

New gun policies have conservatives up in arms

Obama calls for safety courses, background checks

by Joe Borushek

On Jan. 5, 2016, President Barack Obama revealed his new policies on gun control in response to the Oregon shooting in October.

Obama's executive order (an order having the force of law issued by the president) will require more strict background checks on people trying to buy guns, as well as requiring a gun safety course and stricter enforcement laws at the state level.

Obama has been trying to pass stricter gun control laws ever since the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012, where 20 first graders and six staff members were shot and killed by Adam Lanza, a mentally ill individual who's mother was an avid gun enthusiast.

"Everytime I think about those kids," Obama said with tears in his eyes, "it gets me mad."

This is not the first instance where Obama has tried to make



Children and parents march on the Capitol for gun control (2013) | AP Images

changes to the laws on gun control

In 2013, Obama tried to pass a similar plan to the one that he ordered on Jan. 5. However, in this plan he asked for bans on military assault weapons and to limit magazines (clips that hold bullets)

to 10 rounds (bullets) along with other requirements, like extra safety training.

But, this bill was not passed due to fierce backlash from the National Rifle Association (NRA), leading conservative Republicans and some

Democrats to vote no, killing it in the senate.

This time, Obama came back with a bill similar to the one in 2013, however it has less focus on banning weapons and more on heavy background checks and extra safety training.

This proposed bill has also become a hot button topic for several 2016 presidential candidates. Hillary Clinton tweeted "Thank you, @ POTUS (Barack Obama), for taking a crucial step forward on gun violence."

Others, however, are not so happy. Ben Carson argued that Obama's order will "regulate freedom" in a tweet he sent out soon after the resident announced it.

This topic has also reached New Trier, where many have concerns with the new laws.

"I really think people are overreacting to what has been going on," said junior Trevor Visotsky, "people think that creating harsher background checks and more strict rules will stop gun violence. The harsh truth is that if someone wants to commit a crime with a gun, a background check isn't going to

stop them and a safety course isn't going to make them realize guns are dangerous."

Junior Brennan Sandor felt differently, saying "I think that this is a step in the right direction, gun control laws are pretty relaxed and I'm glad that people are taking gun safety seriously. It's time for mass shootings to stop happening and I think these background checks will really make it difficult for those that try to commit these atrocities."

This new gun control law is also in response to recent events, such as the Laquan McDonald shooting, where a police officer shot McDonald 16 times. In response to this, a threat was called on the University of Chicago. The caller, Jabari Dean, threatened he would "execute 16 white male students and or staff, which is the same number of times McDonald was killed."

The rise in mass shootings and senseless violence has had a significant effect on the public, and the new law already has as well. The proposed policies will not please everyone, but will change how Americans purchase guns.

Seniors must keep college in mind before dropping APs

Altered schedules may risk college acceptances

by Tia Rotolo

As admissions letters get sent out, seniors have begun to weigh the decision of whether to drop difficult classes for a free period during their day.

At New Trier, more than 895 juniors and seniors took AP tests in 2015. Students believe that the more AP classes one takes, the more appealing they'll be to colleges.

Deborah Donley, a post-high school counselor, understands the importance of taking AP classes. "Most highly selective colleges encourage students to demonstrate their intellectual capacity by the challenge of AP courses. However, most schools are more interested in what is academically appropriate for students," Donley said.

While taking AP classes can influence one's chances to get into college, they come with a catch. The added work, stricter discipline, and increased time commitment rarely allow free time.

Hannah Wineman, a second semester senior, has begun to feel the effects of senioritis now that she's finished her applications. "I feel like I'm so close to being done. At this point, it's just so easy to fall behind or watch Netflix instead of doing homework," Wineman said.

Donley doesn't think it's that hard to understand why seniors would want to drop their more challenging classes. "It's natural to want relief after the stress of college applications and first semester. That's why a free period seems like such an easier option," Donley said.

Many students end up dropping their AP classes at the start of the second semester for a variety of other reasons as well. A senior girl couldn't stand the rigor anymore, "It was just so hard to keep up. I would study for hours and continuously get bad grades. My effort just wasn't being reflected in my grades. I couldn't take it anymore," she said.

While bad grades can make work unbearable, outside factors can also influence one's decision. A senior boy had a hard time managing his overwhelming schoolwork with his job schedule. "My hours at work and my extra-curriculars became almost impossible with how much homework I was being assigned. I had to figure out what was more important for me," he said.

However, in order to drop an AP, students are required to contact their future university. "The student is only allowed to drop the class after they've gotten permission from their college. They should also talk with their current teacher, as well as their college counselor to work everything out smoothly," Donley explained.

A senior girl said her process was a long one. "The teacher, advisor, department chair, college counselor and college must all give you permission before you can drop the class. I emailed my college early on and they understood my reasoning," she said.

Time isn't the only discouraging factor of dropping a course. The post high school office highly discourages doing so. "The college could always take back your admission after you've requested to drop a class," Donley said.

Taking an AP is a big choice--the post high school counseling department believes the student should recognize what they're getting themselves into before they commit.

"We consider it a contract, and so do colleges. They expect that once a student is admitted, they will complete the senior year program that the college understood and based their acceptance on. It's not about us or the students, it's really about colleges wanting students to take full advantage of their acceptance and opportunities," Donley said.

However, colleges can be understanding. "If a student has a real reason instead of a frivolous one, then we'll work with and advocate for the student to make the semester more manageable for them," Donley said.

CPD enforces change in response to recent shootings

Chicago clamors for gun regulation, Emanuel gives in

by Emily Wong

After the fatal shooting of Quentin LeGrier and Bettie Jones, as well as further accusations of police brutality, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced changes to the policies of the Chicago Police Department.

In response to these shootings, including that of LaQuan McDonald in 2014, Emanuel cut short his personal vacation to Cuba and started to enact change in the police department. He gave a speech on Dec. 30, 2015 to announce these moderations.

The first of these changes was the dismissal of the CPD Superintendent Garry McCarthy. Because of the problems that had occurred during his time in this position, the mayor thought it best that he step down to restore Chicago's trust in their police department. First Deputy Superintendent John Escalante is serving in his place.

The department also increased their number of tasers, doubling it from 700 to 1,400. Emanuel explained that his goal is to have at least one taser in each squad car so that there is a non-lethal option available to officers at all times.

Unfortunately, the tasers do pose problems. Officer Josh Perez, New Trier's police liaison, said the issue is not just about the device, but also about police experience and training.

"We have to be retrained every year," Perez said. "We have to take a two-part written exam to be recertified."

Perez also explained that both the training and the weapons can be costly. This issue was also brought up at Emanuel's press conference.

Possibly due to confusion, the temporary Superintendent never answered the question directly. When asked where the money would be coming from, Escalante responded by restating the number of tasers they would be adding to the department.

However, Emanuel admitted



Chicago policeman patrolling on horseback at Wrigley | NT News Archive

that tasers won't solve the whole problem. "Tasers, like cameras, are technology," he said. "The tasers and the policy we're announcing today go together somewhat like hand and glove."

Perez expressed a similar opinion, saying that tasers help give officers another level of force to use, but they're "not the solution."

Perez, like Emanuel, strongly advocates for the new training policy. Emanuel announced in his speech the idea to make interactions with police "less confrontational and more conversational." He talked about making the use of force a last resort instead of a first option, reiterating that "the goal is to make sure everyone goes home safely."

Attention was called to the Chicago Police Department earlier this year as Chicagoans gathered in the city to march in protest of police misconduct, specifically the shooting of Laquan McDonald.

The shooting took place on Oct. 20, 2014. Around 10 PM, it was reported to police that 17-year old McDonald was breaking into trucks while using a three-inch knife.

According to police reports, when he was asked to put down the knife, McDonald refused. Shortly after, he was shot 16 times by officer Jason Van Dyke. McDonald died that night at 10:42 at Mount Sinai Hospital.

The video was released on Nov. 19, 2015, thirteen months after the shooting took place. Shortly after the video was released, a similar incident occurred on the West Side where 19-year old Quentin LeGrier and his 55-year old neighbor Bettie Jones were killed.

According to CNN, the CPD received a call that LeGrier was threatening his father with an aluminum baseball bat. LeGrier then called Jones, his downstairs neighbor, asking her to open the door when the officers arrived.

When they got to the scene, LeGrier was running down the stairs with the bat. He was shot by the police, and Jones was killed in the crossfire.

This event created even more unrest in the Chicago area. Civilians again gathered in the city to protest.

Perez thinks that Chicago's greater size and limited budget may be a source of their struggles. He compared the city to Winnetka. "The people in this area have the benefit of having good leaders," he said. "A small department makes it easier for everyone to get certified."

There will be some challenges, but Emanuel is confident that with all the changes enacted, the CPD will be able to make a full turnaround. "We can change the culture," he assured, "piece by piece, policy by policy."