



Written by [James Heiser](#) on January 12, 2011

## Is Gun Control the Answer to Tucson Tragedy?

The Senate's Sergeant at Arms, Terrance Gainer, is now on record opposing such self-defense. [Michael O'Brien posted an article](#) to the "Blog Briefing Room" at TheHill.com in which Gainer explains his position:

"I don't think that's a good idea," Gainer said on "Good Morning America" on ABC. "I think we should leave the law enforcement and security to those professionals."

Two lawmakers — Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) and Heath Shuler (D-N.C.) — have said they plan on carrying guns when they're in their districts as protection against potential attacks. "I've been a policeman for 42 years and I don't think introducing more guns to the situation is helpful," Gainer said.



And, of course, by "more guns," he means, guns in the hands of the American people.

Gainer's invocation of his career in law enforcement certainly reveals decades of commendable service. But such service — especially in Washington, D.C. — should also teach one the inherent limitations which police have in protecting the public. In many circumstances, the time it may take for police to respond to a crime means that they will arrive far too late to save the life of a victim. Stories of police officers [taking hours to respond to 911 calls](#) cannot be dismissed as simply "anecdotal" for those whose lives are at risk.

It is easy to second guess the events leading up to the tragic shooting last week in Tucson, Arizona. Certainly, it seems in retrospect that it would have been prudent for Rep. Giffords' office to have arranged for local law enforcement to have been present during her constituent event on Saturday morning. As O'Brien wrote for TheHill.com, "Gainer said that, in the case of the Giffords incident, he probably wouldn't have done much more except advise local police to stop by at the meeting and take a look." In that case, it is hard to see how Gainer's advice — merely stopping by and taking a look — could have prevented the horrific events last Saturday.

The primary right, and responsibility, for the defense of any individual rests with the citizen — and that responsibility includes persons of prominence. How a person chooses to defend himself — whether by means of carrying a firearm or other weapon, or by retaining the services of another person for such defense — it is still that individual's responsibility to take the first step in maintaining his own safety. When [Gov. Rick Perry \(R-Texas\) used a concealed handgun](#) to shoot a coyote last year, the Governor offered an example of an exercise of the right of self-defense. And if a member of Congress chooses to carry a firearm, wisdom would dictate that he also undertake the training which would enable him to do so in a way which maximizes his safety, and the safety of those people around him.



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What is unconscionable in this discussion of the right of self-defense is the irresponsible legislation proposed by Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), who is responding to the tragedy in Tucson with an effort to deprive citizens of their Second Amendment rights. [According to the Washington Post](#), Rep. King's answer to the act of a deranged individual is to restrict the rights of citizens in every state of the union:

Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) plans to introduce legislation making it illegal to carry a firearm within 1,000 feet of lawmakers and some other government officials.

"It is imperative that we do all that we can to give law enforcement the tools they need to ensure the safety of New Yorkers and prevent an attack before it happens," King said at a news conference with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "That is why, as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee and co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on Illegal Guns, I will be introducing legislation that would make it illegal to knowingly carry a gun within a 1,000 feet of certain high-profile government officials."

Why, and how, such magical "gun-free" bubbles are supposed to surround "certain high-profile government officials" is known only in the mind of Rep. King. If a legislative decree could make guns vanish from the hands of those who intend evil, then Washington, D.C., New York and Chicago would never have been plagued by the horrifically high murder and violent crime rates which are the usual marks of gun control in America. In fact, given the stringent requirements that most states impose on citizens for concealed handgun permits, it is safe to say that the criminal history of politicians such as [convicted felon](#) and former house majority leader Tom DeLay forbid them from procuring such a permit.

The elected representatives of the American people have nothing to fear from the citizens of this Republic exercising their constitutionally-enumerated rights. Rep. King's proposed measure has the smell of elitism, and is ultimately meaningless in the defense of those "certain high-profile government officials" whom he would claim he is defending. Whether a firearm is procured and carried legally or illegally, a person with criminal intent is unlikely to be dissuaded from his intention by more legislation. It was not Gainer's police officers or Rep. King's paper-pushing that subdued a murderer in Tucson: It was three brave citizens who did not hesitate to put themselves in harm's way for the preservation of the lives of others.

*Photo: Terrance Gainer*

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