Federally Funded Gun Control Propaganda

March 20, 2002

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

The federal government says it lacks funding for much-needed research about the alarming increase in autism, asthma, diabetes and other serious childhood conditions. Now we know where scarce research money goes: to fund gun-control propaganda.
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded a study just released about an event that is extremely rare: firearm deaths of children aged 5 to 14 years. The Journal of Trauma published its results in an article entitled "Firearm Availability and Unintentional Firearm Deaths, Suicide, and Homicide among 5-14 Year Olds."

Far fewer children die each year in firearm incidents than from car accidents, fires, poisoning, suffocation, or drowning. In fact, the firearm accident rate for children has declined much faster than any other major type of accident.

The report fails to admit that, during the last ten years of its study, accidental childhood deaths from firearms fell by more than 50 percent. This decline in firearm accidents occurred during the same period in which states increasingly allow citizens to carry concealed guns.

In 1999, more than 12,000 Americans died from accidental poisoning, while only 824 died from firearm accidents, only 88 of whom were children. Yet the CDC is apparently more interested in stopping guns than poisons.

The CDC spent its money asking if more children die from firearms in states that have more firearms. Where is Senator William Proxmire and his Golden Fleece awards for ridiculous government waste when we need him?

The study found that Alaska has the highest rate of childhood firearm deaths, followed by Montana and then Idaho. What do they all have in common? All three are sparsely populated states, featuring lots of hunting and difficult access to emergency rooms.

The most densely populated states, which include New Jersey, Rhode Island, Hawaii and Massachusetts, have the lowest rate of childhood firearm deaths. The top ten states in childhood firearm safety are all in densely populated areas where no one is far from an emergency room.

But the unremarkable correlation of population density and emergency response to firearm accident deaths is not what the CDC was seeking, and so it was completely ignored. The study also manipulated the scope of the research by eliminating the District of Columbia, which has the strictest gun control laws in the country combined with some of the worst violence.

Next, the researchers eliminated youths age 15 and higher, who flout gun control laws and injure unarmed citizens. Deaths of 15-19 year-olds by firearms are nearly ten times the rate of the younger group, according to the National Safety Council, and thus far more significant.

This study was initiated during the Clinton Administration, and its only plausible purpose was to promote gun control and to try to rebut John R. Lott's brilliant book, "More Guns, Less Crime." The Clinton Administration hatched this study in order to claim that states having relatively many guns harm children more than states having relatively few guns, presumably to be followed by the mantra that we must ban guns "for the children."

Which of the 50 states have more firearms? Incredibly, the study simply assumes what it claims to prove: it asserts a state-by-state level of firearm ownership based on the number of deaths from firearms.

The conclusion of this expensive study is, in effect, that states with higher numbers of adult deaths from firearms also have higher numbers of childhood deaths from firearms. Is this what the CDC is spending its scarce resources on?

Had the researchers simply approached the gun control issue directly, they would have found that pro-gun states have very low childhood firearm death rates. New Hampshire, which protects gun ownership and allows carrying concealed guns, has the fifth lowest child mortality rate from firearms, and Vermont, one of the most pro- gun states in the country, has the eleventh lowest rate of childhood deaths from firearms.

An accompanying editorial in the Journal of Trauma, far from the headlines, concedes that states with the highest rates of firearm deaths by children do not have particularly high rates of gun ownership after all. Its response to this is to demand "future studies" to try to fit the data to the thesis.

This CDC-funded study follows a pattern of politically biased junk science published in medical journals on the subject of guns. Publications that support gun control then run headlines about the claims without checking the details.

Now that we have a new president, he should tell the CDC to do some sensible studies about the real health problems children face, such as potential harm from Ritalin and the many vaccines now mandated. Congress should also look into whether the CDC has violated the Dickey Amendment, which prohibits the CDC from spending funds to promote gun control.