

"Whom Should We Ask?"

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One of the main issues which is debated in America and a hot topic at the moment is gun control. Eighty seven Americans are killed every day in gun related cases in America; the developed world's leading nation in terms of gun casualties. From a foreign perspective, news on America is usually negative and stories of gun shootings a regular occurrence in U.S. society. Incidents of shootings are usually covered in the news informing those tuning in that the gunman was mentally unstable who had too easy an access to a firearm. Schools and colleges/universities are usually the public places targeted with young people—students, the victims.

The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV) advocates for stricter gun control legislation as a way to combat gun violence and shootings which have become too common an occurrence in modern day United States. Founded in 1974 and based in the American capital, Washington D.C., the interest group is part of a national, non-profit organization which has had enough of gun availability and exploitation in America. The CSGV aims and seeks "to secure freedom from gun violence through research, strategic engagement and effective policy advocacy"¹.

What is the CSGV trying to accomplish in the long run—what are its goals/objectives? The CSGV has five key areas it wishes to address, concerning campaigns and issues. Firstly, the CSGV is opposed to the "insurrectionist policy" of the National Rifle Association (NRA). The NRA contends that everyday Americans should "retain the right to take whatever measures necessary, including force, to abolish oppressive government". The CSGV believe this is a conspiracy to combat all restrictions on firearms which damages the organizations that safeguard other freedoms. Secondly, the CSGV require absolute state and federal support; this includes government funding for gun micro stamping. Micro stamping is

¹ <http://csgv.org/about-us/>

1 an identification technology which can trace the serial number of any gun from removed bullet casings
2 found at a crime scene. Thirdly, the CSGV believes that individuals should not be able to privately
3 purchase guns without background checks because this is a step in the wrong direction. This is a flaw in
4 the law in the eyes of the CSGV who are working to change this. Pen ultimately, the CSGV constantly
5 reminds the government the problem of the current order which permits individuals to carry a hidden
6 loaded firearm in public. Finally, the CSGV believes the best way forward is through support through
7 federal legislation. This includes a repeal of the Tiahrt Amendment which forbids the ATF from
8 publishing evidence from its weapons traces archives to anyone but a law enforcement organization or
9 prosecutor linked with a criminal inquiry. This also includes renewing the Federal Assault Weapons Ban,
10 making background checks mandatory and prohibiting individuals who are on any government watch list
11 from purchasing firearms.

12 What it comes down to is which branch of government should the CSGV try and influence to get their
13 objectives achieved? There are three branches of government in the United States of America. These are
14 the Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The executive is headed by the president who passes new laws
15 and directs foreign policy. The executive is "responsible for priority setting and policy
16 formulation...Second, the president is responsible for handling national emergencies. The military role
17 of the president has increased in importance...Finally, the president is supposed to be the strongest
18 mobilizer of public influence in the American system of power"²

19 The second branch of government, the judicial, is headed by the Supreme Court. They play by the
20 constitution, review laws and decide cases concerning states' rights. In general terms, the judicial branch
21 "is the branch of government whose task is the authoritative adjudication of controversies over the

² Robert Langran and Martin Schnitzer; *Government, Business, and the American Economy*, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007, pg. 21.

1 application of laws in specific situations"³

2 The last branch of government is the legislative branch. The legislative is headed by the House of
3 Representatives and the Senate which passes laws, makes spending bills (House), can impeach officials
4 (Senate) and approve treaties (Senate). In summary, the legislative branch of government is the 'branch
5 of the government that makes laws"⁴.

6 The CSGV should try and influence and approach the legislative branch of the American government
7 regarding their policy objectives. The CSGV should attempt to influence the legislative branch of
8 government because this would give them the best chance of affecting public policy. Since the CSGV
9 yearn for government funding for projects like micro stamping, they should target the legislative branch
10 of government for they make the spending bills. In order for them to have their requests heard by the
11 national government, the CSGV would most likely achieve their goals if they took their case to the
12 legislative branch of government. The legislative branch also makes the laws and since the CSGV feel
13 laws are not up to scratch at the moment to combat gun violence, then they should definitely present
14 their goals to the legislative branch. The CSGV have had some success in the pass when targeting the
15 legislative branch of government. "In addition to lobbying for a licensing and registration system, CSGV
16 helped secure passage of 1993 Brady Bill, which provides for background checks during firearm
17 purchases and 1994 assault weapons ban"⁵

18 The CSGV shouldn't bother trying to influence the executive branch because the executive has a lot of
19 emphasis on foreign policy which, in the modern day is a huge and time consuming process. At the
20 moment, gun control is not a priority (although it should be) and hence attention is paid to foreign acts

³ Britannica Educational Publishing; *The Judicial Branch of the Federal Government: Purpose, Process, and People*, New York: Rosen Publishing, 2009, pg. 52.

⁴ Bryon Giddens-White, *Congress and the Legislative Branch*, Chicago: Capstone Classroom, 2005, pg. 30.

⁵ Gregg Lee Carter, *Guns in American Society: A – L*, California: ABC-CLIO, 2002, pg. 120.

1 of aggression rather than acts of aggression within America's own borders. All in all, the executive would
2 not be a suitable branch of government to try and influence. This is because; "the framers of the
3 constitution created a presidency of limited powers. They wanted a presidential office that would stay
4 clear of parties and factions...(and) deal with foreign governments"⁶ .

5 Equally, attempting to approach the judicial branch of government would be a waste of time for the
6 CSGV due to the fact they (the supreme courts) stick by what is written in the constitution. The
7 constitution proclaims that every American deserves the right to bear arms in order to defend his/her
8 rights and freedoms. The judicial also only reviews laws and does not make them. If an interest group
9 wants a policy change it would be much more beneficial to them to try and influence those in charge of
10 making the laws. The CSGV have national ambitions. They want gun control across America whereas the
11 judicial branch of government only settles cases which concern a certain state and its rights. The CSGV
12 violate the constitution so why would the judicial branch listen to what they have to say? "One of the
13 checks held by the judicial branch is judicial review, which is the Supreme Court's power to declare a law
14 unconstitutional if it violates the constitution."⁷ .

15 To conclude, the CSGV would have the best chance of achieving their policies and objectives if they
16 attempted to get their ideas to the legislative branch of government. The fact that most of the CSGV's
17 goals involve getting new laws passed, the legislative is the perfect branch to approach because they
18 draw up the laws of the United States. The legislative also regulate government spending. The CSGV
19 would need to convince the legislative to introduce the micro stamping system on guns which would
20 require a complete revamp of existing rules and regulations on the purchasing of firearms. The CSGV
21 have already been successful in the nineties when they approached the legislative. Considering it is the

⁶ Robert Langran and Martin Schnitzer; *Government, Business, and the American Economy*, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007, pg. 21.

⁷ Bryon Giddens-White, *The Supreme Court and the Judicial Branch*, Chicago: Capstone Classroom, 2005, pg. 10.

- 1 twenty first century and still gun shootings in America are common, why would the CSGV not have a
- 2 better likelihood now of reform than back then?

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