

THE KNOX GUN-RIGHTS REPORT

Battle for liberty begins with guns

By Jeff Knox June 15, 2010

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There is confusion within the conservative community - and even among some gun owners - over what exactly the gun-rights argument is all about. Similarly, there is confusion among some gun voters about the goals and objectives of the conservative movement.

The simple answer is that these battles are about freedom, individual liberty and the rule of law.

Our system of government is founded on principles of the rule of law and individual liberty. No man - or government agency - is supposed to be above the law, and all citizens are supposed to be able to go about their peaceful business, enjoying their "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" without fear of harassment or any limitation beyond the rights of others and the basic rules spelled out in the Constitution.

The right to arms is a fundamental right that ensures that the weakest among us have the capacity to resist physical assaults and government excesses. This right is no more negotiable than the right to freely exercise the religion of our choice or the right of free speech and a free press. The right to arms also serves the role of safeguard for all of the other rights enumerated within the Constitution and of the limits imposed upon the federal government by the Constitution.

Citizens have a responsibility to protect and defend the Constitution. Within the Constitution we were provided with a number of tools with which to accomplish this mission: the right to petition Congress to let them know how we feel about their activities, the right to a free press to illuminate those activities and the right to arms as a last resort for the citizens to remind politicians just who is in charge and to force an end to unconstitutional activities if the other tools fail.

The Constitution also included a mechanism for making changes to it in case we the people ever decided that it needed amending. The power to make such changes was not given to politicians or to judges; it was reserved exclusively to the people, and it was structured in such a way as to ensure that only changes that are broadly supported by a strong majority of the people in most of the states can be enacted.

Fundamental rights are not open to restriction or limitation under the Constitution, and all attempts to do so violate not only the Constitution itself, but the principles of individual liberty and responsibility upon which our nation was founded.

When we barter with politicians over how much we are going to allow them to violate the Constitution, we have already lost the argument - just as all credibility in the debate over gun rights is lost the moment the pro-rights side accepts some "minor infringements" in the name of public safety or "common sense." Whether the issue is registration, mandatory training, waiting periods, background checks or some other convoluted "common-sense" scheme, the fact is that gun-control laws infringe upon a fundamental right.

Even if such laws did not violate constitutional rights, they have been proven to be completely ineffective at their stated purposes. Gun-control laws have never resulted in any noticeable reduction in crime, accidents or suicide - they simply do not work. What these laws do accomplish is systematic harassment and demonization of gun owners and deterioration of the Constitution, rule of law and the supremacy of individual rights.

Gun voters and gun-rights organizations are committed to restoring and protecting the Second Amendment, but the Second Amendment exists as a safeguard to protect the Constitution as a whole. One cannot rationally work on behalf of the Second Amendment and simultaneously oppose other aspects of the Constitution. There can be no Second Amendment without the Constitution, and there will not long be a Constitution without the Second Amendment. All parties involved in support and defense of any portion of the Constitution must support and defend all of it, or else their activities are in vain. Similarly, those who support the Constitution and the rule of law must work on behalf of all aspects of the Constitution and its duly ratified amendments, or else their proclaimed support rings hollow and they are actually endorsing a "death of a thousand cuts" for our nation.

While opposition to some aspects or provisions of the Constitution is totally acceptable, such opposition must be couched within the framework provided by the Constitution. Anything less is truly un-American.