

# Emotional president unveils his plan to control firearms, violence

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Announcing steps his administration plans to take to reduce gun violence in the U.S., President Barack Obama pauses to wipe away tears as he recalled the 20 first-graders killed in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The president spoke in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C. Photo: AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Tuesday, President Barack Obama announced his plan to tighten control and enforcement of firearms in the United States. When Congress failed to pass the legal changes the president requested, he opted to use his presidential powers to make a change. During the announcement, he was visibly emotional, even wiping tears from his cheek at one point.

Obama accused the gun lobby of taking Congress hostage, but said "they cannot hold America hostage." He insisted that it is possible to uphold the Second Amendment while doing something to tackle the frequency of mass shootings in the United States that he said had become the "new normal."

"This is not a plot to take away everybody's guns," Obama said in a ceremony in the East Room. "You pass a background check, you purchase a firearm. The problem is some gun sellers have been operating under a different set of rules."

## **Recalling Young Victims Of Violence**

Obama wiped tears away as he recalled the 20 first-graders killed in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. He paid tribute to the parents, some of whom gathered for the ceremony, who he said had never imagined their child's life would be cut short by a bullet.

"Every time I think about those kids, it gets me mad," Obama said.

At the center of the president's plan is a more sweeping definition of gun dealers than is currently in place. The administration hopes this new definition will expand the number of gun sales subject to background checks. Under current law, only federally licensed gun dealers are required to conduct background checks on buyers. At gun shows, websites and flea markets, sellers often decline to register as licensed dealers. If they are not licensed, they are not currently required to perform background checks.

## **Tightening The Rules On Gun Sellers**

Aiming to narrow that loophole, the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is issuing updated guidance. The new regulation says that the government should deem anyone "in the business" of selling guns to be a dealer, regardless of where he or she sells the guns. To that end, the government will consider other factors, including how many guns a person sells, how frequently, and whether those guns are sold for a profit.

The White House also put sellers on notice that the administration planned to strengthen enforcement. The stronger enforcement includes deploying 230 new examiners that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will hire to process background checks.

The impact of Obama's plan on gun violence remains a major question and one not easily answered. Had the rules been in place in the past, they probably would not have prevented any of the recent mass shootings that have garnered national attention. The Obama administration acknowledged it couldn't quantify how many gun sales would be newly subjected to background checks, nor how many currently unregistered gun sellers would have to obtain a license.

## **Even 1 Life Saved Is Worth Effort**

In response to criticism, Obama said every time the issue is debated, gun rights groups have the same argument. No matter what is proposed, they claim that it would not necessarily have stopped the last massacre, "so why bother trying?"

"I reject that thinking," Obama said, arguing it would be worth it if the measures would prevent even a single gun death. "We maybe can't save everybody, but we could save some."

To personalize the issue, the White House assembled a cross section of Americans whose lives were altered by the nation's most searing recent gun tragedies. Those affected by recent shootings include former Representative Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona and relatives of victims from Charleston, South Carolina, and Virginia Tech. Mark Barden, whose son was shot to death at Sandy Hook, introduced the president with a declaration that "we are better than this."

## **Setting Presidential Policy**

Obama's package of executive actions aims to curb what he has described as a scourge of gun violence in the United States, punctuated by appalling mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut; Charleston, South Carolina; and Tucson, Arizona, among many others. After Newtown, Obama sought far-reaching, bipartisan legislation that went beyond background checks.

When the effort collapsed in the Senate, the White House said it was thoroughly researching the president's powers to identify every legal step he could take on his own. But a more recent spate of gun-related atrocities, including in San Bernardino, California, have spurred the administration to give the issue another look. Obama is seeking to make good on a policy issue that he's elevated time and again but has failed until now to advance.

## Quiz

- 1 Read the paragraphs from the section "Even 1 Life Saved Is Worth Effort."

*In response to criticism, Obama said every time the issue is debated, gun rights groups have the same argument. No matter what is proposed, they claim that it wouldn't necessarily have stopped the last massacre, "so why bother trying?"*

*"I reject that thinking," Obama said, arguing it would be worth it if the measures would prevent even a single gun death. "We maybe can't save everybody, but we could save some."*

What is the meaning of the word "reject" in this case?

- (A) do not like
- (B) do not agree with
- (C) do not want to hear
- (D) do not understand

- 2 Read the sentence from the section "Setting Presidential Policy."

*Obama's package of executive actions aims to curb what he's described as a scourge of gun violence in the United States, punctuated by appalling mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut; Charleston, South Carolina; and Tucson, Arizona, among many others.*

Which of the following is the BEST replacement for "scourge" in the sentence above?

- (A) scandal
- (B) misfortune
- (C) major problem
- (D) surprising amount

3 Read the quote from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

*"This is not a plot to take away everybody's guns," Obama said in a ceremony in the East Room. "You pass a background check, you purchase a firearm. The problem is some gun sellers have been operating under a different set of rules."*

Which of the following BEST summarizes how President Obama is trying to advance his point of view in this quote?

- (A) by explaining his plan for a new gun-buying process in logical, non-frightening terms
- (B) by making an emotional appeal to viewers and readers about guns and unfair rules
- (C) by using examples and anecdotes to bring the loopholes in the laws to life for viewers and readers
- (D) by reminding people that he is first and foremost a friend to gun owners who value the Second Amendment

4 Which statement accurately identifies the purpose of the article?

- (A) to question and critique President Obama's plan
- (B) to persuade readers to agree with President Obama's plan
- (C) to present President Obama's reasoning and context for his plan
- (D) to provide an even-handed debate between both sides of the issue