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Firearms and mental care - fix both

Limiting size of ammunition clips, and limiting right to refuse treatment are good places to start

BY [MICHAEL BIASOTTI](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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As a police chief, I have a strong interest in the nationwide debate that is inevitably rekindled whenever a mentally ill individual uses an assault rifle to commit mass murder.

Each time, the question becomes which is more dangerous: Untreated serious mental illness or unrestricted access to any type of gun? As a law enforcement officer, I know they are both dangerous.

The police chiefs don't have a left or right political agenda; our stance on these issues is based purely upon what we believe to be in the interest of public safety. We support the rights allotted under the Second Amendment, within reason, and we support an individual's right to choose or reject treatment, within reason.

The vast majority of persons with serious mental illness are not dangerous. But there is a readily identifiable subset of the most severely mentally ill who do become more violent.

Today, the Daily News is launching a petition to call for the ban of assault weapons. To participate, print and send in the form at the bottom of this page, or [SIGN ONLINE HERE](#).

There are two common sense solutions. The National Sheriff's Association and The New York State Association of Chiefs of Police call on the mental health system to increase use of Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) for mentally ill people who have a history of violence or incarceration.

AOT allows courts to order seriously mentally ill people who have a history of violence or hospitalizations caused by refusing treatment to stay in treatment as a condition of living in the community.

The second common sense approach is to limit the capacity of assault rifle magazines. Limiting the rounds that an assault rifle can spew out allows time for potential victims to run and police to return fire. It also reduces the chances that an officer will be outgunned. It allows those who use guns for sport or to protect themselves to continue to do so.

An individual with mental illness can harm himself or others without a gun. An individual with a gun can harm himself or others without mental illness. Only by placing reasonable limits on guns and reasonable limits on the right to refuse treatment can we improve the safety of all.

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