



Participating in Public Debates

Newspapers and online news Web sites are good sources of information on current public issues. They often provide information on both sides of a topic as well as contact information for organizations and groups that share your views. In addition, you can get ideas on how to present and publicize your opinions by reading about the strategies of others. The following news article appeared on an Internet news source, www.foxnews.com, on May 14, 2000. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

Mothers Converge in D.C. for Gun Control Rally

By Robin Wallace

WASHINGTON — Tens of thousands of mothers and their families gathered in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol Sunday to lecture lawmakers about gun laws....

Large banners on the National Mall, bidding a “Welcome to the Million Mom March: Sensible Gun Laws, Safe Kids,” greeted the moms, many pushing strollers. Big-name speakers included President and Hillary Clinton, Handgun Control chairwoman Sarah Brady, Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, New York Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, mothers and teachers of victims of the Columbine High School killings and various Hollywood celebrities.

A smaller number of counter-demonstrators to the Million Moms gathered near the Washington Monument, led by a group called The Second Amendment sisters, which supports gun owners’ rights.

“Gun control increases violent crime by shifting the balance of power from the law-

abiding to the criminal,” Maria Heil, a “Sisters” coordinator, told the crowd, some of whom carried signs that said, “Guns — the ultimate in feminine protection.”

In the mom crowd itself, five or six counter-demonstrators held signs that read “Crooks don’t register their guns” and “America: armed and free....”

Later, members of the Bell Campaign, an anti-gun violence group and major sponsor of the group, took the stage and rang a 500-pound bell made entirely of melted-down guns. A dozen child victims of gun violence, some in wheelchairs, rang the bell to represent the 12 children the group said are killed by gun violence on an average day.

The event was organized for what supporters call “common sense” gun control legislation. In addition to licensing and registration, the moms want a ban on military-style assault rifles and built-in locks on all guns. Supporters staged simultaneous smaller rallies in more than 60 communities across the country.

1. What issue does the article address?
2. What information do gun control supporters give to support their point of view?
3. What information do supporters of gun ownership rights give to support their point of view?
4. What groups or individuals could you contact if you support strict gun control laws?
5. What groups or individuals could you contact if you support gun owners’ rights?
6. How did each group publicize their opinions?
7. What did the gun control supporters hope to achieve through the rally? What did gun owners’ rights supporters attempt to achieve?