

Opinion / Viewpoints

Gun lobby's proposals won't make Florida residents safer

By **Maria Sachs**

JANUARY 22, 2016, 11:08 PM

The last thing that Florida needs now are looser restrictions on gun use. Over the past few decades it has become abundantly clear that our state is dealing with significant problems in the areas of gun deaths, violence and safety.

In 2000, the total percentage of murders that were caused by the use of a firearm was 56.1 percent; in 2010 this figure increased to 67.8 percent and in 2014 this figure had further increased to 70 percent. These numbers do not even factor in homicide where the shooter claimed self-defense.

Despite all this, pro-gun legislators in Florida are now pushing for looser restrictions on gun use. One bill would allow the carrying of concealed weapons on college campuses, even though 73 percent of Floridians say this is a bad idea. Another piece of legislation that has been introduced would even allow individuals to bring guns to public meetings.

Most menacingly, House Bill 163 and Senate Bill 300 would legalize "open-carry" in Florida, which would allow citizens to openly carry guns almost anywhere concealed-carry weapons are permitted. These bills would allow more Floridians to have more guns in more places, a situation we should avoid.

Given the elevated gun violence levels in our state, this is not the kind of legislation that Florida needs.

We must implement stricter and safer gun-control legislation that would counteract the growth of gun violence, not enhance it. Florida deserves common-sense gun control and funding that would provide additional mental health programs.

These are precisely the kind of measures I will support during the upcoming session.

When our forefathers drafted the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution, they did not envision that someone who was found mentally incompetent would be guaranteed the right to carry a loaded firearm.

There is much talk today about money running policy. There is not a more aggressive group than the **National Rifle Association**. Check your legislator's record and their NRA rating to see who they are representing in our state capitol: the people or the NRA lobbyist?

This is important as we start the second week of a session in which we will be sure to see pro-gun legislation introduced.

*Maria Sachs represents District 34 in the **Florida Senate**.*

Copyright © 2016, Sun Sentinel

This article is related to: [National Rifle Association of America](#), [Florida Legislature](#)