

Houston Chronicle

Opinion: Yes, it's easier to get a gun than a job at Domino's

Ron Berler

July 5, 2022

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Opinion-Yes-it-s-easier-to-get-a-gun-than-a-17284963.php>



Domino's Pizza will hire you after a background check; you can buy a gun immediately.

Alan Diaz, STF / AP

Two weeks after the funeral for Amerie Jo Garza, 10, the first of the Robb Elementary School students to be interred following the Uvalde mass shooting, I phoned the manager of my local Domino's in Stamford, Conn., to inquire about a delivery job.

Though I've never driven professionally and have been out of the job market since turning 70, I felt confident about my chance of being hired. I have a valid driver's license. I'm insured and have my own car. Since my last citation more than a decade ago my record has been clean.

So I was somewhat surprised when the manager said that while he needed a driver and I sounded like a good candidate, he couldn't hire me on the spot even were I to ace my interview. First I'd have to pass a corporate background check.

"How long would that take?" I asked.

"Two days," he replied.

Roadblocks — even small ones — have an outsized impact on deterrence. They're the sort of guardrails one might expect, following Newtown and Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Las Vegas, Uvalde and so many other communities, that should apply to operating other potentially lethal pieces of machinery.

I hung up the phone and considered my options. I dialed a Papa John's not far away.

"Do you conduct a background check as part of your interview process?" I asked the assistant manager.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

All he really wanted to know was if I'd be available to work a daytime shift, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. He encouraged me to come for an interview that day.

It's always heartening when someone recognizes value in your skill set, when imminent employment awaits. Yet it was hard to ignore that this particular Papa John's has set its bar for hiring perilously low — about as low as that of federal law regarding the purchase or possession of most firearms, even after adoption of the recent gun-control legislation.

Legally, there are limits to the vehicles I can take for a spin. My license — subject to periodic renewal — permits me to drive our Toyota Prius Plug-In Hybrid and Acura RSX, as well as any other car, SUV, pickup or U-Haul-type truck that I buy, rent or borrow for noncommercial use.

It does not allow me to operate a school bus or dump truck, both of which require a commercial-driver license and weeks, if not months, of specialized training.

I suppose I could call my congressman and object to such licensure restrictions, arguing that they infringe upon my constitutionally guaranteed personal freedoms. But he is one of those liberal Democrats, so I doubt he would support me.

Instead, I spoke with Aziz Huq, a University of Chicago constitutional law professor who studies the interplay between the Constitution and individual rights and liberties. I asked him why driver regulations go uncontested while the Second Amendment inspires an absolutism among many gun-rights advocates that precludes nuance — that fails to distinguish, for instance, between shotguns and assault weapons, or the appropriate minimum age for possessing particular firearms.

Frustratingly, the Constitution provides little counsel. “Arbitrariness comes into the law,” he said, “because the [Supreme] Court has never explained how it knows what a compelling state interest is. Why is it a compelling state interest when the government fights terrorism, for example, but not when it is fighting the pandemic?”

I asked Huq if he saw any chance for stricter gun-reform legislation.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “You’re asking a question about political morality.”

But in fact, legislators have placed limits on numerous so-called personal freedoms in the name of public safety. We pass through mandatory security checks in airports and government buildings. We’re required to wear seat belts on airplanes, cars and rollercoasters.

Is it too much to ask that firearms be treated in the same, nuanced manner as motorized vehicles? That there be one set of rules for owning and carrying a handgun; another for purchasing a semiautomatic, assault-style rifle; and a third for how much ammo a single clip may hold?

To which one could add a fourth:

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz told Sky News reporter Mark Stone, in the wake of the Uvalde killings, “If you want to stop violent crime, the proposals the Democrats have — none of them would have stopped this.”

A long-standing Democratic proposal has been to lengthen the waiting period prior to completing the purchase of a firearm, allowing time to conduct a thorough background/mental health check. Salvador Ramos, the Robb Elementary shooter, purchased his first assault weapon shortly after he turned 18, one week before he massacred those 19 students and two teachers — just two days before their school year was to end.

Had there been even a 10-day waiting period, Ramos’ attack might never have taken place.

Ron Berler is the author of “Raising the Curve: A Year Inside One of America’s 45,000 Failing Public Schools.”