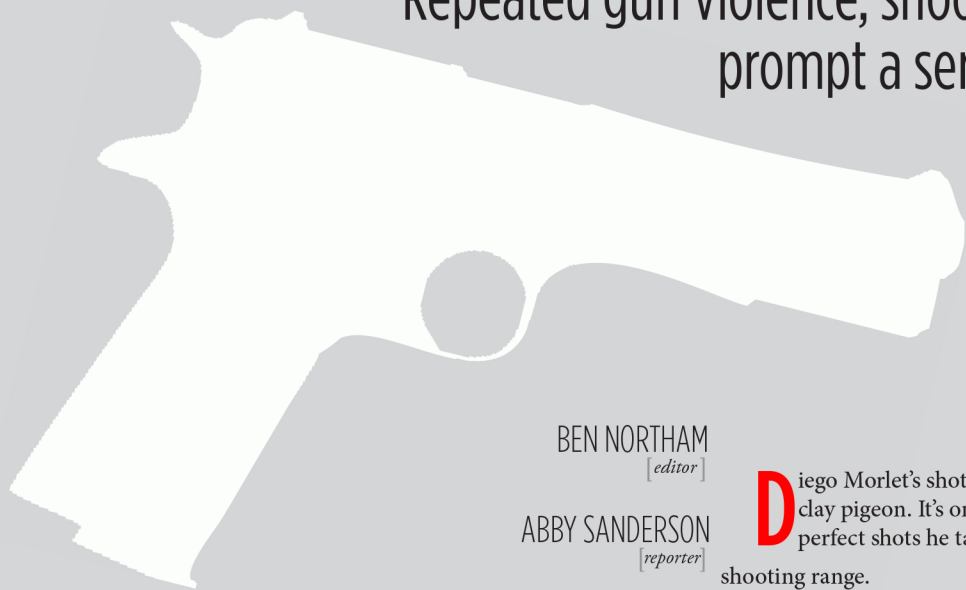


Caught in the Crossfire

Repeated gun violence, shootings
prompt a serious discussion over gun control



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Diego Morlet's shot shatters the clay pigeon. It's one of the many perfect shots he takes at the shooting range.

Whether it's CSI: Miami or Law & Order, guns on TV are usually portrayed as dangerous or bad, but for most of East Texas, that's not the case.

"In Texas, we see guns differently than most of the other states," junior Nick LeGrand said. "We either shoot guns for fun or hunt with them, for most of us they aren't dangerous."

With shootings in a city and the new California shooting, gun control has been a highly controversial subject in recent months. Presidential candidates, especially, are under constant questioning about gun control.

"I think gun control is important for politicians to talk about," junior Will Humphrey said. "I think that now more than ever with the threat of terrorist groups that guns are becoming even more important to American people."

A Difference of Opinion

In East Texas, most people are pro-gun. Even so, there are politicians and students that believe stricter laws should be in place to purchase guns.

"I think mental health checks, medical history, criminal history, or anything that could raise an alarm should be in place to prevent people from purchasing a gun," sophomore Carl Bruner said. "I believe restrictions on firearms should be in place to prevent people who don't have a spotless record from buying them. If someone has committed a crime, they don't need to have a gun."

Guns play a major role in a person's future. Whether they want to pursue a career in the military or law enforcement, guns are important to them.

"A long time dream of mine has been to become a Navy Seal," junior Matt Lindsey said. "Guns aren't dangerous, it's the people that have them. Most people just use guns to practice shooting or for hunting. They aren't as dangerous as everyone says."

Making Changes

The Texas legislature recently passed a bill that will allow students with the proper license to carry a concealed weapon onto a college campus.

"I don't think that having guns in college campuses is a bad thing at all," LeGrand said. "If someone was going to hurt someone, they wouldn't take the time to get a concealed carry license. If I was in college, it would make me feel much safer knowing there are people in my classes or dorm that could protect me."

With some restrictions already in place, people don't know if any more reasonable restrictions can be put in place.



"We're already to the point where you can't easily buy a gun," junior Ethan Wagner said. "I'm fine with adding restrictions as long as they aren't unreasonable. What's going on now is, in my opinion, unreasonable."

Across the Pond

Countries like Australia and England have taken the lead on gun control by restricting the ability of citizens to buy guns and ammunition. Politicians and interest groups are pushing for the United States to follow suit.

"I believe that America is the only developed country in the world that has not and does not have strict gun laws," sophomore Carl Bruner said. "We have more school shootings than any other country and I think it's time for a change."

While gun control advocates use this argument to push their agenda, opponents argue that just because other countries have

strict gun control laws doesn't mean we have to.

"You can't compare the United States to other countries," junior Noah Nicholas said. "We have a completely different government and a completely different economy than a

lot of other countries. You can't say an apple should be more like an orange, because they're completely different to begin with."

Laying Down the Law

Gun control laws have been proposed for a long time, but very few have actually been passed. Some students think it's time for actual gun legislation. At the beginning of 2015, the only gun related law that had been passed is the ban on plastic firearms.

"People can purchase guns and ammo for revenge," freshman Ashlyn Garner said. "People can buy guns to kill people out of hate rather than using the gun for self defense, hunting, and other activities."

Students have their own reasons why gun legislation should be passed.

"I think more laws need to be passed to make everyone in the country safer," Bruner said. "We need to make it harder for everyone to purchase guns so people who want to hurt people won't get guns."

California and many other states have begun to pass more restrictive gun laws, moving ahead of the federal government.

"I think states need to agree on gun laws, not rush forward all on their own," LeGrand said. "That has been the issue with our town for a long time. People used to cross state lines to buy alcohol and then just bring it back over. I feel like that would be a major problem with gun laws if they're passed by states."

What Students Say

Gun laws ranging from restrictions on magazine capacity to the types of guns that can be sold have been proposed for a long time.

"I think people who pass current background checks have every right to own a gun," junior Ethan Wagner said. "I shouldn't be restricted on what I can buy because someone else does something irresponsible and stupid with it."

One of the things gun control advocates want is for guns to be less accessible to everyone, regardless of their mental or criminal history, an issue that is under fire by gun rights supporters.

"People should be able to buy guns if they want, the way we sell guns is fine," junior Kyler Cooper said. "Making them harder to buy won't change anything — criminals will still find a way to get them."

The United States has a much higher gun-related crime rate than Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and many other countries.

"I think it definitely says something about our country," junior Will Humphrey said. "I think that we need to do something about our gun-related crime rate, but I think there are other ways to do it than restricting the sale and use of guns and ammunition."

Pleasant Grove students use guns for hunting more than anything else. In a survey of 100 students conducted by the Edge staff, 68 percent of students use guns for hunting, 15 percent for competition, and 17 percent for recreational or other uses.

"I'm really big into competition shooting," Morlet said. "I think most people use guns for a good reason, not to hurt anyone. Competition shooting is something I've done for a long time, and it's a good hobby for anyone to pick up."

Playing Politics

Recently, supporters of gun control attempted to help push a bill through Congress that would limit the amount of ammunition that can be carried in a magazine. The bill would only allow the purchase of magazines that hold, at max, ten rounds.

"I don't think limiting ammunition amount is going to affect what they think is the problem," LeGrand said. "Instead of carrying one magazine that holds thirty rounds, I carry three that hold ten. It's supposed to be a solution to the problem, but it really doesn't do anything at all."

Supporters of this bill argue that it is a solution to the United States high crime rate.

"I definitely think that limiting the amount of ammunition you can buy and use is reasonable," Bruner said. "I think that limiting ammunition would actually make America's crime rate decline."

Presidential candidates have led the charge on gun control, often becoming symbols for either side of the argument.

"People in politics will always try to influence people to believe one side or strongly oppose another," junior Jedd Ramos said. "We shouldn't be influenced by politicians. We need to find out what we believe, not be influenced by the people on the TV screen or the people around us."

To Purchase a Firearm

80%

of students think there shouldn't be any more gun control laws

44%

of students support mental health checks for everyone

68%

of students think you should have to have a clean criminal record

93%

of students think you should be required to show a drivers license

20%

of students say you should have to have a firearms license

*100 surveyed