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## The Washington Times

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### EDITORIAL: Guns decrease murder rates

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

More guns in law-abiding hands mean less crime. The District of Columbia proves the point.

Reading most press accounts, one would be forgiven for thinking Armageddon had arrived after the Supreme Court struck down the District's handgun ban in 2008. Predictions sprung forth from all directions that allowing more citizens to own guns and not forcing them to keep them locked up was going to threaten public safety. According to D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty, more guns in homes would cause more violent crime.

This has never been the case. Local politicians enthusiastically embraced the 1977 handgun ban predicting it would make Washington a safe place by dramatically reducing murder rates. But they were as wrong three decades ago as they are now.


A telling story is illustrated by the murder numbers since the handgun ban and gun-lock bans were struck down. Between 2008 and 2009, the FBI's preliminary numbers indicate that murders fell nationally by 10 percent and by about 8 percent in cities that have between 500,000 and 999,999 people. Washington's population is about 590,000. During that same period of time, murders in the District fell by an astounding 25 percent, dropping from 186 to 140. The city only started allowing its citizens to own handguns for defense again in late 2008.

Few who lived in Washington during the 1970s can forget the upswing in crime that started right after the ban was originally passed. In the five years before the 1977 ban, the murder rate fell from 37 to 27 murders per 100,000. In the five years after the gun ban went into effect, the murder rate rose back up to 35. One fact is particularly hard to ignore: D.C.'s murder rate fluctuated after 1976 but only once fell below what it was in 1976 before the ban. That aberration happened years later, in 1985.

This correlation between the D.C. gun ban and diminished safety was not a coincidence. Look at the Windy City. Immediately after Chicago banned handguns in 1982, the murder rate, which had been falling almost continually for a decade, started to rise. Chicago's murder rate rose relative to other large cities as well. The phenomenon of higher murder rates after gun bans are passed is not just limited to the United States. Every single time a country has passed a gun ban, its murder rate soared.

The choice Americans face isn't between freedom or safety. Washington's experience with gun bans shows once again that Americans will either be free and safe or unfree and unsafe. Letting people protect themselves is the responsible approach. It's important the Supreme Court remember these facts in March when it hears the case over Chicago's handgun ban.

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