

# Calif. shootings set local gun backers, foes on edge

CARLO WOLFF | STAFF REPORTER

cwolff@cjn.org | Posted: Thursday, December 10, 2015 12:37 pm

Guns can kill, guns can protect, and guns can be a target. Guns polarize.

Nearly five years ago, National Council of Jewish Women co-vice presidents Marie T. Smith and Linda Tobin wrote an article for the Cleveland Jewish News calling gun safety reform a “moral imperative.” Their opinion piece prompted Beachwood attorney Kenneth S. Kabb to counter with an impassioned defense of the Second Amendment and an endorsement of the National Rifle Association, of which he is a life member.

The backdrop was Tucson, Ariz., where, on Jan. 8, 2011, Jared Lee Loughner killed six people and injured 14 others including his intended target, then-U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, a Jewish Arizona Democrat. Loughner is in prison for life.

Now the backdrop is San Bernardino, Calif., where 14 people were killed and 21 injured Dec. 21, less than a week after a smaller mass shooting in Colorado. Police killed the San Bernardino shooters, Syed Rizwan Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, hours after the massacre. The FBI is probing the incident as an act of terrorism.

Gun control remains a touchy, divisive issue, raising questions of the relative value of individual rights and the common good, of self-protection versus – gun advocates would say for – public safety.

On Dec. 7, a day after U.S. President Barack Obama recommended that people on a no-fly list shouldn't be able to buy guns, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to take up a case out of Illinois that effectively upheld a ban on assault weapons as consistent with the Second Amendment. Gun violence continues to roil the body politic, and the gun control issue shows no signs of cooling.

The move by the nation's highest court comes in the wake of both the San Bernardino rampage and a Nov. 27 incident near a Planned Parenthood center in Colorado Springs in which three people were killed and nine were injured.



Susan Reis

Has anything changed in the positions of the NCJW and Kabb?

Susan Reis, state policy advocate for the NCJW, said that since Tucson, NCJW has joined with Greater Cleveland Congregations in Do Not Stand Idly By, a national campaign dedicated to gun violence reduction. The push is on for smart gun technology, Reis said Dec. 4.

Smart guns only work in the hands of their owners; the Armatix iP1 pistol, which can only be fired if its user is wearing a wireless wristband broadcasting on a specific frequency, is an example.

Gun rights organizations have attempted – successfully – to suppress the Armatix. The owner of a Maryland gun store who announced he would begin selling the high-tech pistol in 2014 backed down after gun rights advocates threatened to kill him, his girlfriend and dog, according to [theverge.com](http://theverge.com), a technology website.

Firing up gun rights advocates is the Childproof Handgun Law, which was passed in 2002 but is yet to take effect. The New Jersey law orders that retail sellers of handguns sell only state-approved, child-proof pistols and revolvers within three years of the first sale of smart guns anywhere in the country. No such sale has been made yet.

Any government mandate to require use of these weapons opens the door to a ban on guns lacking the technology, the NRA said in a 2014 statement.

“The hype about so-called smart guns isn’t supported by experience or common sense,” NRA advocate Kabb said in an extensive email. “Having an electronic lock coupled to a bracelet might seem like a neat idea to some, but what happens during a night-time home invasion when the bracelet is lost in the dark? Or, if the gun owner is wounded and the spouse has to pick up the gun to save her life? Think about it. Never have I seen any evidence of the NRA blocking firearm safety in any respect, and that includes gun design.”

Other kinds of economic pressure are being considered, however, Reis suggested. Forty percent of gun sales in the United States are purchases by law enforcement agencies and/or the federal government, Reis said. Getting public agencies to buy smart gun technology is a goal of Do Not Stand Idly By.

On the state level, Reis suggested the gun control picture is bleak and likely to remain so until a redistricting reform bill approved in November takes effect – in 2021. For now, the Ohio legislature seems committed to expanding concealed carry laws; just last week, the Ohio House sent the State Senate House Bill 48, which would expand concealed-carry to day care centers, school safety zones and most areas in airports.

Nationally, many states have passed laws designed to make their citizens safer, Reis said, “but in Ohio, our government is only passing laws that put more guns in more places.”

Educating people on the issue so they can pressure their representatives for change is critical, Reis

suggested. While 90 percent of Ohioans in a 2013 poll said they favored universal background checks, “in our federal government, we couldn’t get that legislation passed and locally they aren’t passing legislation that most people in the state want. Even 75 percent of gun owners support universal background checks.”

“If anything’s changed (since Tucson),” Kabb said, “I’m even more convinced that the Second Amendment is the only gateway to true freedom.”

Why?

“Because if you don’t have the means to protect yourself, you’re the victim of anybody who wants to come around to hurt you.”

“Let’s face it: the liberal progressive left has a clear political agenda – to eliminate all firearms in the hands of American citizens. Australia tried it some years ago. Violent crime rose as much as 40 percent in some categories, and there was substantially less than 100 percent compliance. The Clinton Era gun ban did nothing to reduce crime. Although Americans own guns in the majority of households, our murder rate per 100,000 is substantially lower than over 100 other countries. Should we also ban kitchen knives, baseball bats, hammers, and pipes, which account for far more deaths than guns? We tried banning drugs and alcohol. How did that work?”