

Should gun laws be looser or stricter?

DEBATING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

In 2008 the Supreme Court ruled that the Second Amendment protects a long-standing natural right to self-defense, in addition to prohibiting the disarming of militias. This means the government cannot ban the possession of handguns. However, the Supreme Court pointed out that reasonable regulation of guns is allowed. Although the Court did not explain which restrictions were allowed, it gave examples such as banning weapons not typically possessed by law-abiding citizens, prohibiting the possession of guns by felons and the mentally ill, and forbidding the carrying of firearms in places such as schools.

YES

TEAM A Gun Laws Should Be Stricter

Each year, more than 8,000 murders are committed with guns. There are too many guns in our society, and they are too easy to buy. Since guns are more lethal than other weapons, we need to regulate them more strictly. A criminal with a gun can do much more harm to many more people than someone with another type of weapon.

Moreover, guns are more likely to harm the owner or his family than to harm a criminal. Guns can fall into the wrong hands, and children with access to guns can cause horrible accidents. It is a tragedy when innocent lives are lost due to gun violence. The Constitution allows for reasonable restrictions.

NO

TEAM B Gun Laws Should Be Looser

Gun control infringes on a basic Constitutional right to protect oneself. Guns are used by law-abiding citizens for self-defense and protection. The police cannot protect everyone all the time and citizens must be prepared to protect themselves. Criminals may be deterred from robbing or harming someone if the potential victim has a gun.

Criminals will always get guns even if we make them illegal. Outlawing guns could even open up a large new black market where criminals buy and sell illegal guns. Guns are not responsible for injuries and deaths; the people who misuse them are. We should hold those people responsible.

EXPLORING THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Evaluating Arguments and Counterarguments Consider each proposal below. Think about the arguments, the Constitution, and your personal experiences. Do you think that these proposals should become law? Draw a line across your paper, with one end labeled YES and the other labeled NO. Place the number of the proposal along your line to indicate whether you want the proposal to become law. Note the reasons that support your position. Your teacher will ask you and your classmates to indicate your support for each proposal by standing along a virtual continuum in the classroom. Be prepared to defend your position.

1. Ban all assault weapons.
2. Allow people to carry concealed weapons more easily.
3. Require all guns to be registered to their owner.
4. Require biometric technology that allows only the owner to operate a gun.
5. Allow people to bring guns into schools and government buildings.
6. Ban high-capacity magazines that allow guns to fire many times without reloading.
7. Add a tax to bullets that would make them very expensive.