

The Gun Ban Lobby and Its Funders

By James Simpson

Summary: The gun ban lobby includes not just a few groups like the Brady Center but also the mainstream media as a whole. Its preferred tactics are to use misleading terms and to ignore the actual facts of gun control's failure.

The massacre at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, this past December hit home like few other tragedies. Yet again a lunatic commits mass murder, this time slaughtering our most vulnerable and most cherished: our children. Words cannot express the bottomless grief one feels at the mere thought of such loss. Sandy Hook rightfully shook our sensibilities and forced us to reassess what we believe about ourselves and America. *Why is this happening?* we ask.

As usual, before police cordoned off the crime scene, the Left had its answer ready: not enough gun control. Left-wingers repeated their old refrain: America can no longer defend its “gun culture,” which is responsible for this tragedy, and we must have a national “dialogue” on guns.

In fact, we have been having a “dialogue” about guns for decades, and it has been very one-sided. The Left has often received what it asked for, starting with the 1968 Gun Control Act, the 1993 Brady Law (until the courts found parts of it unconstitutional),



Gun ban author Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) openly admits she would confiscate all privately owned guns in the United States if she could.

and a so-called federal “assault weapons” ban on semi-automatic rifles and high capacity magazines from 1994 to 2004. Yet none of this has affected gun crime or prevented any massacres. The Centers for Disease Control, a federal agency widely seen as favoring gun control, produced a major study in 2003 that admitted, “The Task Force found insufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of any of the firearms laws or combinations of laws reviewed on violent outcomes.”

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Prior to the 1968 Gun Control Act, few controls existed on privately owned firearms, with the exception of machine guns—that is, guns that keep firing as long as you hold the trigger—which have been strictly regulated since 1934 under the National Firearms Act. Even children could order rifles through the mail with parental permission. Yet firearms crimes were less frequent, as were the mass shootings that seem to be a regular feature in the news these days.

Activists on the Left don't really want a dialogue. They want a total ban on guns in private hands, but they rarely admit that. Instead, they mask the issue with misleading language, selective statistics, and a campaign to vilify their political opponents.

Major Players

On the gun control issue, only a few small activist groups dedicate their work to banning guns. Here is the list, with the most recent available annual revenues shown on their IRS tax returns:

- American Hunters and Shooters Association (2011 revenues \$5,000)
- Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2010 revenues \$3 million) and its 501(c)(4) affiliate, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (2010 revenues \$2.9 million)
- Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (2010 revenues \$309,000)
- Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (2010 revenues \$249,000)
- Legal Community Against Violence (a.k.a Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence; 2010 revenues \$978,000)
- Mayors Against Illegal Guns Action Fund (2010 revenues \$2.7 million)
- Stop Handgun Violence (co-founded the American Hunters and Shooters Association in 2005; 2012 revenues \$143,000)
- Third Way (formerly Americans for Gun Safety Foundation; 2010 revenues \$7.5 million)
- Violence Policy Center (2010 revenues \$832,000)
- United Against Illegal Guns Support Fund (affiliated with Mayors Against Illegal Guns; 2010 revenues \$1.3 million)

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Brady Center paid the consultant \$96,000). In the same year, the group's (c)(4) affiliate, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, paid the same consultant \$99,000 to bring in \$2.8 million of its \$2.9 million revenues.

Altogether these 10 groups provided less than \$20 million to the gun control cause in 2010, a trifle compared with the National Rifle Association (NRA), which lists 2010 revenues of \$228 million. To the uninformed this appears to be a David versus Goliath struggle, the little good guys versus the big, bad old NRA, and that's the way the Left likes it. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Conservative groups often focus on one or a few issues like abortion, taxes, excessive regulations, immigration, or guns, and rarely unite behind other causes. Conversely, the Left should be understood as a single amorphous organism. Like a giant amoeba, one segment may move one way and a second another, but the whole organism moves slowly forward as one. While leftist groups may identify themselves with one issue, most work together on *all* leftist agendas.

Thus the gun ban lobby actually includes the ACLU, Women Strike for Peace, People for the American Way, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Physicians for Social Responsibility, National Council of La Raza, as well as labor, women's, and medical groups. (Yes, the gun control Left has captured the national leadership of such groups as the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has stated, "The most effective way to prevent firearm-related injury to children is to keep guns out of homes and communities.")

The NRA published a list of 141 organizations, 237 actors, and 26 national figures who have lent their resources and/or names to the anti-gun agenda. The list

also includes 37 journalists and cartoonists who editorialize against guns. Practically all mass media outlets, including ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, the publicly funded PBS, most major daily newspapers, and many magazines overtly push an anti-gun agenda. The earned media alone from this unified public voice is worth billions of dollars.

In addition, Soros's philanthropic network purchases media to promote its founder's radical agenda, granting annual awards to "Soros Justice Fellows." In at least one case, this involves subsidizing a working journalist. Amanda Crawford, who works for Bloomberg and *Newsweek*, received \$47,000 in 2010 "To illustrate the failure of the drug war through a blog [crawfordon-drugs.com] and series of targeted magazine articles...." Not surprisingly, she also writes about guns. This seems to be a clear case of Soros actually buying media to promote his agenda. In the past month, President Obama has asked Soros and other wealthy leftists to open their checkbooks to challenge the Second Amendment.

Lying About Their Beliefs

Gun control is not a winning issue. Talking amongst themselves or trolling for votes from their base, leftists will say what they think, but most moderate or hide their views to appeal to rational voters. The best example is our president. While he denies it today, President Obama has been overtly anti-gun for most of his political career:

* He served on the board of the anti-gun Joyce Foundation from 1994 to 2002, and considered becoming the foundation's president.

* As a U.S. Senate candidate in 2004, he favored federal legislation to ban all concealed-carry laws for private citizens.

* While teaching at the University of

Chicago, he told another professor, "I don't believe people should be able to own guns."

* He supported Washington, D.C.'s draconian gun laws, struck down by the Supreme Court in *D.C. v. Heller* (2008).

* Presidential candidate Obama made the infamous comment about "bitter" people who "cling to guns or religion."

Not all on the left, however, are so deceptive. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), author of the 1994 gun ban and the current Senate proposal, said in 1994, "If I could have gotten 51 votes in the Senate of the United States for an outright ban, picking up every one of them, Mr. and Mrs. America turn 'em all in, I would have done it."

Misleading Language

The Left deliberately uses incorrect and misleading definitions to elicit emotional responses and sway voters. We must, therefore, correctly define the more important terms:

Machine Gun: A fully automatic weapon that fires a rifle cartridge. Strictly controlled under the 1934 National Firearms Act (NFA), these require an extensive, months-long background check and payment of a \$200 tax. Any such weapon manufactured after 1986 cannot be purchased by civilians. Only two criminal uses of legally owned machine guns have occurred since the law was passed.

Assault Weapon: Assault weapons, as understood by the military, are military-issue small arms capable of fully automatic fire, that is, continuous firing while the trigger is pulled; a.k.a., machine guns. Civilian versions of these kinds of guns, for instance, the popular AR-15 rifle, are only capable of semi-automatic fire; that is, you must pull the trigger each time to shoot one

bullet. The Left deliberately conflates these two types of weapons—fully automatic military guns vs. semi-automatic civilian guns—to exaggerate the lethality of the civilian versions and generate an emotional response to the scary-sounding phrase "assault weapon." The "assault weapons ban" now being contemplated is for semi-automatic firearms, *not* true assault weapons.

Submachine Gun: A fully automatic weapon that fires a pistol cartridge; it falls under the same NFA restrictions as machine guns. The Left deliberately confuses machine guns with civilian semi-automatic firearms, for the same reason they mislabel semi-automatics as "assault weapons."

Gun Safety: Proper care and safe, responsible use of firearms. The NRA conducts gun safety courses nationwide for thousands of adults and children, for which it rarely receives credit from the anti-gun press. In the Left's lexicon, "gun safety" means gun control. Not a single leftist "gun safety" group offers any training or information on the responsible, safe ownership and use of firearms, nor do they even advocate for it. They simply use the term "gun safety" because "gun control" does not win votes.

One extreme left organization, Third Way, even dedicated itself specifically to creating a positive "messaging strategy" about gun control. Founded in 2005, it absorbed the former Americans for Gun Safety Foundation. AGS was a project of the far-left Tides Center. Its creator, Andrew McKelvey, was also a prominent board member of Handgun Control Inc.

Using poll data to develop their "message," Third Way believes "progressives" can "take back the Second Amendment"—as if they ever owned it—by convincing voters that "reasonable" gun laws don't undermine the individual right to keep and bear arms.

The group emphasizes “gun safety” because “gun control has become a loaded term that leads voters to believe that the candidate supports the most restrictive laws....” According to Third Way, “reasonable” gun laws include an “assault” weapons ban, closing the “gun show loophole,” and registration of all guns.

The flagship anti-gun group, National Council to Control Handguns, founded in 1974, was later known as Handgun Control Inc. Its most prominent leader has been Sarah Brady, wife of Jim Brady, the White House press secretary wounded in the 1981 attempt to assassinate President Reagan. When the term “gun control” became politically radioactive, the outfit was rechristened the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence. In the group’s most recent tax returns, Sarah Brady is now listed as “chair of the organization,” with compensation of \$135,000 for an average of five hours work a week (i.e., \$519 an hour).

Gun Show Loophole: Another invention of the Left that implies gun show purchases can be made without a background check. This is false. All licensed federal firearms dealers must conduct background checks on all prospective purchasers, and all gun show exhibitors that sell firearms hold federal firearms licenses (FFLs). Private sales between individuals, however, are not regulated in most states. This is what the gun controllers really seek to stop, and because such sales sometimes occur at gun shows, gun ban extremists demonize show promoters and hope to shut them down. They have had some success. Meanwhile, the scholar John Lott explains that the now-common claim that “40 percent of all gun sales today are private” is nonsense. It’s based on one small, flawed survey from two decades ago which mostly surveyed sales that occurred before mandatory federal background checks became law in 1994. Lott speculates that the true figure is in the single digits.

Sporting Purposes: Gun ban advocates try to delegitimize ownership of firearms that do not appear to serve a “sporting purpose.” They question, for example, the “sporting purpose” for semi-automatic firearms, especially those with large capacity magazines. But the Second Amendment was not intended for sportsmen: it was intended for defense, personal and national.

That is exactly why Sir William Blackstone, in his 1765 *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, a seminal work that profoundly influenced America’s founders, said that having arms for defense is a “natural right of resistance and self-preservation.”

It is precisely because the antebellum Supreme Court accepted Blackstone’s rights-based defense of firearms that it handed down its notorious *Dred Scott* decision in 1857. In that ruling, which helped to precipitate the Civil War, the high court tried to make sure black people would never be American citizens and therefore never be able to acquire the right “to keep and carry arms wherever they went.”

Similarly, when the Ku Klux Klan was trying to enforce Jim Crow restrictions against blacks, gun control was high on its list of goals. Liberal black *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy recently praised the way blacks responded to the Klan by forming private groups like “the legendary Deacons for Defense and Justice—an organization of black men in Louisiana who used shotguns and rifles to repel attacks by white vigilantes during the 1960s.”

The same phenomenon occurred during the Rodney King riots in 1992, when many Korean business owners stood guard over their property with their firearms prominently displayed. Korean businesses suffered a large proportion of the losses during the riots, and those firearms proved critical to their survival when police

abandoned the area and left them to face the rioters alone.

Selective Statistics

The Left trots out Britain and Australia as model gun control utopias, basking in peace and security. Handguns have been controlled in the U.K. since 1920, and other firearms also have been heavily regulated. That didn’t prevent horrific mass killings in Hungerford, England (1987), and Dunblane, Scotland (1996), which claimed a total of 33 victims, including 17 school children, and spurred successively more restrictive gun laws.

The Firearms Act of 1998 effectively banned automatic weapons and handguns. The penalty for possession of a handgun in Britain is up to 10 years in prison. After the handgun ban, gun crime, including handgun crime, skyrocketed. In 1997/98, there were 2,636 crimes committed with handguns in England and Wales. By 2001/02, handgun crimes had increased to 5,871. Overall, firearms were used in 9,974 crimes. (“Gun crime soars by 35%,” *Daily Mail*, Jan. 9, 2003).

Firearms crime in the U.K. peaked in 2005/06 and has declined since. In 2010/11, firearms were used in 7,024 crimes, and 3,105 of these were handgun crimes, down from the earlier peak, but still well above its 1997/98 level. In 2010/11, 9.3 percent of all homicides were committed with a firearm. U.K. firearms crime and violent crime in general remain well below U.S. levels, but both have increased dramatically despite a century of gun control. (Press release, Home Office, Jan. 19, 2012)

Despite harsh laws regulating what few firearms are still allowed in the U.K., in June 2010, a taxi driver in Cumbria, England, killed 12 and injured 11 during another murderous spree.

In all these circumstances, victims were completely at the killer's mercy, and local police, also unarmed, were powerless to stop the rampages. In the U.K., only specially trained police carry firearms. In the Hungerford case, the nearest armed police unit was 40 miles away. The killers all ended their sprees by committing suicide.

In 1996, shortly after Dunblane, a man with a violent history killed 35 people and wounded 21 using two semi-automatic rifles at a tourist site in Port Arthur, Tasmania. Australia's gun laws were stricter than Britain's at the time, and after Port Arthur the Australian government banned all semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, and certain other firearms and instituted a forced buyback program, destroying 631,000 firearms at a cost of \$500 million. The result? According to the *Wall Street Journal*:

Peter Reuter and Jenny Mouzos, in a 2003 study published by the Brookings Institution, found homicides "continued a modest decline" since 1997. They concluded that the impact of the National Firearms Agreement was "relatively small," with the daily rate of firearms homicides declining 3.2%.

The United States has a rate of firearms crime higher than many other developed countries. For example, 3.5 per 100,000 are murdered by firearms in the U.S., while in most Western European countries the rate is less than 1 per 100,000. The U.K. is often cited due to its very low firearms homicide rate of 0.03 per 100,000. Many but not all Western European countries have restrictive gun laws. Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, for example are less restrictive; all allow open carry, and their firearms murder rates are no higher than the others. Germany's rate is roughly equivalent to the U.K.

The U.S. rate is radically lower than most Central and South American countries, despite stringent controls in many of them. Venezuela, for example, bans all semi-automatic rifles, pistols, and shotguns, yet Venezuela's firearms murder rate is 11 times higher than ours. Brazil and Honduras require extensive background checks and registration, but Brazil's firearms murder rate is 5 times higher than the U.S., and Honduras' rate is almost 20 times higher. Conversely, Chile has few restrictions and licensed owners can carry handguns openly, yet Chile's firearms murder rate is much lower than the U.S.

What does this say about gun laws? Obviously, other factors are at work in these different countries, and they have a much greater impact than gun laws. Just about the only thing consistent about gun laws is the inconsistency of their results.

But let's engage in a thought experiment. Let's imagine that somehow the Left got its wish and all civilian-owned firearms were confiscated and banned. Would Adam Lanza, the Newtown shooter, have attacked Sandy Hook if such a ban existed? It's impossible to know; he was mentally disturbed. But even assuming Lanza had no access to firearms, would that have stopped him from murder? He could wait until school got out and attack the kids with a car as they waited for busses to arrive. He may have killed more that way.

In 2009, a 20-year-old man attacked a daycare center in Belgium with a knife. He killed two babies and a daycare worker and seriously injured 12 others, 10 of them children. He was also implicated in another knife murder and had plans to attack two other daycare centers, according to police. (WKRK website, Jan. 27, 2009)

This young man, Kim De Gelder, had a history of mental health issues. His parents had tried to have him committed, but

medical authorities declined because he was already receiving treatment for depression. Interestingly, he applied make-up before the attack, using white face and black eye-liner, and like last summer's Aurora, Colorado killer, who attacked theatergoers watching the Batman sequel, *Dark Knight Rises*, De Gelder dyed his hair red, earning himself the nickname, "Joker Killer." ("Belgium's 'joker killer' Kim De Gelder admits guilt," *Telegraph* (U.K.), Jan. 27, 2009)

For the 1999 Columbine, Colorado high school attack, the perpetrators manufactured a total of 99 explosive devices. This included two diversionary bombs set elsewhere in town that exploded before the attack, 30 bombs that exploded at the school, 46 more that did not explode, 13 in their cars, and 8 more at their residences. Police determined that the two unexploded propane bombs left in the cafeteria could have killed up to 488 students, all of whom were at the cafeteria when the bombs were set to detonate.

Following the Australian gun ban, suicides by firearms did decline. Firearms are naturally a preferred vehicle for those intent on suicide because they are quick and effective. Following the ban, firearms were more difficult to obtain for most non-criminals. But people intent on suicide have serious problems. They are not going to be dissuaded simply because one of many methods is denied them. And indeed, the overall suicide rate remained essentially unchanged. People simply chose other

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Many thanks.

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President

methods. (Time.com, May 1, 2008; TheTruthAboutGuns.com, Dec. 16, 2012) Gun bans only guarantee that law-abiding citizens will be unarmed. *One cannot argue that they would prevent criminals and terrorists in the U.S. from obtaining guns.* A robust international trade exists in small arms, much of it illegal, and much of that illegal activity backed by governments hostile to ours. The world market is awash in weapons from past wars and defunct governments. Many weapons used by Mexican drug cartels are genuine assault weapons, i.e., capable of fully automatic fire. They did not come from U.S. dealers as alleged by the gun control crowd, because they are much more difficult and expensive to obtain in the U.S. (Stratfor.com, July 9, 2009)

In 1996, U.S. Customs seized a shipment of 2,000 AK-47s from a merchant marine ship of Communist China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). It was the largest seizure of its kind in U.S. history, and the guns were allegedly to be used by street gangs. (*Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 8, 1998) At least 35 Jamaat-ul Fuqra terrorist training camps operate within the United States. These are privately owned compounds, complete with gun ranges and underground bunkers. Two have been shut down by police; one in California and another in Colorado. A storage facility used by the Colorado compound was raided by police in 1989. It contained handguns, silencers, explosives, bombs, and other materials plainly meant for terrorist acts. ([Colorado Attorney General, statement, Feb. 9, 2005](#)) Will Jamaat-ul Fuqru comply with an "assault" weapons ban? Will American street gangs? The notion is laughable. Every criminal or terrorist who has a gun will keep it, and the illegal firearms market will thrive.

Vilification and Smears

Here is where the extremist media comes to the fore. Journalists constantly vilify guns and gun owners. After any headline-

grabbing event, activists then pick up the narrative, which journalists in turn amplify, creating a feedback loop of propaganda. Meanwhile, the facts about gun control and the role guns play in deterring violent crime are suppressed by the media and ridiculed by leftists. The Newtown fallout was especially ugly.

Des Moines Register columnist Donald Kaul suggested (Dec. 29, 2012) that the NRA be branded a terrorist organization and people who refused to turn in their guns be killed: we should "tie Mitch McConnell and John Boehner ... to the back of a Chevy pickup truck and drag them around a parking lot until they saw the light on gun control."

Westchester County, New York's *Journal News* published names and addresses of every concealed-carry permit holder in Westchester and Rockland Counties, along with an interactive Google map showing their addresses. After widespread public outrage over this action, which put retired police, prison guards, and many others at risk, the *Journal News* hired armed guards to protect themselves. They also sheepishly admitted that a staff member held a concealed-carry permit, but they did not publish his information. Putnam County officials refused the *Journal News*' request for their permit holder records, calling it "stupid and dangerous."

In 1995, Eric Holder, then U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia (but now Obama's attorney general), said we need to change attitudes about guns as we did with cigarettes. He advocated a relentless campaign of brainwashing in schools: "We have to be repetitive about this," he declared. "We need to do this every day of the week, and just really brainwash people into thinking about guns in a vastly different way." Some critics have claimed Holder conceived the "Fast and Furious" gun-running scam to create the appearance that U.S. gun shops were supplying Mexico's

drug cartels. At least one American and hundreds of Mexicans have died at the hands of drug dealers using those same weapons.

Anti-gun hysteria whipped up by politicians has another unintended consequence. It spurs panic-buying among current and prospective gun owners when new gun restrictions are proposed. As Clayton E. Cramer noted at National Review Online, after the 1994 federal "assault" rifle ban was passed, people who lacked experience with guns bought firearms "while they still could." Some misused the weapons, resulting in deaths.

With the saturation coverage that tragedies like Newtown receive, the media may actually be encouraging more killings. David Kopel argued in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article that

Cable TV in the 1990s, and the Internet today, greatly magnify the instant celebrity that a mass killer can achieve. We know that many would-be mass killers obsessively study their predecessors ... the copycat effect is as old as the media itself. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1774 classic "The Sorrows of Young Werther" triggered a spate of copycat suicides all over Europe. But today the velocity and pervasiveness of the media make the problem much worse.

If Kopel is correct, we will likely see more of this appalling violence, which only makes it more urgent to ensure that people in schools and elsewhere are free to defend themselves and those they are responsible for.

Mental Illness

Finally, while the Left hyperventilates over guns, we overlook the elephant in the tent in stories like the Newtown killings: mental illness.

David Kopel observed that deinstitutionalization of the violently mentally ill may be credited to an earlier left-wing campaign, the 1970s deinstitutionalization movement:

A second explanation is the deinstitutionalization of the violently mentally ill. A 2000 *New York Times* study of 100 rampage murderers found that 47 were mentally ill. In the *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry Law* (2008), Jason C. Matejkowski and his co-authors reported that 16% of state prisoners who had perpetrated murders were mentally ill ... today, while government at most every level has bloated over the past half-century, mental-health treatment has been decimated.

Moreover, a 2011 paper by Steven P. Segal at the University of California, Berkeley, ... found that a third of the state-to-state variation in homicide rates was attributable to the strength or weakness of involuntary civil-commitment laws.

According to Rasmussen and Gallup polls taken shortly after Newtown, most Americans believe treating mental illness is the most important factor in preventing these mass crimes.

Conclusion

So should we deny private citizens the right to self-defense on the off-chance that a few lunatics may be prevented from using firearms as their method to commit mass murder, even though we know, with certainty, that terrorists, street gangs, and other criminals will remain heavily armed and able to attack citizens they know are defenseless?

Isn't it a better idea to let law-abiding citizens remain armed, promote firearms safety and responsible gun ownership, while

relaxing counterproductive constraints that now prevent law-abiding citizens from using firearms in defense of themselves and others in emergencies like Sandy Hook?

Isn't it a better idea to confront the problem of mental illness in our society head on? Aren't our dollars better spent treating these people, rather than risking more children's lives by attempting to fix the problem on the cheap with feel-good non-answers like gun control? Would we not be risking many more lives by disarming the public while letting criminals go free?

James Simpson is an economist, businessman, and freelance writer. His writings have been published in Accuracy in Media, American Thinker, Big Government, Washington Times, WorldNetDaily, FrontPage Magazine, and elsewhere.

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PhilanthropyNotes

Opinions vary on how giving will be affected by the fiscal cliff legislation. The new law raises the top income tax rate from 35 to 39.6 percent and resurrects an old provision that reduces itemized deductions by 3 percent of the amount that married-joint filers' income exceeds \$300,000. Giving may fall because write-offs are limited as a person's taxable income rises, reducing the value of deductions by up to 80 percent for the highest-income taxpayers, the **Tax Policy Center** says. But the **Urban Institute** claims giving will rise by 1.3 percent or \$3.3 billion this year because the highest earners will derive larger benefits as a result of higher tax rates. They will save \$39.60 in taxes for \$100 donated, up from \$35.00 under the previous rates.

Every year the **Internal Revenue Service** fails to collect as much as \$1 billion in taxes because it doesn't do enough to make taxpayers prove the value of gifts of art, real estate, cars, and other non-cash contributions to charities, according to the **U.S. Treasury's** inspector general for tax administration. The new report marks the fourth time since 2007 the government watchdog has identified the problem, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* reports. The watchdog estimates that upwards of 273,000 taxpayers claimed \$3.8 billion in deductions for 2010 without adequate proof of the items' value.

Rep. **Charles Boustany** (R-La.), a leading critic of the IRS's approach to nonprofit issues, has been reappointed chairman of the House Ways and Means subcommittee that focuses on tax-exempt organizations. Boustany expressed concerns last year that the tax collection agency does not monitor charity abuses aggressively enough.

The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** has hired its first Vice President for Public Policy, **Peter Murphy**, who will "work to educate politicians about the foundation's research and learn how the fund can help lawmakers shape policy," according to an interview he gave BeliefNet.com. Murphy's first nonprofit job was as a community organizer for the **American Friends Service Committee** in 1969. Later he was a college professor, then a Congressional staffer on **Medicare**. He "says that philanthropy can have a much bigger impact if government adopts and expands projects that foundations initiate."

After six years, **Eric Bruner** has resigned as chairman of the **American Humane Association's** board. It's unclear why Bruner quit, but he leaves three months after the media reported the group paid \$233,863 to his business partners for unspecified consulting services.

Goldman Sachs WATCH

Goldman Sachs Group Inc. moved up the payment of bonuses so that its top officials could avoid taxes. The bank gave senior executives including CEO Lloyd Blankfein a total of \$65 million in restricted stock late on December 31, just hours before new, higher tax rates took effect. Ten of the bank's directors and executives received early vesting on a half million shares awarded previously as compensation, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. Such vesting normally happens in January.