

DIAMOND: Gun control kills jobs

Stimulate the economy by repealing pointless firearms restrictions

By [Richard Diamond](#)

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*Illustration: Gun lock
by Greg Groesch for The Washington Times*

Ever since Barack Obama was sworn in as president, the economy has misfired. Jobs remain scarce and the market has yet to recover the value it had prior to the 2007 crash. Though Mr. Obama's policies have unintentionally given a major boost to an industry he hates - firearms - even this one bright spot hasn't necessarily translated into new employment.

[Take Sturm Ruger Co.](#), one of the few publicly traded U.S. gunmakers. Anyone who happened to invest \$100 in the firm's stock on Mr. Obama's [Inauguration Day](#) would have about \$532 today. That's stellar performance in any business climate. According to company filings, [Ruger](#) had orders in hand for twice as many guns as it had the capacity to manufacture. Under ordinary circumstances, such sustained demand would be a green light to expand production lines and make new hires.

Unfortunately, [Ruger](#), like most corporations, is afraid of what the Obama administration has up its sleeve. "The company believes that the lawful private ownership of firearms is guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution and that the widespread private ownership of firearms in the United States will continue," [Ruger](#) told the [Securities and Exchange Commission](#). "However, there can be no assurance that the regulation of firearms will not become more restrictive in the future and that any such restriction would not have a material adverse effect on the business of the company." Between 2007 and 2010, [Ruger](#) added just 10 employees.

Other gunmakers have added capacity, but they are doing so very selectively. Last month, Florida Republican [Gov. Rick Scott](#) cheered the decision of Connecticut-based [Colt Manufacturing Co.](#) to open a factory in Osceola County, Fla. As the firm's CEO, [M. William Keys](#), explained, "[Gov. Scott](#)'s personal commitment to both [Colt](#)'s growth plan

and America's right to bear arms was instrumental in our decision." That's 63 jobs that the Nutmeg State's gun grabbers sent to the Sunshine State.

This has happened before. In 1977, Italian gunmaker [Beretta](#) set up a factory in southern Maryland. By 1985, it won the contract to manufacture pistols for the U.S. military and its allies, invigorating a region without much industry. "There's probably not a family in this area not directly impacted by jobs and business from [Beretta](#)," the company's general counsel, [Jeff Reh](#), told The Washington Times. "We buy local - everything from printing services to cardboard."

As civilian demand for its products grew, the company wanted to expand, but gun-control fanatic Parris N. Glendening, a Democrat, occupied Government House. Shipping pistols from a distribution center next to the factory would have triggered pointless Handgun Roster Board red tape. So [Beretta](#) decided to build a facility in pro-gun Virginia, which offered relief from the Old Line State's gun-control laws.

There may come a point when long-established firearms manufacturers have no choice but to flee anti-gun states like Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maryland. Since 1526, [Beretta](#) has remained family-owned and loyal to its workers, so for now its leaders aren't eager to accept the solicitations they've received from gun-friendly governors to move to another state. "It's not fair to our employees here in Maryland," said [Mr. Reh](#).

The regulation-minded states need to realize what Florida and Virginia already understand. Firearms sales and ownership are at an all-time high, while crime remains at an all-time low. Gun control doesn't save lives or reduce crime; it just destroys jobs. Federal and state lawmakers could give the economy a real stimulus by repealing these obnoxious statutes once and for all.

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