



Civitas Mock Legislature Background Paper

Guns

1. Apparently the first gun was invented around the year 1000. The Chinese had invented gunpowder several hundred years before.
2. The presence of power of guns increased considerably through the centuries.
3. In the U.S. Constitution (1788), the Second Amendment addresses the issues of guns as follows:
 - a. A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.
 - b. Let's make a list of the number of words and terms in the Second Amendment that might cause confusion:
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
4. So, let's ask some basic questions about the presence of guns in our society:
 - a. Consider the balance between the protection that they provide some and the damage to others. Do they do more of one than the other?
 - b. Why is the protection of "gun rights" so much more intense in the United States than most other countries? Include present day considerations and the history of the United States.

- c. The term “commons sense gun laws” is often used. What do you think that it means?
 - d. What do you think of the idea of arming teachers and administrators in schools?
 - e. What do you think of individuals being able to carry concealed weapons in public?
 - f. What do you think of individuals being able to “open carry” a weapon in public?
 - g. Is there some point along the continuum from a small handgun to a nuclear weapon where you think that particular weapons should absolutely be forbidden for private ownership?
5. During his 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary race against Hillary Clinton, in an unguarded moment, Barack Obama said in reference to working-class voters in old industrial towns decimated by job losses, “They get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.” Obama did not want that comment to be made public, but what do you think of the content of what he said?
6. So, the two “extremes” on the gun issue in the United States are:
- a. There should be no restrictions on owning and/or carrying guns.
 - b. Guns should be outlawed except for law-enforcement officials. Hunters should be allowed to own or perhaps only rent guns.
7. Are you comfortable with either of these “extremes,” or would you prefer policy to be somewhere in the middle? If so, where?