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**Guns and the Body Politic
By Christine Palm**

Yes folks, it *is* political.

Decrying the Democratic “politicization” of the rampant gun violence engulfing our country, Republicans from my local state representative colleagues to Donald Trump are focusing instead on prayer, platitudes and the boogeyman of mental health. The fact is that the issue of guns has always been political.

The Second Amendment – considered sacrosanct by most Republicans, was ratified in 1791 out of fear that the federal government might prove tyrannical, (as the new Americans felt England had been). It wasn’t until the ill-considered 2008 Supreme Court decision *District of Columbia vs. Heller* that the Second Amendment was re-interpreted to mean an individual’s right to own weapons. And now, it has become the default excuse for owning guns that slaughter indiscriminately.

The real politicization here is how the Second Amendment has been co-opted. Adherents forget that the word “politics” (originally from the Greek *politikos*) **means** “of, for, or relating to citizens.” So when citizens are being killed by the dozens – and now on a daily basis – how is this *not* political?

Given the Congressional Republicans’ unwillingness to address the issue of gun safety other than to say violence should be condemned, as Connecticut Minority Leader Sen. Len Fasano did after a recent rally in which no Republicans participated, Democrats are merely stating the obvious. We all express sorrow, send out prayers and say hatred is unacceptable, but Democrats alone are offering legislative solutions. It is not “politics” to point this out.

After the recent massacres in El Paso and Dayton, the NRA issued this tepid and meaningless response: “We will not participate in the politicizing of these tragedies but, as always, we will work in good faith to pursue real solutions that protect us all from the people who commit these horrific acts.” Have I missed something? What, exactly, does the NRA do to pursue any meaningful change?

Like most Democrats, I’m tired of being accused of “politicizing” this most venal abdication of the role of government – to protect its people. And I reject the idea that promises of funding for mental health will end this scourge. Must we really point out, once again, that there is never enough money in GOP budgets for mental health services for veterans suffering from PTSD, women who’ve been sexually abused, people struggling with addiction, LGBTQ kids traumatized by bullying, or migrant children separated from their parents at our borders? But let one white male with a grudge gun down dozens of people, and the compassion – *for him* – flows like a honeyed river.

And now, several countries, along with the well-respected Amnesty International, have issued warnings that America may be too dangerous a destination for travelers. How will the pro-business folks spin this loss of tourism income?

Trump and his acolytes continue to value an individual’s “right” to make a scapegoat of the Second Amendment over a child’s right to go to school in safety, a person of faith’s right to worship in peace, a young couple’s right to go on a date to a nightclub, or, as in El Paso, a family’s right to shop for a back yard barbecue.

So, I am asking all my Republican colleagues: what do you tell yourself when you look at photos of Paul Anchando, the infant who survived the El Paso Walmart shooting only because his father, Andre, threw his body on top of that of his wife, Jordan, who threw hers on top of two-month-old Paul's? Will you vote for mental health funds for him when he is older and struggling to understand why he was orphaned?

Your continued silence on the subject of meaningful gun safety regulation is deadly, deafening, and unforgivable.

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