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James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

Defending handgun bans

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment March 19, 2010

On March 2, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *McDonald v. the City of Chicago*, a case involving a challenge of the city's ban on handguns that has been in place since 1982. Given the 5-4 ruling two years ago in *District of Columbia v. Heller* in which the Court held that Second Amendment rights to private gun ownership trump gun control restrictions within federal enclaves (such at the nation's Capital), many observers are expecting a similar result in the McDonald test of state/local prohibitions once the court announces its ruling sometime in the next few months. But some new evidence may tip the scale in the other direction.

In *McDonald*, the petitioners have argued that the blanket restriction on handguns denies law-abiding citizens the opportunity to protect themselves, their families, and their homes from criminals armed with weapons acquired through the illegal gun market. However, there is compelling statistical evidence that the Chicago handgun ban has actually saved lives—as many as 1,000 over the quarter century since it was first implemented—rather than risking them.

In case you missed it, the New York Times online forum invited four contrasting perspectives on the McDonald case, including my own. And for more detail on the law's positive impact, you may refer to my amicus brief submitted to the Supreme Court on behalf of the city.