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Date: 3/12/19

Suicide is a devastating event in the lives of family and friends.

But, in a state that champions "Death with Dignity," why are the same people who pushed for that legislation, pushing for gun control to stop acts of suicide by firearm?

Isn't suicide the ultimate choice of a free citizen? It is, unless a gun was used. Then it is the gun's fault.

What leads a person to suicide has been researched and debated for decades.
Psychology is NOT an absolute science.

There are countless occurrences, trials, tribulations and events that led up to an attempt of suicide.
There is no formula to solve.

There is no template to predict who, or when, or how.

There is no crystal ball to "see" what goes on in a person's mind.

In fact, even psychologists disagree on what can be done.

But, we are supposed to believe that "statistics" are the most reliable way to determine what LAWS are able to prevent suicides.

Statistics are not an absolute science either.

If psychologists who are **directly** involved with patients cannot prevent suicides, why do we think statisticians who are **totally removed** from the issue, are the ones who can tell us how to prevent suicides?

It is immoral to use legislation to restrict the Constitutional rights of all, in the professed hope of altering an individual's right to determine their life's outcome.

There is a saying, "you cannot legislate morality."

That is immensely profound seeing the intense debate on H.57.

If 48 to 72 hours is such a crucial time period, why is waiting period legislation needed in regards to a firearm and not to a forcep? Hypocrisy.

The FAMILY should be involved in BOTH decisions, not the government.

Many reports have made headlines across the anti-gun media over the last two decades. Most are produced by organizations that are funded in large part, either directly or indirectly, by Michael Bloomberg, or the Joyce & Tides Foundations, the three largest anti-gun funding organizations on the planet.

Report titles state:

"Such and such is reduced by x% when this law is passed."

"Some other rate is reduced after this other legislation is enacted."

These reports are always directly linked to upcoming legislation across the nation. Curious isn't it?

The most recent report published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) is being reported across the world with the most startling claim: **"Mass shootings are more prevalent in states with relaxed gun laws, and VERMONT and South Carolina had higher rates than anywhere else in the country..."**

Let that sink in.

Tiny Vermont has the highest rate of MASS SHOOTINGS anywhere in the country?

Where is the data?

It doesn't matter that most Vermonters cannot remember the last random "mass shooting."

It doesn't matter if the report is wrong.

All that matters is that the general public BELIEVE the research that Vermont is a very dangerous place and NEEDS more gun control!

We are to believe this claim is based on supposedly UNBIASED research.

If we Google search these researchers, we find they are working under the anti-gun **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**.

If we investigate these researchers further we find:

One researcher. Associate professor **Douglas J. Wiebe**, is affiliated with the **Firearm Injury Center** at the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania. He has a long history of producing anti-gun reports over the last decade. His research is always tied directly to **upcoming legislation**. Curious, no?

One report from 2010 was funded by THREE monetary grants from the University of California, The California Endowment, and the School of Social Ecology at the University of California at Irvine.

That's a lot of money for someone already on the payroll.

Another researcher from the latest report, **Magdalena Cerda, PhD**, is the Vice Chancellor's Chair on Violence Prevention, and an associate professor at the University of California, Davis. She also received funding in the past from the, guess who? Yup, the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**.

And just in case you think the RWJF is a simple teaching and research org, they admit that the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholars Program** provided “two years of support” to postdoctoral scholars “to build the nation’s capacity for research and leadership to address the multiple determinates of population health and contribute to policy change.”

Another recent report “Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths” was written by three professors from the **Harvard Business School**. The Harvard Business School is funded by the **Bloomberg Philanthropies**.

Sources they cite include the wildly anti-gun, and often discredited **David Hemenway**, and even a poll on Wonkblog. Seriously, a poll to prove that states need to enact laws to disarm Americans for their own good?

These reports are full of formulas, rates, deviations, and a plethora of other terms that the layman must find bewildering, but impressive.

"Wow, this person is really smart, he must be right!"

ALL of these reports are “peer reviewed” by other organizations that hold an anti-gun bias. The American Public Health Association (APHA) often cites these anti-gun reports using a “circular verification” method where one report proves the data in another report, which is then used to support the next. The next author links back to another to use that report as the basis to prove his current report. The BMJ retweets the APHA link. The HSPH cites the BMJ and APHA as “peer reviewed” research.

The raw data from these reports are NEVER released publicly, so NONE OF THEM can be independently verified.

Previous reports that were referenced by the authors also include reports from many decades ago, some that were inconclusive, are now used as proof that they actually verified what they did not back then! Dozens of them were funded by grants from the Bloomberg philanthropies and anti-gun organizations such as the Joyce and Tides Foundations.

One point that is NEVER made in ANY of these reports, is that many suicides were linked to **other** acts of violence:

Murder / Suicides top the list of publicly researchable cases.

Television reporter Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward were shot dead while filming a live interview for CBS news affiliate WDBJ 7. The killer fled the scene and later committed suicide when confronted by the police.

Did the killer buy his gun within the previous 48 hours?

Must not have been or we would have heard about it on the news.

Random shootings, bank robberies gone wrong, kidnappings, muggings, liquor store holdups, and the like often end in the perpetrator taking their own life instead of going to jail. Are cases of “suicide-by-cop” also included in these statistics?

Were INDIVIDUAL CASES researched for those anti-gun reports?

No. Actual data points are very difficult to obtain, therefore they are not used. It is much easier to manipulate general statistics to prove what their benefactor wants.

How many of these suicides were with firearms that were purchased within 48 hours? No one knows.

Most criminal acts are NOT committed with recently purchased LEGAL firearms. Therefore, any data that excludes these numbers should be questioned. Especially when the data used is in regards to hundreds or thousands of people.

The ATF reports consistently show that up to 90% of so called "crime guns" have been in circulation for over a DECADE.

Suicide is considered a crime and has occasionally made it into the ATF reports. Most likely it was also part of a violent crime such as murder/suicide. In fact, the 2017 ATF Firearm Trace Report shows TWO Vermont firearm traces linked to suicides.

Again, WHICH cases we don't know. It is not public information.

A quick thought analysis of that number clearly show that since every firearm purchased from an FFL since November 1998 CAN be traced, these 2 firearms were the ONLY ones, linked to a suicide, that could possibly have been purchased since 1998. No details are publicly available to see if these two were purchased within 48-72 hours before death.

Since 1998, Vermonters have purchased over **HALF A MILLION** firearms (FBI/NICS data as of Jan 2019: 538,876 background checks), yet we can only find 3 cases where a firearm was actually purchased and then shortly thereafter used to end their life.

As legislators you are ultimately responsible for what data you choose to use in order to make an informed decision that will impact the rights of 625,000 current citizens and all future generations of Vermonters.

If the evidence you are provided is faulty, or intentionally misleading, it should **not** be considered as the basis for your decision.

The reality is, you cannot use generalized data to return a valid report on a specialized topic.

If you want a specific report, you need to use a relevant data set.

Suicide by firearm has many factors:

1. Mental health of the victim.
2. Alcohol and drug use.
3. The economic status of the victim.

4. The marital status of the victim.
5. Life changes in the victim's family.
6. Disruptions in the victim's social circles.
7. How many of these firearms were actually bought within 48 hours of the suicide?

Were ANY of these factors used in statistically determining the effectiveness of firearm waiting period legislation in other states?

1. NO.
2. NO.
3. NO.
4. NO.
5. NO.
6. NO.

And, 7. NO.

If NO data actually pertinent to the study's intent were collected, how can any study's result be valid?

In short, it can't.

It wouldn't work in business, industry, economics, or education, but, in politics it often works as intended after the campaign checks are cashed.

In fact, all of the anti-gun reports have one thing in common besides zero specific facts, they all IGNORE cultural and historical facts and trends.

In 2001, David C. Stolinsky, MD, reported that all of the anti-gun reports of the day that supported new firearm restrictions were invalid.

His reasoning is explained that all the other researchers totally ignored the fact that historical trends show suicide and homicide rates of the day are comparable to current ones. Trends followed world wars, economic depressions, overcrowding, poverty, criminal justice and medical care.

The charts he provided from 1900 to 1967, show the homicide and suicide rates were LOWER during the time period where ordinary citizens could buy a firearm by MAIL ORDER and have it delivered to their HOME! Up until 1934 those mail ordered guns included full-auto MACHINE-GUNS!

Today, Bernie Sanders still rails against the imaginary "gun show loophole."

This shows that if a researcher chooses to ignore relevant data, i.e. "Cherry-Picking," he can sway the results of the report to favor whatever viewpoint he is being paid to report.

Dr. Stolinsky was a retired medical oncologist and was not paid for his study.

Over the last five years we have heard many proponents of gun control in Vermont state, "if we can just one life it will be worth it..."

If each violation of a Constitutional Right could save one life, then violating all 27, could potentially save 27 lives. But, COUNTLESS lives would be **adversely** affected.

Our nation was founded on the freedom of pursuing liberty, this legislation would continue to chip away at that fundamental right.

Vermont has 3 active anti-gun groups ALL funded by Michael Bloomberg's **Everytown**.

Each year we hear the need to enact JUST ONE MORE law, because we are not safe enough.

Every year we are told that each new law is NOT an infringement of our rights.

Nor, the next.

Nor, the next.

Or, the last...

Gun control is not a "grass roots" effort. It is not about safety. It is about CONTROL.

Anti-gun legislation is a large-scale conspiracy of big money, media and academia buying the power to disarm the American people one small step at a time.

Since 2013, FIFTY-ONE gun control laws have been proposed in the Safest State in the Union.

Since then we have slipped to #2 for two years in a row. **Maine** is safer than Vermont.

THAT should be proof enough that gun control is making Vermont LESS safe.

H.184 (Act 34) was enacted in 2017 that was supposed to start investigating ACTUAL suicide cases for relevant details such as I have listed above.

Why were the founding organizations of the Vermont Gun Shop Project not invited to serve on that committee?

The H.184 data would at actually relevant to Vermont' issues, not a study by college professors looking for next year's funding grant. If our side of the aisle is not represented on that committee, it would be impossible for us to use that data to **defend** our rights, but we know it will be used to **infringe** our rights when the opportunity arose.

I ask you to not move this bill (S.22), nor any other firearm-related legislation, forward, as there is no factual proof that any of it will do what it says, but as we now know, actually harm the rights of hundreds of thousands of law abiding citizens of Vermont.

Bob DePino

Vice President, Gun Owners of Vermont

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