SECOND AMENDMENT

The deadliness of gun laws

For a long time, it was an almost comic ritual of reality denial among liberals and journalists. Typical was The Associated Press' June 27, 2003 headline: "States face growing prison population despite drop in crime rate."

Liberals refused to acknowledge cause and effect — good things happen when bad people are put away for long stretches — largely because of their general disdain for prisons but also their desire to see the wholesale release of inmates on the off chance a few were wrongly convicted. Slowly, however, they're beginning to accept facts. Time magazine connected the dots in its Feb. 22 issue. "Go back half a century: As sentencing became more lenient in the 1960s and '70s, the crime rate started to rise. When lawmakers responded to the crime wave by building prisons and mandating tough sentences, the number of prisoners increased and the number of crimes fell." It really isn't much more complicated than that.

This liberal cognitive defect came to mind when MSNBC posted an article on its Web site lamenting how a record number of Americans are "licensed to pack heat." Blared the incredulous headline: "Firearms deaths fall as millions obtain permits to carry concealed guns." As the article vividly demonstrated, lefties and many other Americans take it on faith that *guns kill,* so they believe when more people have guns, more people are killed. Conversely, they believe the way to a safer society is to restrict or forbid gun ownership.

Except that in the real world, the opposite is true. Only law-abiding citizens obey gun laws, and when they do, they become easy targets for criminals, who can get the tools of their trade no matter how illegal governments make them. For 31 years, Washington, D.C., had some of the toughest gun-control laws in America and annually was among the nation's leaders in gun crimes. In 2008, the Supreme Court struck down D.C.'s handgun ban. According to liberal orthodoxy, this should have led to all manner of murder and mayhem; instead, gun crimes plummeted 25 percent. Why? Because criminals no longer could be sure their intended victims were unarmed, and D.C. residents once again were allowed to brandish handguns in self-defense.

Other cities, the United States as a whole and nations as far-flung as Australia have had similar experiences with gun laws. Now the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as MSNBC grudgingly reported, says Americans "overall are far less likely to be killed with a firearm than they were when it was much more difficult to obtain a concealed-weapons permit. ... In the 1980s and '90s, when the conceal-carry movement gained steam, Americans were killed by others with guns at the rate of about 5.66 per 100,000 population. In this decade, the rate has fallen to just over 4.07 per 100,000, a 28 percent drop. The decline follows a fivefold increase in the number of 'shall-issue' and unrestricted concealed-carry states from 1986 to 2006."

The unmistakable conclusion: Gun laws kill.