



THE KIDS ARE RIGHT

Gene Goldwasser



It's time we listen to the kids. Young people in their teens and twenties have been agitating for two specific issues – global warming and gun control. It's time we not only listen to them, but also **join their efforts**.

Scientists have been warning us about the effects of global warming for decades, about rising sea levels that threaten low lying areas, about the increased frequency of devastatingly powerful hurricanes that overwhelm coastal areas with once-in-a-hundred year flooding, about the melting of glaciers and the break-up of the Arctic ice shelf at unprecedented rates that contribute to rising sea levels, and a host of other potentially catastrophic weather-related events that impact both urban and sparsely populated areas in this country and around the world.

Instead of ignoring this phenomenon, or declaring it a hoax, it's time we became more responsible citizens and do our part to lessen the effect of global warming. Make no mistake about it, carbon emissions from gasoline powered vehicles are major contributors to global warming, in fact everything we do to perpetuate our dependence on fossil fuels brings the inevitable closer instead of delaying it or stopping it completely. Those of us living in low-lying areas on the south shore of Long Island, southern Florida, the battery area of Manhattan, parts of the Carolinas, Louisiana and Texas are flirting with disaster. It is one thing to clean up and rebuild after a major storm, but quite another to rebuild after a succession of major storms and extreme flooding.

What can we do about it? For one thing, we can try to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels. Quiz yourself. Are you:

- driving more fuel efficient cars?
- buying more efficient appliances?
- using solar panels for heating and electrical consumption, where possible?
- advocating for renewable energy sources like wind power?
- considering all options that reduce our carbon footprint?

If you answered **yes** to these questions, you're already helping to reduce our carbon footprint. If you an-

swered **no**, then there's opportunity to change. We don't need to wait for the president or congress to act – as individuals, we can accomplish much.

We have discussed the epidemic of school, work-place, and entertainment venue shootings in prior newsletters. Has anything changed since this issue has been raised? I don't think so. No longer are we comfortable attending an event at a stadium or theater without looking around to determine possible escape avenues should the need arise. One has only to look at the increased police presence during New Year's Eve in Times Square, at the Gay Pride Parades, at the World Series or at the Super Bowl to note that we are employing a "prevent defense" to stop would-be shooters from senselessly spraying crowds with indiscriminate gunfire. The same "prevent defense" is now being used in schools as children participate in active shooter drills, and where armed guards are being hired to patrol hallways and monitor school grounds.

It seems to me that there is a more basic solution to this conundrum – strengthen background checks, bar people on no-fly lists from owning guns, and eliminate access to guns, especially those that use clips and "bump stocks" that turn them into automatic weapons. I am not naive – I know we are not going to be able to eliminate guns, but we have to start somewhere. After the recent mass shooting in New Zealand, the prime minister and her parliament stepped up and enacted legislation banning access to all automatic weapons. That was a brave start; an example we should follow. If congress refuses to act and the president refuses to lead on this issue, then it is up to states to enact laws that restrict access to guns, to outlaw automatic rifles, and ban clips that turn pistols and rifles into automatic weapons. Our first line of attack is to reach out to our state legislators to encourage them to enact laws that limit access to guns in the states we live in. We can do that as individuals or, if you agree, as an organization.

The kids are on the right side on these issues.

Are we?

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