

GUEST VIEW

Gun lobby rules

Mere weeks after Las Vegas, the GOP is quietly pushing a gun-lover's pipe dream

For a few days after the Las Vegas sniper attack, it seemed as if Congress might actually move to ban the device known as the bump stock, which the gunman used to convert his semiautomatic rifles into, essentially, machine guns that could fire 90 shots in 10 seconds into a crowded music festival. That moment — like so many before it — seems to have passed.

So what gun policy measure are lawmakers discussing in Congress these days? An absurd yet dangerous proposal that would drastically undercut states' abilities to set reasonable rules about who gets to carry a weapon.

The proposed federal law, the so-called Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017, would require any state that issues permits for carrying concealed weapons to recognize concealed-carry permits issued by other states — even if those states have different eligibility and training requirements and less stringent restrictions on gun ownership. In the House, the measure has picked up 212 cosponsors (including three Democrats), just five short of a majority; a companion Senate bill has 38 cosponsors, signaling significant support.

The National Rifle Association has made passing the reciprocity bill its legislative priority for this session. The rest of the nation should make it a priority to stop this madness. It is little more than cynical gamesmanship by the NRA and its martinets in

Congress. It needs to be shot down.

Proponents of the bill argue that a permit to carry a concealed weapon is similar to a driver's license and should be recognized nationwide. But that's cooked-up logic. States observe similar traffic laws and training requirements before issuing driver's licenses. That's not so with guns. In fact, a dozen states put no restrictions at all on who gets to carry a concealed firearm so long as people meet minimal federal qualifications for being able to buy a gun.

Other states should not be forced to live under such loose rules if they don't believe those rules to be safe. Gun owners from Arizona, where no permit is required for carrying a concealed weapon, should not be allowed to wander armed into a state such as California, which has some of the strictest gun controls in the country, without meeting its requirements.

Given the Republicans' historical support of states' rights, it's a bit rich that they are now seeking a federal law to trump state laws on something so crucial to public safety as gun ownership. We hope members of Congress have closely read the studies that have found that states with the most-relaxed gun-control laws tend to have higher rates of gun deaths than states with tighter controls.

The constitutionality of a gun reciprocity law is unclear. If states have a right to determine who may carry a gun — which the courts have recognized — then is Congress

within its rights to let the NRA in through the back door? In any case, such an approach is, as we have argued before, a race to the bottom, in which the least restrictive state laws will be the ones that govern the whole country.

Previous versions of this gun-lover's pipe dream have stalled in Congress, but with the Republicans now in control of both houses and the White House — and with the support of gun-friendly Democrats — there is a very real chance this reckless bill might actually get somewhere. Gun-control groups have been actively trying to stir up opposition, and a group of 17 Democratic attorneys general — including California's Xavier Becerra — sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to block the "ill-conceived bills that would override local public safety decisions and endanger our communities and law enforcement officers."

There is no reason for this law to exist other than to feed the fantasy that an even more heavily armed nation would be a safer nation. That is simply untrue. Congress would better serve the nation's public health and safety by ignoring this bit of legislative subterfuge and focusing its attention instead on fixing the federal law that allowed the Las Vegas shooter to convert a firearm that ought to be banned into one that already has been.

— Los Angeles Times

Keene needs a policy to protect immigrants

By JOE SCHAPIRO

On Aug. 4, Eleazar Lopez Ayala, a Manchester resident, left work with a coworker to get a cold drink. Driving into Deerfield, the two men got a flat tire. Lacking cellphone service, they knocked on the door of a nearby home to use the phone. The resident called the police. The police brought them to the station. Since they were unable to provide proof of citizenship, ICE was called and today, Mr. Ayala remains in detention awaiting a hearing and probable deportation.

Mr. Ayala came to this country more than 20 years ago from Honduras as a 17-year-old. His only police record is one instance of driving without a license. He is married with four children; all of them born in this country. Mr. Ayala was working to support his family. Now they are separated from him and without his critical financial support.

This would not have occurred in Manchester, where police department policy precludes asking about immigration status for the sole purpose of enforcing immigration law. This will no longer happen in Deerfield where, just weeks after this incident, Police Chief Gary Duquette proposed a similar policy, which was quickly approved by the board of selectmen.

But this could happen in Keene, where the police department is without a specific policy dealing with undocumented immigrants.

In order to prevent such an occurrence the Keene Immigrant and Refugee Partnership (KIRP) has brought forth a resolution to the City Council that would show support for humane and just law enforcement policies as they affect the undocumented. We are gratified by support from residents and councilors alike, and the resolution is currently on "more time" as city staff and KIRP attempt to come up with mutually acceptable wording.

We believe that in most respects, Keene is a safe and welcoming community for diverse populations, and in no way are we accusing the police of wrongdoing or of being hostile toward immigrants. In fact, we seek to embrace and amplify the wonderful community where we live.

Some have asked us, why fix something that is not broken? Times are changing. Between Jan. 22 and Sept. 2 of this year the fastest growing category of ICE arrests were "non-criminal immigrants." More than

28,000 immigrants with no criminal charges were arrested, nearly three times as many as in the same period of 2016 (according to The Washington Post). Last week Gov. Sununu announced his support for a group of Christian Indonesians who fled persecution in their homeland and have resided in New Hampshire for decades. They are now being deported by the Trump administration. We do not know what situations will arise, nor do we know what kind of requests or pressure will come from the federal government. Therefore, it is important to act proactively.

We are not alone. States and cities, large and small, across the country are wrestling with this issue. Many have enacted policies, which provide protections to undocumented immigrants, clearly distinguish between federal and local responsibilities, while at the same time putting in provisions that ensure public safety. Many cities in New Hampshire have policies, including Manchester, Concord and Nashua. The N.H. State Police have announced that they are in the process of developing such a policy.

We at KIRP are aware that enacting policies that protect the rights and privacy of undocumented immigrants is controversial. This issue evokes very strong feelings. Some will agree wholeheartedly. Some will say we have not gone far enough. Others will agree with the intent, but feel unsure of potential legal

jeopardy. Still others may feel that anyone who has come to this country without following the rules should be deported immediately.

Two things are clear, however. Intelligent and educated people, including legal scholars, stand on both sides of the divide. It is a discussion that is increasingly happening across the country. In fact, these very issues are being litigated in courts across the country. After reviewing policies enacted elsewhere, consulting with lawyers and reading legal opinions, we believe that the council will be on sound legal footing in passing the resolution, as will Chief Steven Russo in developing a clear and commonsense policy.

Fixing immigration is not a local issue. Our country condemns undocumented immigrants while simultaneously depending upon and taking advantage of their labor. National politicians have had neither the will nor the courage to reform the system. There is a limit to what we can do locally. Still, Keene is not a city that avoids hard issues. So let's not stick our heads in the sand. By acting now we can avoid the kind of incident in the future, where an innocent man is separated from his children and a police department is left feeling responsible.

Joe Schapiro of Keene is a member of the Keene Immigrant and Refugee Partnership.

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YOUR LETTERS

Volunteer to make our region better

The Monadnock Region has a rich history of volunteerism.

Look around and, on any given day, you might see students participating in playground clean-up activities, come across older adults reading to groups of young children at the library or a group painting a mural to beautify a local building. Each one of these activities warms the heart and lets us know that we live in a caring community.

On those same days, there are thousands (yes thousands) of people in this region who actively volunteer in important, behind-the-scenes activities that also strengthen New Hampshire communities. Volunteers work one-on-one with abused and neglected children so they can safely navigate the court system to achieve a better life. Volunteers help nonprofits raise funds for their future stability. Volunteers distribute food at food pantries. Volunteers make home visits and provide transportation to veterans, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Volunteers tutor at local schools and nonprofits who serve children and adults. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Participatory government, community pride and caring for your neighbor represent the values of our region.

Together, the people who live in this community — from the youngest to the oldest among us — are clearly committed to making our region strong and vibrant for years to come. Yet there is still much to do.

Many organizations simply could not deliver services as effectively, efficiently or even exist at all without volunteers. Even with the multitude of people who give their time and talents in our region, organizations like Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Hampshire; Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire; Hundred Nights, the Samaritans, the Serenity Center and many others desperately need people to help them meet the physical, social and emotional needs of our friends and neighbors.

Do you have a cause that you believe in? Something that makes you feel proud or stand up taller when you think about how it would feel to help out? Whatever that something is, take a step today to make it a reality. You'll be adding to the success of our community and feeling healthier and happier for years to come.

To volunteer, please contact Monadnock United Way at muw.org or Monadnock RSVP at monadnockvolunteercenter.org, where we maintain an inventory of community organizations and opportunities. We would love to hear from you!

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JAY KAHN
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135 Darling Road
Keene

“IT'S THE JIM CROW VERSION OF THE CAUSES OF THE CIVIL WAR.”

— HISTORY PROF. STEPHANIE McCURRY OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ON WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF JOHN KELLY'S DEFENSE OF CONFEDERATE GEN. ROBERT E. LEE MONDAY

LETTERS POLICY

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What's missing from Trump's opioid emergency response

By BLOOMBERG NEWS

In sweeping if vague terms, President Donald Trump last week declared opioid addiction a "national health emergency." What he didn't do is talk about one of the most effective ways to address it — or how much it would all cost. His administration's subsequent refusal to target aid to the states that need it most also makes little sense.

The strategy Trump outlined includes training doctors to prescribe painkillers more carefully, encouraging scientists to create nonaddictive alternatives, urging children not to start taking opioids and using drug courts to help the addicted find treatment. He also promised to seal the borders against illegal drugs and to prosecute traffickers.

Absent from this list is something called

medication-assisted therapy. The treatment uses methadone and buprenorphine (the main ingredient of Suboxone) to safely help addicts through recovery, prevent fatal overdoses and enable people to work and live normal lives, studies and experience show.

Yet the U.S. government restricts their use to specially trained doctors, who can treat only a limited number of patients.

And too many Americans believe the myth that prescribing methadone or buprenorphine — both opioids — simply replaces one addiction for another, and that it's better for addicts to simply abstain. Trump's former secretary of Health and Human Services questioned the value of medication-assisted therapy, and insurance companies have been reluctant to cover it.

Fortunately, Scott Gottlieb, head of the Food and Drug Administration, realizes

the value of the treatment. He explained to a House committee that there is a "difference between a physical dependence and an addiction." Many patients successfully overcome their addiction to opioids with a managed course of methadone or buprenorphine while undergoing counseling.

The FDA is looking into ways to allow medication-assisted therapy to be prescribed more widely, and to reflect that some people may need to be treated for life.

Getting the therapy to the millions of Americans who need it will take a concerted, well-funded effort by the federal government and the states. The president's own commission on opioid addiction is reportedly considering calling for wider use of the treatment in its forthcoming report. If so, Trump should heed its recommendation and direct his administration to act accordingly.