

To: Gun control advocates and Second Amendment deniers,

A person of color who's done nothing wrong is kicked out of a hotel where he's a paying guest. It should go without saying this is a terrible offense. Word spreads and people are held accountable. That's as it should be. A same sex couple's denied services, the world hears about it and people are outraged.

Now, a decorated veteran, exercising his Second Amendment rights goes into a store to buy a birthday card. An employee notices his legally carried gun. He's surrounded, harassed, embarrassed, kicked out of the store like a common criminal and told to never return.

We don't, nor should we ever, remove people from establishments for wearing a burqa, hijab or yarmulke. Yet we allow the expulsion of peaceful, law-abiding citizens from establishments because some people don't understand our culture and can't stand the sight of guns.

Against the overwhelming decision of voters, many Oregon lawmakers want to make driving licenses available to people who can't prove they're in the country legally. They posit that if caught driving without a license people could be jailed and separated from their families. Yet another law, if passed, would make lawful gun owners criminals overnight. This law provides for steep fines, jail time, a criminal record and would separate people from our families just because our history and culture is offensive to some.

Xenophobia: Fear and hatred of strangers, foreigners or anything that is unfamiliar or different.

Bigotry: Intolerance toward those who hold different beliefs from oneself.

Why do we not only allow but encourage and celebrate discrimination of lawful gun owners? And, how is it that gun control advocates and Second Amendment deniers are free to be as intolerant as they please without consequence?

Imagine the outrage if any other group or class of people were consistently being so discriminated against as lawful gun owners exercising our Constitutionally protected rights.

I served, fought and put my life on the line to ensure that the tyranny I've witnessed in other countries didn't reach our shores and that all of our beloved rights were protected. I support the rights of women, gay rights, people of color and legal immigration. I do this happily and proudly for my fellow Americans and those who aspire to be. Try to imagine the slap in the face to those of us who would do anything to protect the rights of others while others will stop at nothing to deny us ours.

Take the time to look at the art, paintings and murals in the Capitol in Salem. In the rotunda alone there are no less than a dozen depictions of strong, brave men with guns. These are the tools with which we provide for and protect our families. Guns are engrained in our history and protected by our Constitution. They're a cherished and undeniable part of our culture. We proud Oregonians are not second class citizens, we will never surrender our arms and we are done riding in the back of your shameful bus of intolerance and discrimination.

Norwood Paladin