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GUNS AND GUN LAWS

Silver lining on Chicago gun decision

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The long anticipated U.S. Supreme Court decision in [McDonald v. City of Chicago](#) was just about right on target with what Constitutional scholars and gun advocates alike had anticipated all along: a 5-4 ruling that once again honors the 2nd Amendment right of private citizens to own firearms for the sake of protecting their home and family. Two years ago, the Court ruled against a gun ban in the federally-controlled District of Columbia, and this latest decision simply extends that position to state and local governments.

It came as no surprise that Chicago's blanket handgun ban, implemented in the early 1980s, was shot down by the Court -- not because the gun ban wasn't effective, but because that's just how so many cases fare given the High Court's current composition. The Chicago ban had in fact significantly reduced the scourge of gun killings in the Windy City. According to my own calculations submitted to the court in the form of an [amicus brief](#), there were as many as 1,000 fewer homicides in Chicago cumulatively over the course of the ban, a point that Justice Breyer noted in his dissent (p. 13)..

My research showed that gun laws can make a difference in terms of public safety, especially in reducing the risk of homicide in the home and among family members. Even without a total ban on handguns, which clearly and significantly infringed on the rights of law-abiding citizens to arm themselves, there are many sensible steps that can be taken to interrupt the flow of guns into the secondary market that supplies criminals, without being overly egregious to legitimate gun owners

If there is a silver lining for the losing side “ of which I am an active member, it is the Courts recognition that various government bodies maintain the authority to regulate gun ownership and licensing. Notwithstanding todays ruling, the following steps seem to be the type of reasonable approaches that even the Court majority might deem as legitimate:

- Repeal of federal restrictions on the wide-ranging use of ATF trace data for identifying patterns of illegal gun trafficking
- Control of bulk sales of firearms
- Require licensed firearms dealers to maintain up-to-date records and to report all stolen or lost inventory
- Require background checks on all gun purchases and for registration of all guns and transfers of ownership

Many gun advocates speak often and suspiciously of the slippery slope, whereby government, if given an inch, would take a mile, and would eventually take away guns altogether. However, I fail to see this as a realistic possibility. If we are ever to reach any reasonable middle-ground between the two sides of the gun debate, then I would urge others who, like me, push for intensified efforts to combat gun crime to pledge to fight against any such initiative to disarm America completely.

But, of course, I don't consider making such a promise as a very steep ledge out on which to wander. There will never be a gun-free America, at least not in my lifetime.