



Need for Gun Control Laws -US

Why in news?

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A Las Vegas Strip in US witnessed a mass shooting, killing around 60 people and injuring more than 500.

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What are second amendment rights?

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- In 1791, the Bill of Rights, which is the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was adopted.

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- The Bill of Rights provided for **greater constitutional protection for individual liberties** and specified prohibitions on governmental power.

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- The **second amendment** pertains to the right of every citizen to bear arms and ammunition.

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- It was envisaged as a provision to give a sense of freedom to the citizens and for their own defense.

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What is the concern?

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- The constitution makers did not mean this provision for the present sophisticated, automatic-firing killing machines.

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- Also, being a truly federal state, the US states brought in their own rules

governing the possession of arms and ammunition.

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- It differs from stricter regulations to those that does not mandate even a license to bear arms and limitation on the numbers.

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- The regional difference and unregulated use have resulted in many instances of gun violence, claiming thousands of innocent lives.

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- On an average, more than 90 Americans lose their lives to gun violence every day.

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- Though the shooter in recent case is suspected for IS links, the need is for a more sensible gun ownership regulation.

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What were the earlier attempts?

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- Many attempts at bringing in gun control regulations failed in the US Congress.

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- The former President Obama launched a final attempt through an executive action.

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- Introduced in 2015, the King-Thompson bill aimed at closing the loopholes in gun laws.

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- It aimed at -

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1. expanding the existing background check system.
2. The system would cover all commercial firearm sales including those at gun shows, over the internet or in classified ads.
3. However, it provides reasonable exceptions for family and friend transfers.
4. boosting funding for federal agencies enforcing the laws.
5. improving treatment of mental health conditions nationwide.

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- Despite these attempts, the U.S. Congress shows reluctance to take steps.
- This is primarily because of lobbying by the National Rifle Association and the huge number of gun manufacturers.
- The gun lobby's interest is being upheld by a cultural inclination for gun ownership rooted in the Second Amendment.

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What should be done?

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- The US Congress must take efforts to pass the bipartisan King-Thompson legislation.
- This can strengthen the life-saving background checks that keep guns out of the wrong hands.
- A Select Committee on Gun Violence could be created to study and report on a sensible legislation addressing other issues in this regard.
- This can ensure that children and those with mental illnesses don't have access to guns.
- The 'right to bear arms' would become meaningful only with accompanied responsibilities.

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Source: The Hindu

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