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Standing Up for the Second Amendment

“Free men have arms, slaves do not.”
— William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1769)



The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is more than just a guarantee of a right; it is a cornerstone of our Republic and a vital safeguard of our liberties. In an era in which the fundamental rights of American citizens are continually questioned and often undermined, it is imperative that we stand up for the Second Amendment with unwavering resolve.

To fully appreciate the Second Amendment, we must first understand its historical context. The framers of the Constitution, influenced by the works of Cesare Beccaria, Algernon Sidney, and James Harrington, recognized the necessity of an armed populace as a bulwark against tyranny. They were keenly aware of the abuses of power that could arise in a centralized government, having experienced firsthand the oppressive rule of the British Crown.

James Madison, often referred to as the “Father of the Constitution,” articulated the importance of the right to bear arms in *Federalist* 46. He argued that an armed citizenry would serve as a formidable deterrent against the potential overreach of a federal government. Madison and his contemporaries viewed the Second Amendment as an essential check on government power, ensuring that the people retained the ultimate authority.

The experiences of the American Colonists under British rule were pivotal in shaping their views on the right to bear arms. The British attempts to disarm the Colonists, particularly in the lead-up to the Revolutionary War, demonstrated the critical importance of an armed populace in resisting tyranny. The battles of Lexington and Concord, after British troops attempted to seize Colonial arms and munitions, underscored the necessity of the right to bear arms for the protection of liberty.

The language of the Second Amendment is clear and unequivocal: “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.”

The phrase “shall not be infringed” leaves no room for interpretation. The right to keep and bear arms is an individual right that the government cannot abridge, regardless of how “reasonable” or “necessary” that abridgment is portrayed.

The Courts and the Constitution

Despite the clarity of this language, the Second Amendment has been the subject of much debate and litigation. In *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Supreme Court affirmed that the Second Amendment protects an individual’s right to possess firearms unconnected with service in a militia and



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to use those arms for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home. This landmark decision reinforced the notion that the right to bear arms is a fundamental and individual right.

The *Heller* decision was significant in that it clarified the *individual* nature of the Second Amendment's protection of the right to keep and bear arms. For many years, opponents of gun rights had argued that the Second Amendment applied only to state militias, not to individuals. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Heller* put this argument to rest, affirming that the right to keep and bear arms is indeed enjoyed by each and every person.

Moreover, the Court's decision in *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010) extended the protections of the Second Amendment to the states. This case was crucial because it ensured that state and local governments could not infringe upon the right to keep and bear arms.

While the *McDonald* case is celebrated as a victory for the perpetuation and expansion of the Second Amendment's protection of the right to keep and bear arms, the incorporation of the Second Amendment to the states through the 14th Amendment was philosophically and constitutionally unnecessary. The Second Amendment most certainly was written and ratified as a protection of a person's right to exercise armed protection of his life, liberty, and property against any attempt by the *federal government* to interpret its enumerated powers to grant to it some pretext for authority to disarm civilians. That right in general, however — the right to protect one's life, liberty, and property by force of arms if necessary — is a *natural* right, and as such is unalienable, and no government — local, state, federal, or global — possesses or could possess the power to deny anyone that right of which God alone is the giver.

The Current Assault on the Second Amendment

In recent years, the Second Amendment has come under increasing attack from various quarters. Gun-control advocates, often motivated by genuine concern for public safety, have proposed and enacted numerous laws aimed at restricting gun ownership and usage. While the desire to prevent gun violence is understandable, many of these measures infringe upon the constitutionally protected rights of law-abiding citizens.

Common arguments for gun control include the need to reduce gun-related deaths, prevent mass shootings, and keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. While these are legitimate concerns, it is crucial to remember that restricting the rights of responsible gun owners does not address the root causes of these issues.

For example, many of the most restrictive gun-control measures are enacted in cities with high rates of gun violence. Despite the draconian denials of the right to keep and bear arms, gun violence persists and proliferates because by very definition criminals do not adhere to gun-control regulations. Instead, these laws primarily affect law-abiding citizens who seek to exercise their Second Amendment-protected rights.

In his essay *On Crimes and Punishments* (published in English in 1775 and found in the libraries of John Adams, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, among others), young Italian thinker and jurist Cesare Beccaria explained this illogical approach to attempting to address armed violence in these words:



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The laws of this nature are those which forbid to wear arms, disarming those only who are not disposed to commit the crime which the laws mean to prevent. Can it be supposed, that those who have the courage to violate the most sacred laws of humanity, and the most important of the code, will respect the less considerable and arbitrary injunctions, the violation of which is so easy, and of so little comparative importance? Does not the execution of this law deprive the subject of that personal liberty, so dear to mankind and to the wise legislator? And does it not subject the innocent to all the disagreeable circumstances that should only fall on the guilty? It certainly makes the situation of the assaulted worse, and of the assailants better, and rather encourages than prevents murder, as it requires less courage to attack unarmed than armed persons.

Similar statutes such as universal background checks, waiting periods, and magazine-capacity limits do nothing to deter criminals. Instead, they create obstacles for responsible gun owners who wish to purchase firearms and ammunition. The focus should be on enforcing existing laws and addressing the root causes of violence, such as mental-health issues and gang activity, rather than imposing asinine and ineffectual additional restrictions on law-abiding citizens.

Clear intent: Although the phrase “shall not be infringed” seems clear, the Second Amendment has been the subject of several Supreme Court cases, some of which have protected, most of which have weakened, the right to keep and bear arms. (Douglas Rissing/Getty Images Plus)



Government Complicity With Global Disarmament Design

While our efforts should specifically focus on the threats to the Second Amendment coming from our own government, we must not forget the globalist gun grab being planned by the United Nations through agreements to which our government is a signatory. This includes the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

In brief, this agreement would require a national gun registry; would deny the individual not only the right to keep and bear arms, but also the right to buy, sell, trade, or manufacture them; would mandate the tracking of ammunition from manufacturer to end user; and would grant to the UN the authority to deploy armed forces to help local and federal authorities enforce these regulations.



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As it stands today, the U.S. Senate has not ratified the ATT, but the opposition to the measure holds a razor-thin majority. With the loss of a couple of seats, all that would stand between enforcement of the globalists' disarmament scheme and the American people would be the people and the states refusing to enforce any unconstitutional act of the federal government, including a "treaty" the terms of which violate our most sacred rights and the document that guarantees them.

The Forgotten First Phrase of the Second Amendment

The Second Amendment, in its historical context, emerged from a deep-seated fear of standing armies and the oppressive potential of a centralized military force. The framers of the Constitution had witnessed how oppressive regimes in Europe used standing armies to maintain control and suppress dissent. To counteract this, they envisioned a system in which citizens, organized into local militias beholden to local communities, would serve as a bulwark against potential tyranny.

Indeed, the vast majority of advocates for the right to keep and bear arms are well-versed in the profound connection between the Founding Fathers' apprehensions regarding a standing army and the essence of the Second Amendment.

Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, Elbridge Gerry, Melancton Smith, and James Winthrop were motivated by a crucial concern when they championed the inclusion of a bill of rights in the federal Constitution — their conviction rested on the belief that safeguarding the sovereignty of the several states against the presence of a standing army during peacetime was imperative. To that end, Article 2 of the Bill of Rights, known as the Second Amendment, was crafted with the specific purpose of achieving this critical objective.

As one of the chief proponents of adding protection against standing armies to the U.S. Constitution, Elbridge Gerry pointed out that the purpose of a militia, and the protection thereof proposed by the Second Amendment, was "to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty."

The American War for Independence, fought from 1775 to 1783, was a monumental struggle that witnessed the establishment of 13 new nation-states and reshaped the course of history. While the courage of the Continental Army and the leadership of figures such as George Washington are well-documented, one often under-appreciated aspect of the war is the vital role played by the citizen militia.

In the years leading up to the war, Colonial Americans were well-accustomed to serving in their local militias. These militias, composed of ordinary citizens, played a crucial role in the early phases of the conflict. They were the first line of defense against British oppression and were instrumental in sustaining the war effort.

Moreover, the citizen militias represented a highly motivated and ideologically committed force. They were not professional soldiers, but patriots who took up arms to defend their homes, families, and newfound ideals of liberty. This unwavering commitment bolstered their resilience in the face of adversity. They endured extreme hardships, limited supplies, and unforgiving conditions throughout the war.

The citizen militias that sprang up across the American Colonies during the War for Independence played an indispensable role in securing America's freedom. Their intimate knowledge of the terrain, their unwavering commitment to the cause, and their ability to adapt to the changing nature of warfare



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were instrumental in achieving victory. While the Continental Army deserves its due credit, it was the citizen militias that proved to be the unsung heroes of the American War for Independence, the very literal expression of the spirit of liberty that helped secure the safety and freedom of 13 self-governing states.

The Importance of the Second Amendment Today

The Second Amendment remains as relevant today as it was when it was ratified in 1791. Here are several reasons why this right is crucial in contemporary America:

Self-Defense: One of the most fundamental human rights is the right to self-defense. The ability to protect oneself and one's family from harm is an inherent aspect of personal liberty. Firearms provide individuals with the means to defend themselves against attackers, home invaders, and other threats.

Firearms unquestionably play a critical role in enabling individuals to protect themselves and their loved ones from harm. In many cases, the mere presence of a firearm is enough to deter an attacker and prevent a crime from occurring. According to statistics published in 2019 by the Foundation for Economic Education, "Every year, 400,000 life-threatening violent crimes are prevented using firearms."

Even the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hardly a champion of gun rights, published the results of a 2012 study that revealed that guns in the hands of private individuals prevent as many as three million crimes annually.

Deterrence of Tyranny: The Second Amendment serves as a powerful deterrent against government overreach and tyranny. An armed populace can resist the unjust laws and actions of a tyrannical government, thereby preserving freedom and government by the consent of the governed. This was the primary purpose of including the Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights.

History is replete with examples of tyrannical governments disarming their citizens to consolidate power and suppress dissent. The framers of the Constitution were acutely aware of this danger, having witnessed the disarmament of the American Colonists by the British. The Second Amendment ensures that the government cannot easily strip the people of their ability to resist tyranny and protect their liberties. An armed citizenry is, as declared in the text of the Second Amendment itself, "necessary to the security of a free state." In fact, this necessity also explains why it is vital that the right to keep and bear arms is not infringed — as expressed in the second part of the amendment.

And should the government decide to use force or arms to impose its despotic will on the people of the United States, James Madison predicted in *Federalist 46*, unless the government's plan be "voluntarily renounced," the American people would make "the same appeal to a trial of force" against a domestic tyrant as they made against a foreign one.

"Let a regular army, fully equal to the resources of the country, be formed; and let it be entirely at the devotion of the federal government; still it would not be going too far to say, that the State governments, with the people on their side, would be able to repel the danger," he added.

Crime Prevention: Studies have shown that responsible gun ownership can deter crime, as criminals are less likely to target individuals or homes where they know firearms are present. The mere presence of a firearm can prevent a crime from occurring, thereby enhancing public safety.



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To paraphrase the quotation from Beccaria, it only makes sense that it takes a lot less courage to target unarmed people than those who might match the assailant's firepower.

A man planning to assault a woman half his size is made her equal if she is armed and he is not. Regulations barring the carrying of weapons by civilians do not deter crime; they simply ensure that those who choose to obey such an edict are at the mercy of those who do not. The disparity between the deranged and the general population is erased by the presence of firearms in the hands of those who would only use them to protect their lives, liberty, and property against those who use them to commit atrocities.

It is worth noting, furthermore, that, as the right of self-protection by the keeping and bearing of weapons is a natural right and as such should not be regulated by government at any level, permits should not be required for the carrying of firearms by those who have not had those rights denied through due process of law. To require a permit to carry firearms is to convert what is a God-given right into an act exercisable only with the permission of government.

Preservation of Other Rights: The Second Amendment supports and protects other constitutionally protected rights. An armed citizenry can resist efforts to curtail freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and other fundamental rights. It serves as a safeguard for the entire Bill of Rights.

The Second Amendment is often referred to as the "guardian" of the Bill of Rights because it provides the means by which citizens can defend their liberties against encroachments by the government. Without the right to bear arms, the people would be vulnerable to attempts by the government to suppress dissent and curtail other fundamental rights.

One need only look to the annals of history to learn that a disarmed populace is powerless against an authoritarian government bent on impoverishing and enslaving them. It is as forgotten Founding Father St. George Tucker warned:

This may be considered as the true palladium of liberty.... The right of self defense is the first law of nature: in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest limits possible. Wherever standing armies are kept up, and the right of the people to keep and bear arms is, under any color or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction.



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The great equalizer: A woman with a firearm is able to protect herself and deter potential assaults. This seems like common sense, but many want to deprive women of this right. (marchsirawit/Adobe Stock)

Standing Up for the Second Amendment Today

Every constitutionalist, every patriot, can see that we are living in days like those described by St. George Tucker. Our right to keep and bear arms is being buried under reams of regulations, and even Republican administrations have shown disregard for the boundaries around that right drawn by the Second Amendment. To put it plainly, our liberty is on the brink of destruction, and our right to keep and bear arms is all that prevents it from being pushed over that cliff into annihilation.

It is incumbent upon us to defend and promote this right. Listen to this eerie yet accurate admonition written in 1787 by the Anti-Federalist author “Cato”:

You are then under a sacred obligation to provide for the safety of your posterity, and would you now basely desert their interests, when by a small share of prudence you may transmit to them a beautiful political patrimony, which will prevent the necessity of their traveling through seas of blood to obtain that, which your wisdom might have secured.

Our “sacred obligation,” our duty to our descendants, is to use all our wisdom, time, talents, and treasure to restore this Republic and to hand down to them a free country with the Constitution still intact. This is most ably and adequately accomplished by becoming personally engaged in the worthwhile endeavor of defending the Second Amendment.

Here, then, are several ways individuals can stand up for the Second Amendment and for the irreplaceable rights it was written to protect:

Education and Awareness: Knowledge is power. Educate yourself and others about the Second Amendment, its historical context, and its contemporary relevance. Share information through social media, blogs, community meetings, and educational workshops. Counter misinformation and myths about gun ownership with facts and reasoned arguments.



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Understanding the historical foundations of the Second Amendment is crucial for effectively defending it. Familiarize yourself with the writings of our Founding Fathers and the men whose works taught them the value and source of our right to keep and bear arms.

Engage in the Political Process: Stay informed about local, state, and federal legislation that affects the Second Amendment. Contact your elected representatives to express your views and advocate for policies that protect gun rights. Participate in elections and support candidates who are committed to defending the Second Amendment.

Political engagement is critical for preserving the Second Amendment. Attend town hall meetings, call and write letters to your representatives and senators, and participate in advocacy campaigns. Let your voice be heard and ensure that your elected officials understand the importance of protecting gun rights.

Join Gun Rights Organizations: Organizations such as Gun Owners of America, the Second Amendment Foundation, and the National Association for Gun Rights focus on issues affecting gun rights, and as such play a crucial role in defending them. Join such organizations and support their efforts.

Pro-Second Amendment groups in particular provide valuable resources for gun owners, including educational materials, legal assistance, and advocacy training. By joining a pro-Second Amendment organization, you can become part of a larger community of individuals dedicated to defending and promoting gun rights.

Join The John Birch Society: For more than 60 years, The John Birch Society, the parent organization of *The New American*, has stood in the gap between citizens and federal, state, and local government efforts to infringe on the right of the people to keep and bear arms. Through educational resources available online and in print, as well as through their vast network of local chapters, the JBS is uniquely qualified and organized to assist individuals not only in finding like-minded Americans, but in providing people with the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the cause of liberty generally — and the cause of protecting our God-given rights specifically, including those protected by the Second Amendment.

Regarding the Second Amendment in particular, *The New American* is hosting a new weekly radio show called [2A for Today](#), which debuted July 13 on 50-plus stations. Hosted by yours truly, our first episode featured Gun Owners of America's Erich Pratt.

Challenge Unconstitutional Laws: Support challenges to laws and regulations that infringe upon the Second Amendment. Many unconstitutional laws have been overturned through the efforts of dedicated individuals and organizations. Litigation is a powerful tool for defending rights. While it is often an effective tonic, though, the "rightful remedy," as Thomas Jefferson described it, for any and all unconstitutional acts of the federal government is state interposition, or nullification, as it is called. As the creators of the Constitution and the definers of the boundaries of federal authority, the states (and ultimately, the people who formed the states) retain the power to refuse to adhere to any act of the federal government that goes beyond the limits of its consensual and contractual authority as set out in the U.S. Constitution. The states have not only the right to prevent the people from suffering such tyranny, but the duty. As James Madison explained in the Virginia Resolutions of 1798:

In case of a deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of other powers not granted by the



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said compact, the States, who are the parties thereto, have the right, and are in duty bound, to interpose for arresting the progress of the evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights, and liberties appertaining to them.

Foster Community and Solidarity: Build and strengthen a community of like-minded individuals who support the Second Amendment. Attend gun shows, shooting ranges, and other places where you can meet fellow supporters. Share experiences, knowledge, and strategies for defending gun rights.

Educate the Next Generation: Pass on the importance of the Second Amendment to the next generation. Teach your children and other young people about the significance of this right and the responsibilities that come with gun ownership. Ensure that they understand the historical context and contemporary relevance of the Second Amendment.

The future of the Second Amendment depends on the next generation of Americans. Instill in your children a respect for firearms and an understanding of their rights, where those rights come from, and why they must be protected. Encourage them to become informed and engaged citizens who are prepared to defend their liberties.

Stay Vigilant: Despite a couple of pro-Second Amendment Supreme Court decisions handed down recently, the fight for the Second Amendment continues. Stay vigilant and be prepared to defend your rights at all times, in all places, and from all those who would threaten them. Monitor legislative developments, legal challenges, and public sentiment. Be ready to act whenever necessary to prevent government at any level from infringing on the right to keep and bear arms.

Essential training: Teaching children firearm safety, including responsible handling and self-defense skills, builds a foundation of knowledge of and respect for weapons in the next generation.

(dlewis33/Getty Images Plus)



Conclusion

The Second Amendment protects a fundamental right that underpins our liberty and security. It is a vital part of the American constitutional framework, protecting the ability of individuals to defend themselves, deter tyranny, and preserve other fundamental rights. In an era of increasing challenges to



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these rights and the Constitution that protects them, it is imperative that we stand up for the Second Amendment with determination, education, and courage.

By educating ourselves and others, engaging in the political process, promoting responsible gun ownership, and building a strong community of supporters, we can ensure that the Second Amendment remains a vital and protected part of our constitutional heritage. The preservation of our freedoms and the security of our Republic depend on our commitment to defending this essential right. Let us stand together, united in our resolve to protect and promote the Second Amendment for future generations.



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