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These Dangerous Toys

Stephen King recently wrote, following the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary, “How many have to die before we give up these dangerous toys?” This is an interesting question. Is it 85, the number of Americans every day who are shot and killed, either by their own hand, that of a family member, a friend, or a stranger? Is it 31,328, the number of gun deaths in the USA in 2010? Are these enough to spur our action, or will we hide behind the slogan “guns don’t kill people, people kill people”? Or is the number 151, the number of people injured or killed in mass shootings in America in 2012, including the tragedies at Aurora and Newtown? Can these latest tragedies bring reason to America and increase gun control measures? Will we be able to see reason, see the clear connection between gun ownership and gun violence, or will we continue to cling to our guns? Looking at the facts alone, there is no doubt that there is a positive correlation between gun ownership and the chances of being shot and or killed by a firearm.

Households with firearms are more likely to have gun related injuries, accidental deaths, murders, and successful suicides than households without guns. A physical altercation is more likely to result in death when a firearm is at hand than when it is not. In fact, of all deaths in 2012 when the circumstances surrounding the murder were known almost 42% of murders occurred during arguments. For the most part, killings that are crimes of passion, like murders during arguments, are more likely to occur with a ready lethal weapon, like a firearm, is at hand. Gun ownership does not only increase chances of death by another’s hand, but it increases the chances of a completed suicide attempt exponentially. In 2009, 3 of the top 5 states with the most guns owned per capita ranked as the top 3 states in terms of completed suicide attempts. 15 of the top 20 states with the most guns owned per capita also ranked in the top 20 states in terms of completed suicides per capita.

The facts are indisputable, the presence of a gun in a household increases a person’s chance of dying by a firearm. Its really simple, so when will we enact laws to reflect this. To paraphrase Dianne Feinstein, shouldn’t the right for Americans to feel safe trump the right to bear arms.