

Letters to the Editor

Just say no to NRA

To the Editor:

At a legislative hearing held Jan. 9, I spoke in strong support of the bill to ban assault weapons. Assault weapons are guns which allow up to 30 shots before reloading is necessary. It doesn't take 30 rounds to bring down Bambi.

Gun owner and hunter Lt. Gov. George Ryan of Illinois said that a practice session with a semiautomatic "street sweeper" changed his mind about banning assault weapons. He said, "I don't think anyone needs this kind of weapon unless they live in Beirut."

A second bill would require a waiting period in order to allow a background check before a gun would be sold.

A customer with a criminal record or background of mental illness would be denied the privilege of buying a weapon. (Right now under the very weak federal law, a purchaser from a retail store merely signs a form denying any criminal background or mental illness. After he signs, he walks away with the weapon on the spot).

The proposed waiting period would also allow a "cool down time" — so persons full of anger, depression, and/or drugs could not, in their passions, immediately buy a gun.

Will the bills pass? Probably not. The NRA and its local arm, Gun Owners of New Hampshire, do their job of intimidating legislators well. Many legislators who agree with the bills will be scared off by NRA threats of political ambush. Because of my support for gun control, I received NRA threats during my own campaign for executive councilor. I can attest to the vehemence and stupidity of the communications.

The International Association of Police Chiefs supports gun control legislation. Our police officers are at increased risk along with the rest of us when every crazy can just walk into his local store and come out armed for war.

Many rank and file members of the NRA agree with sane gun control. But you will not hear their voices, for the leadership of the NRA and Gun Owners of New Hampshire take the position that any control is the first step towards total gun confiscation.

(That is why the NRA initially fought tooth and nail against federal legislation banning Teflon-coated "cop killer" bullets (they can pierce bullet proof vests) and why the NRA fought against plastic handgun legislation (airport security machines cannot pick up on plastic).

That is why the NRA fought the first federal legislation which banned mail order rifles — even though in 1963 Lee Harvey Oswald ordered his murder weapon through an ad in the national magazine of the NRA).

The NRA continues to sell the hogwash that the right of an individual to own a weapon is protected by the Constitution.

As any first year law student can tell you, this is not true. The second amendment of the U.S. Constitution has always been interpreted by the courts as an amendment to preserve the states' rights to maintain militias to guard against any federal abuse or power.

Even conservative gun owner and ex-chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Warren Burger, is speaking out in favor of a waiting period, stricter registration and record-keeping, and strict regulation for "Saturday Night Specials."

And the New Hampshire state constitution's gun amendment has been clearly interpreted to allow for reasonable regulation of weapons.

Easy-to-buy guns from New Hampshire, Georgia and Florida are used for crimes in states with strict gun control laws. (Guns bought in Florida were used by Colombian drug lords to kill their Supreme Court justices and 33 other judges). Sane gun control legislation is needed in New Hampshire.

Just say "No" to the NRA.

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