In 2004, Ohio started allowing concealed carry handguns and since then 296,588 licenses have been issued, according to Ohio Attorney General's Office.

By IKE MGBATOGU
Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – In the wake of the unthinkable carnage that claimed the lives of 20 children ages 6 and 7 and 6 adults in Newtown, Conn., the lugubrious and grief-stricken nation promptly erupted in a furious debate over the question of what must now be done to safeguard children from baneful gun violence in schools across the country, in tank towns and big cities, alike.

And while there are no easy answers to the labyrinthic and controversial matter, Ohio Senate Minority Leader Eric Kearney is iron-clad certain of one thing: 'effluvium of more guns into the society is not how to do it.'

Kearney recently weighed into the raging parley after Governor John Kasich, a rabid supporter of the Second Amendment, signed House Bill 495, which would permit guns in the parking garages of the State House. The proposal would also do away with a competency requirement that has been in place for renewing permit to carry concealed weapons.

What's more, folks from out of state would now be able to easily validate their 'concealed carry' permit in Ohio.

In light of the Newtown massacre, Kearney, a Cincinnati Democrat, is mightily flabbergasted about Kasich's decision to support this bill, decrying it as an ill-advised move that sums up to "steady weakening of Ohio's gun laws."

"The mass shooting calls into question what we should be doing in the state of Ohio to keep our children safe," Kearney said in a statement. "Surely, after the massacre of 20 young children, the answer is not more guns in more places."

Of course, Kasich doesn't feel that way.

"There are a range of issues at play here involving mental health, school security and a culture that at times fails to reject the glorification of violence that can desensitize us to the sanctity and majesty of life," he said. "Going forward, we need to pay close attention to what the experts conclude from this incident in order to see if there are lessons to be learned and applied here in Ohio."

Sure, there are plenty of lessons to be learned from the calamity, said State Representative Tracy Maxwell Heard, but she noted that flooding the society with more guns is not one of them.

She launched a broadside against the governor for signing House Bill 495.

“I am deeply saddened by the Governor’s decision to sign such a divisive bill less than a week after a national tragedy that has left us all mourning. These horrific events have happened in recent times with more frequency than we would like to acknowledge, and the murders of innocent children and teachers has strengthened the cries for change and reflection,” said Heard, a Democrat from Columbus.

That “change and reflection” sentiment is something she hopes would produce a solution to the lethal crisis of gun violence in the country, a solution she also hopes would come from a “comprehensive conversation that includes representatives from not only the NRA, but from mental health, law enforcement, gun control advocates, the faith community, education, media, entertainment, legislators from both sides of the aisle and any interested parties relevant to the conversation.”

In 2004, Ohio started allowing concealed carry handguns and since then 296,588 licenses have been issued, according to Ohio Attorney General’s Office.

Mgbatogu is a freelance writer and editor of Onumba.com based in Columbus. He can be reached by email at Onumbamedia@yahoo.com