

A time to act against Mass Gun Violence, America's new Domestic Terrorism (4-7-13)

“A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Second Amendment 1791

America's Founders would be sickened, as we are, by the growing use of semi-automatic weapons against American citizens. How can we explain Newtown, and the ongoing wave of mass shootings, to our elementary age grandchildren in Connecticut? Our family is proud that ancestor Stephen Nickerson, age 21, served in the 1775 Massachusetts Militia at the Battle of Bunker Hill, early in the Revolution. Stephen kept his single-shot Militia musket and powder horn on his fireplace for most of his 90 years, to remind friends and family to be vigilant, against the return of British tyranny. Like that musket, the Constitution and 1791 Bill of Rights promise security against tyranny.

The Constitution insured security with citizen militias, to “suppress insurrections and repel foreign invaders” (Constitution, Article I, Sec 8). The Founders implemented the Second Amendment through the 1792 Uniform Militia Act, which required white males (18-45) to enroll in well-trained militias and to own and keep muskets, under tight state regulations. The Supreme Court has affirmed that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep firearms for self-defense, while it does not grant an “unlimited” individual right to keep and carry any type of weapon whatsoever, including “dangerous and unusual” weapons. (DC vs. *Heller* 2008)

Recently, Americans have allowed a plague of mass murders and lax gun laws to threaten our Constitutional rights, to assemble, learn, worship, recreate, shop, travel, and speak with our leaders... without fear of gun violence. Many developed countries share a violent media culture with the US and have comparable rates of mental disorder and non-gun crime. (Washington Post, “The Solution to Gun Violence is Clear”, 12-19-12). Only Americans are 15 times more likely to be victims of gun homicides than citizens of other developed countries. (New York Times, “The Gun Challenge”, 12-18-12) Only Americans enjoy the world's highest rate of gun ownership, 5% of world population with about 40% of civilian firearms (Small Arms Survey 2007). Arming more “good guys” with guns, as the National Rifle Association advocates, will not make public places more secure, just more fearful. (Harvard School of Public Health, 2012)

Timothy McVeigh and Mohammed Atta would be pleased, if our elected leaders do little or nothing, to prevent a new generation of domestic terrorists from attacking, menacing, or stalking our schools, our public places, Members of Congress or Oregon Legislators. Would-be domestic terrorists will notice that Oregon currently allows thugs to flaunt their semi-automatic weapons and their “gun rights” on the streets of Portland, Gresham, and Medford, and near our public places and schools. Let's head off the next Newtown, by restoring a “well-regulated use” of firearms, for our children, our grandchildren, and ourselves. As Connecticut has just done, Congress and the Oregon Legislature need to act courageously, on a new assault weapons ban and gun safety reforms.

Sincerely

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