

Statement to the Santa Rosa City Council October 26, 1999

My name is Clayton Cramer. You should already have received a detailed letter from me in the mail. I am here tonight to tell you that your attempt to regulate gun shows on city-owned property – even though no one has ever applied to hold one there – is poorly thought out, and would be best dropped, right now.

Your draft policy § 3.1 claims that banning firearms in city-owned “facilities will promote the public health and safety by contributing to the reduction of gunshot fatalities and injuries in the City.” What evidence do you have for this claim? How many fatalities and injuries have occurred in Santa Rosa because of guns purchased at gun shows in Santa Rosa? Because of guns purchased at gun shows elsewhere? Data from other states concerning gun show sales has no applicability to California, nor do incidents from before 1991, because for the last eight years, California has required nearly all firearms transfers to take place through licensed dealers, with a background check and a waiting period.¹

On the other side of the “public health and safety” equation, how many fatalities and injuries in Santa Rosa have been *prevented* because of guns purchased at gun shows? The most recent research on the subject indicates that there are hundreds of thousands to perhaps more than a million civilian defensive gun uses a year in the U.S. A survey published by the National Institute of Justice two years ago, taken specifically to demolish the Kleck and Gertz estimate of 2.45 million uses per year, also produced an estimate of more than a million civilian defensive gun uses per year.²

The real reason that the City Council has asked for this draft policy is, according to the cover memorandum, “Council concern over the regulation of gun shows or sales in City facilities.” You’re trying to “send a message” about how the city feels about gun ownership – that it is something to be discouraged.

Why? About ½ of 1% of gun owners in the U.S. will *ever* criminally misuse a gun – and most of that ½ of 1% can’t lawfully buy a gun in California, in a gun store or at a gun show. So the message is that the other 99 ½% should be discouraged by banning gun shows? Are you planning to take similar action aimed at cars? Why not? It can’t be based on public safety; cars still cause more deaths than guns in the United States, and both are about equally common.

It’s because gun owners are falsely portrayed by the news media as knuckle-dragging Neanderthals, who can be insulted and harassed without political consequences. What was it that, and let emphasize this word, *former* Governor Cuomo of New York called them? “Guys who go hunting on the weekend, get drunk, and lie to their wives about where they’ve been.” That’s the sort of bigotry that underlies your desire to “send a message.” That same prejudice directed against any other group would send you screaming about the importance of “diversity and tolerance.”

Hands off gun shows!

¹ Cal. Penal Code § 12076.

² Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, *Guns in America: National Survey on Private Ownership and Use of Firearms* (Washington: National Institute of Justice, 1997), 8-9.