American Gun Control: What Will it Take?

Research Question

• What will it take to pass gun control legislation in the United States?

A Brief Look at Gun Violence in the United States

- 1999-Columbine High School Massacre- 15 dead, 24 injured (21 by gunfire)
- 2012-Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting- 28 dead, 2 injured
- 2016-Pulse Nightclub Shooting- 50 deaths, 53 injured
- 2017-Las Vegas Shooting- 59 deaths, 869 injured (413 by gunfire)

Literature Review

- John Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Theory
  - Policy Stream
    - An informal collective where there are different players coming up with solutions to issues
  - Problem Stream
    - Crises and disasters that bring issues to the attention of people in and around government
  - Politics Stream
    - Things such as public mood, changes in administration, and pressure group campaigns
  - When these three streams converge, a window is created in which new policy can actually be passed into law and implemented.

- This project presupposes the convergence of the policy stream and the problem stream.
  - Clearly, policy solutions exist that deal with gun violence.
    - For example, assault weapons bans and magazine capacity limits.
  - However, the effectiveness of these solutions is outside the scope of the project.
  - Similarly, it is hard to deny that problems exist, with mass shootings occurring nearly every day in the United States.
  - Therefore, the focus of this project falls on the factors that are impeding the convergence of the policy stream in United States policy creation and implementation.

Methodology

- For my research, I decided to conduct a series of case studies where I looked for mass shootings that occurred in other nations, similar to the United States.
  - After identifying mass shootings in these nations, I looked to see if any sort of gun control legislation was passed as a result.
  - After identifying a case in which gun control legislation was passed, I looked at the ideology of the government that passed it.
    - That is to say, whether it was Liberal or Conservative.

- Comparative Case Studies
  - The United Kingdom
  - Australia
  - New Zealand
  - Canada
  - Non-European Union
    - Individual Nations
  - Western Developed Nations
  - Comparable culture to the United States
  - Shared Colonial-History

Analysis

- United Kingdom

- Australia

- New Zealand

- Canada

Findings and Conclusion

- Non-Partisan Issue
  - From the analysis of the case studies, it can be concluded that gun control is not a partisan issue. In the majority of the cases, gun control was actually passed by conservative governments. While gun control is often seen as a liberal issue in the United States, the evidence presented here points to the contrary.

- Special Interest Groups
  - After learning that the political ideology of the administration does not prevent the convergence of the political stream, I determined what the biggest difference was between the United States and the case study nations, in regards to the political stream. I came to the conclusion that the most significant factor differentiating the United States was the presence of special interests groups and their influence over policy creation.

- Pro-gun special interest groups, such as the National Rifle Association, hold immense sway over policy creation in the United States. They invest significant time and resources to prevent gun control legislation from passing. No meaningful gun control policies will ever be passed in America until something is done to either limit or combat the political power that is exercised by these groups.

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