

Joe Sanfelippo: The hypocrisy of gun control

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Over the years, my dad had many wise sayings, and one that always stuck with me was that “all fences do is keep honest people honest.” This meant that an honorable person with good intentions will respect the fence and leave the property alone, while a dishonest person up to no good will simply ignore the fence, rendering it useless.

I could not help but be reminded of this life lesson as Governor Evers and legislative Democrats turned the recent tragedies in El Paso and Dayton into a political opportunity to prey upon the emotions of Wisconsinites sympathetic to the victims and their families by recycling worn-out ideas that they knew would have little chance of preventing similar tragedies in the future. So why, you might ask, would Democrats propose solutions that they know would not work? The answer is simple: they are trying to hide their culpability for the erosion of public safety that we are experiencing throughout our communities.

We are all moved to tears whenever such tragedies occur, and it is easy for Democrats to exploit these events to divert attention away from the crime epidemic sweeping the urban centers of our state. Democrats seem to have plenty to say about mass shootings that occur in the suburbs, yet they remain silent on rampant inner-city crime. Those proposing stricter gun laws that would primarily burden law-abiding citizens are the same people advocating for summarily reducing our prison population and releasing violent criminals back onto our streets.

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Over the past several legislative sessions, Republicans have proposed numerous bills to keep our citizens safe by cracking down on crime, stiffening penalties for repeat violent offenders, and requiring mandatory revocation hearings for convicted criminals who commit new offenses while out on parole or supervision. Democrats in the Legislature fought us every step of the way on these reforms. Sadly, the problem does not lie solely with liberals in state government: our criminal justice system, which is composed largely of Democrats in more populous urban areas, goes out of its way to avoid holding criminals to account for their crimes by ignoring even the most clear-cut offenses. For instance, from 2011 to 2015, while over 3,600 felons were arrested for illegally possessing a firearm—a felony in its own right—an investigation by Fox 6 News found that three out of four of these criminals were never even charged. More recently, two West Allis Police officers were injured while apprehending a felon caught with cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. As it turns out, the suspect already had an outstanding warrant for bail jumping from a prior arrest, having skipped out on a \$1,500 bond, never showing back up in court, and returning to continue his life of crime. Nevertheless, last week, a court commissioner inexplicably set bail for the new charges at a mere \$2,000, teeing the suspect up for a continuation of his criminal career. Another old saying about the definition of insanity comes to mind.

Democrats are advocating for greater protections for criminals at the expense of the rights of law-abiding citizens. Ask yourself who is more likely to undergo a background check prior to purchasing a gun: a person who goes through legal channels or one of the 3,600 felons arrested for possessing a firearm that they already were not allowed to have? Which one is the real threat to public safety?

The mass shootings that occur are horrific and we should honestly consider proposals that will have a meaningful effect and a real likelihood of averting future tragedies. Unfortunately, an individual here in Wisconsin has a greater chance of being killed driving through certain parts of Milwaukee than in a mass shooting, and until Democrats stop ignoring the crime epidemic destroying our urban neighborhoods and start treating criminals as criminals rather than victims, I have a hard time believing that they are serious about protecting our citizens. We can work together to address both issues, but we will make no progress when tragedies like these are used as a pretext to target law-abiding citizens' rights. Politicians can grandstand through press conferences and releases advocating for tighter gun controls, but those tighter controls will merely serve as fences respected only by the law-abiding and ignored by criminals.

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