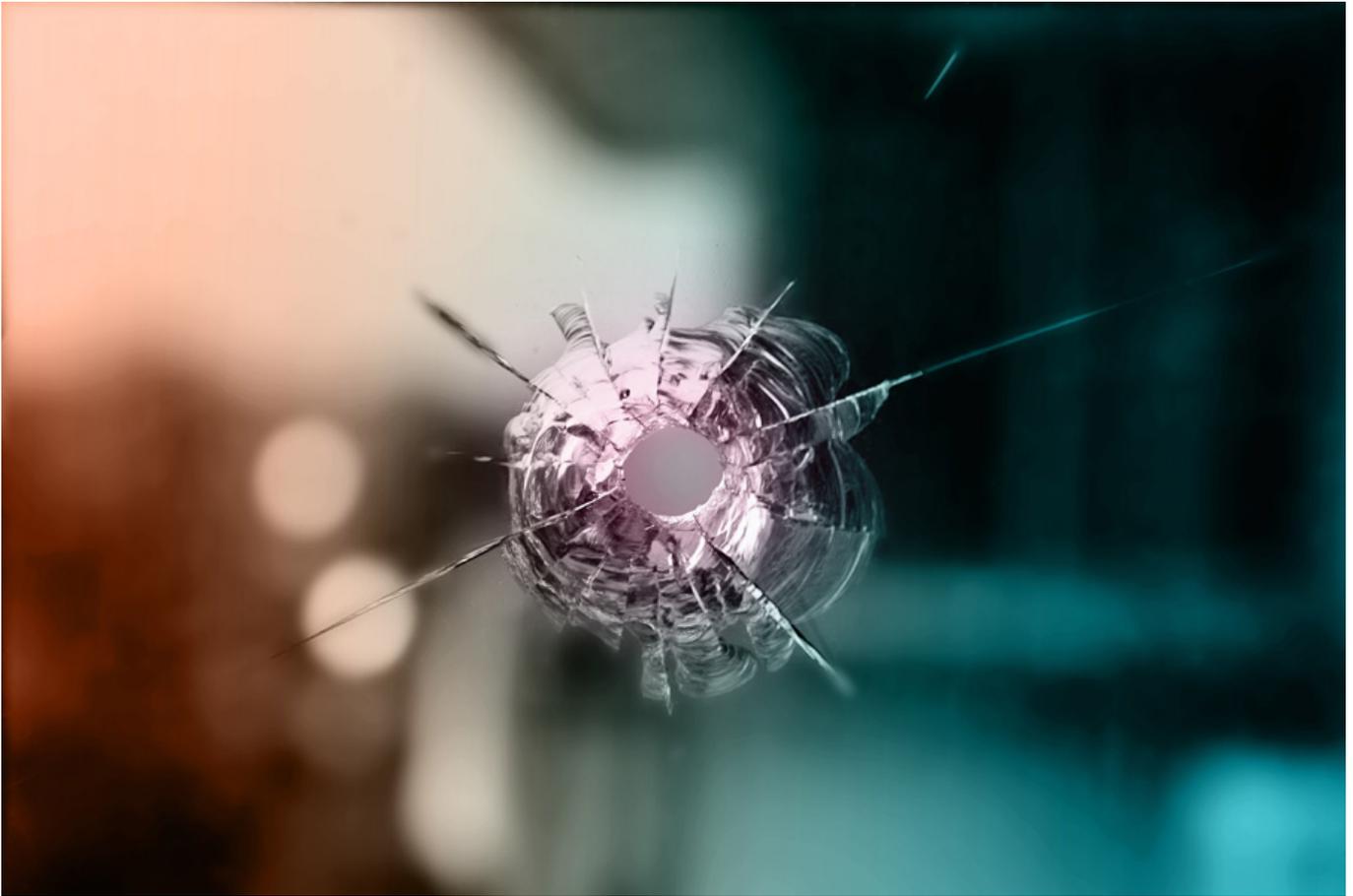


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On Wednesday, Feb. 14 (Valentine's Day), a school shooting occurred at a Florida high school. At least [17 individuals](#) were killed in the shooting.

This shooting was [the third mass shooting](#) at a school in our country this year.

Most Americans view these events and feel a need for us and our leaders to find a way to prevent this violence and protect our children.

A small segment of our society looks at the same event and considers it a challenge to make sure no one does anything to interfere with what they see as an unlimited right to purchase and possess guns of any kind.

It is this small group that holds the power and makes the rules in our democracy. They are winning over and over again.

That does not seem like democracy. Those who are supposed to represent us are instead following the dictates of this small but powerful group. Congress is paralyzed in the face of what is happening in our schools and beyond. They will not permit debate on the topic.

The only solution is to elect a different Congress. We need to make clear we want our children to be protected. We will not vote for anyone, Democrat or Republican, unless they pledge to address this issue.

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Enhanced background checks are a first step that is required.

A ban on military style assault weapons is also necessary. [The AR-15 rifle](#) has proven to be the weapon of choice used in school shootings and other mass shootings.

No one on a terrorist watch list should be allowed [to purchase a gun](#).

Long-term, there needs to be a study of guns and the gun culture in America to determine what is going on and what can be done to improve things. Yet the federal government and its agencies, such as the Center for Disease Control, [are not permitted](#) to study the issue of gun violence. How is this possible? What is the gun lobby afraid of finding?

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None of these measures infringe on the rights of gun owners to have access to guns and to continue to purchase guns for protection and hunting.

None of these measures will make America 100 percent safe from gun violence.

However, these measures will make a difference.

They need to be enacted. We need to demonstrate that we care about our children. We must be outraged by these senseless acts of violence, and we must refuse to normalize them.

The extreme arguments of the gun rights advocates are becoming increasingly hollow and without merit each passing day.

We cannot allow small but powerful voices to tell us nothing can be done. When it comes to our children, we as a people need to do everything we can to make sure they can go to school each day with a reasonable sense that they will be safe to go home at the end of the school day.