

# Gun shows do not belong at Del Mar Fairgrounds

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*Editor's note: This commentary was revised June 20 to correct a factual error.*

Gun shows do not belong at the [Del Mar](#) Fairgrounds. Time is running out and soon they will be gone.

The organizers are looking for a new site because the board which runs the state-owned fairgrounds has signaled that it may raise the minimum age to enter the gun show and prohibit sales of some items. The California Department of Justice ([DOJ](#)) is investigating the lack of an eligibility certificate for the actual producers and organizers of the Crossroads of the West Gun Shows.

**Related:** [Safe, legal Del Mar gun show should not be singled out](#)

The First Amendment does not require the fair board to rent to gun shows. The Second Amendment does not require the state to permit the sale of guns wherever the seller wishes.

Gavin Newsom, the leading candidate for governor, told the fair board he is against gun shows on state property. If elected, he can end this practice by replacing members of the fair board.

Other local, regional and state elected officials have been clear that gun shows do not belong on state-owned property. The Costa Mesa gun show contract renewals are delayed while the DOJ investigates certificates of eligibility. Legislation to end gun shows at the Cow Palace is currently wending its way through the state Legislature and prohibitions on other venues may be added.

[Solana Beach](#) and Del Mar can set speed limits on the roads leading to the Fairgrounds; it is time for the fair board to set a limit on how much danger it invites into our communities.

Now it is up to the appointed fair board to decide if it wants to continue to be on the wrong side of history. An elected board could not ignore the wishes of its constituents. The elected city councils of Del Mar, Solana Beach and Encinitas have called on the fair board to end gun shows at the fairgrounds.

Nevertheless, this appointed board has ignored all the wrongdoing by the operators of the gun shows. From running guns to white missionaries in South Africa during apartheid to repeated convictions for drug abuse, from illegal entrance policies to dangerous open displays of potentially lethal knives and other weapons, this board has ignored it all. Until now, no crime seemed to disqualify the operation of these gun shows from continuing in Del Mar.

The problem is that weapons used in one of the first mass killings in a school, Columbine, were purchased at a gun show. The Las Vegas shooter purchased his armor-piercing bullets from a Crossroads Gun Shows dealer; this dealer

was vetted and approved by Crossroads to sell at its shows while it advertised on its website that it sold this illegal, cop-killer ammunition.

The fair board would not hire a wolf to protect the livestock barn during the fair; why would it knowingly hire federal firearms violators to protect our community from the sometimes ill-intentioned, possibly criminally insane gun and ammunition sellers and purchasers who are attracted to gun shows like iron to a magnet? The Del Mar Fairgrounds is famous for the song “where the surf meets the turf.” It should not be where a future mass murderer meets the merchant selling illegal tools for converting a rifle into an assault rifle.

Since the first of this year, in the last 22 weeks, there have been 23 gun incidents in U.S. schools; 31 children have been killed and 60 injured. Fortunately, we have not had a mass shooting in Southern California. Don't think it cannot happen here. Since 2000, there have been three school shootings in San Diego (Kelly Elementary School in Carlsbad, Santana High School in Santee and Granite Hills High School in El Cajon) killing two and injuring a total of 20 students and teachers.

A student asked the fair board: “Is it normal to fear for my friends’, teachers’ and siblings’ safety on our campus? Is it right that young people have called out for a change to the culture we live in again and again, but that a person’s right to have a gun is still valued over a child’s right to feel safe in their classroom? It is nothing less than callous and apathetic to hold events like gun shows in our community that glorify these killing machines ... if you want us to be safe, you will act. It is the least you can do.”

***Sharp*** is Del Mar lead organizer for *NeverAgainCa.org*