

# Opinion: Guns are not the problem

By Tom McClintock

In its editorial (“Why Does Anyone Need a 100-Round Rifle Clip,” Aug. 5), the *Sacramento Bee* notes that I “failed to respond” to its inquiries. The editorial amply demonstrates the reason: the *Bee* is notorious for stating one-sided political manifestos, listing its heroes and villains, and offering no opportunity for a balanced debate.

In the event I am mistaken and the *Bee* actually welcomes a differing viewpoint, here is mine.



Tom McClintock

The inherent fallacy of all gun bans is that only law-abiding citizens obey them. Violent predators already operate in an extensive underground economy and such laws merely incentivize and reward an additional criminal class to traffic in the contraband.

Gun bans might make it more difficult for lunatics to obtain them, but they make it impossible for the law-abiding. The *Bee* notes that guns make it easier for a criminal to commit a crime, but forgets that guns also make it easier for the law-abiding citizens to defend themselves, as thousands do every year.

Indeed, the theater in Aurora that banned firearms on its premises became a tragic microcosm of the world the *Bee's* policy would produce: a defenseless civil society in which the gunman is king.

The *Bee* lost this argument long ago and is now reduced to chipping away at ancillary issues like limiting ammunition clips. After all, no legitimate target shooter or hunter can justify a gun with more than ten rounds. The *Bee* wonders why any decent citizen would want more?

I certainly wouldn't.

Unless, perhaps, I worked the night shift at a convenience store; or I owned a theater where such an attack could happen again; or I owned a ranch or home near the border where drug cartels often operate; or if I were planning to take a sailboat into international waters; or one of countless other reasons the law simply cannot anticipate.

The *Bee* asserts that gun related deaths have dropped faster in California than the rest of the nation and credits its strict gun laws. True, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, between 1994 and 2010 violent crime in California declined 56.5 percent while falling 43.4 percent nationally – a 13-point difference. But the *Bee* somehow missed the other half of this statistic: non-violent crime in California (unaffected by its gun laws) dropped by a nearly identical spread, (48.9 percent compared to 36.7 percent nationally).

What would account for an equal decline in violent and non-violent serious crimes in California since 1994 relative to the rest of the nation? Perhaps harsher sentencing laws in the 1980s, culminating with California's "Three Strikes" law of 1994 that locks up repeat offenders for violent and non-violent serious crimes explain the statistics far better.

Of course, the *Bee* opposed the "Three Strikes" law when voters enacted it. The editorial was ironically entitled, "Shooting

Ourselves in the Foot.”

*Tom McClintock represents the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin in the House of Representatives.*