

Terror and guns

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The "Knotted Gun" sculpture at the U.N. Some rights reserved by [Jim, the Photographer](#).

The April 15 bomb attack at the Boston Marathon sparked a national outpouring of solidarity and concern and put the threat of terrorism back on the front page. Meanwhile, a modest gun control bill went down to defeat in the Senate.

As horrifying as the Marathon bombings were, it should be noted that only three people died in the attack, but on that same day 11 Americans were murdered by guns. Marc Cohen pointed out in the *Guardian* that over 30,000 Americans are killed by guns each year in the United States, whereas only 17 people died in this country last year from terrorist attacks. More people have lost their lives to guns in America already this year than were killed on 9/11 or were killed in combat in Iraq.

It's understandable that the threat of terrorism causes great fear. But why ignore the mayhem on our streets that every day of the year devastates families and communities? Terrorist threats demand vigilance, and the government has responded to the threats by creating an extensive security and intelligence capability—assets impressively displayed after the Marathon bombing. Why can't the nation display the same kind of resolve and vigilance when it comes to keeping guns out of the hands of the wrong people?

In the case of the Senate gun control bill, a majority of senators voted to strengthen background checks on people purchasing guns, but the 54-46 vote did not attain the

60 votes required in the Senate. Something is wrong with a process by which a minority can derail legislation that is supported by 90 percent of Americans.

Many of the votes against the background check bill were cast by senators from small or sparsely populated states. Based on population, the vote of a senator from Wyoming has 66 times more value than that of a senator from California. This kind of disparity in political power is not what the Founding Fathers had in mind.

The vote also exhibited the continuing clout of the gun lobby. Forty three out of the 46 senators who voted against the bill were recipients of contributions from gun lobbyists, who are funded primarily by gun manufacturers.

In responding to the Boston bombings, Americans exhibited courage, compassion and resilience. We need the same qualities when it comes to preventing gun violence.