



Brooklyn Congresswoman “Threatened” by GOA’s Larry Pratt

Following publication of a blatant hit piece by *Rolling Stone* on Gun Owners of America (GOA) Executive Director Larry Pratt on July 14, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), representing New York City’s boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn, felt personally threatened, and [called the cops](#). Maloney’s staff called the Capitol Police and the House sergeant-at-arms, Paul Irving, to say that Pratt’s comments published by *Rolling Stone* could be taken as a personal threat to her safety, and they should investigate “the extent to which Mr. Pratt’s organization is involved with making threats against other elected officials” as well. She added:



These comments are especially reprehensible in light of what happened to my good friend Congresswoman Gabby Giffords who suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result of a gunshot wound received during a public event....

Pratt’s rhetoric essentially invites similar attacks on other members of Congress.

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The cops called back to tell her staff that there was “no specific danger and [there’s] nothing to be done.”

What set Maloney’s teeth on edge was what *Rolling Stone* reporter Alexander Zaitchik wrote that Pratt had said at a recent Leadership Institute presentation concerning the real meaning and purpose of the Second Amendment. Zaitchik was operating without the assistance of Pratt, who declined to be interviewed for the piece, forcing Zaitchik to rely on public records. He took journalistic license in characterizing Pratt as a “fear-mongering” and “paranoia-stoking zealot” in a long meandering trip through what he called “the gun-movement’s aqueduct into the dark crosscurrents of the militia movement and the radical right.” Zaitchik said his article was written “in Pratt’s voice because he has personally overseen engineering and construction of this aqueduct while building the larger gun movement.”

Here is Zaitchik’s summary of what Pratt said about the Second Amendment that so enraged Maloney:

The Second Amendment is not for hunting, it’s not even for self-defense,” Pratt explained in his Leadership Institute talk. Rather, it is “for restraining tyrannical tendencies in government. Especially those in the liberal, tyrannical end of the spectrum. There is some restraint, and even if the voters of Brooklyn don’t hold them back, it may be there are other ways that their impulses are somewhat restrained. That’s the whole idea of the Second Amendment.”



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 25, 2014

Maloney was certain that Pratt was referring specifically to her, not only because she is from Brooklyn but also because she was a fervent supporter of anti-gun legislation such as the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act of 2013, and she demands that gun owners be required to carry liability insurance just as automobile owners do.

Her call prompted a response from Pratt, who wrote “an open letter to Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney” a week later, amplifying his remarks by quoting from the Declaration of Independence and from Frederick Douglass, Justice Antonin Scalia in his majority opinion in the Supreme Court case *District of Columbia v. Heller*, and former Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story.

To illustrate Story’s position, recall what he said in his *Commentaries on the Constitution*:

The right of the citizens to keep and bear arms has justly been considered as the palladium of the liberties of a republic, since it offers a strong moral check against the usurpation and arbitrary power of rulers and will generally, even if these are successful in the first instance, enable the people to resist and triumph over them.

Pratt ended by hoping that Maloney would take the time to brush up on her reading and understanding of the Constitution “that currently allows you to serve in the People’s House, and come to understand the great principles on which [this nation] was founded.” She certainly could use a little brushing up. According to the Freedom Index, published by *The New American* to track congressmen’s adherence to the Constitution, since her first term began Maloney has scored a discreditable 21 out of 100.

The bigger point to all of this public bickering is this: If Pratt’s GOA is a small, irrelevant, insignificant, out-of-touch group of misfits, miscreants, and malcontents as Zaitchik concludes, why give him all this attention? Zaitchik scores Pratt on his allegedly neo-Nazi sympathies, his allegedly anti-Semitic remarks, his some-time connection with the KKK, and so on. He concludes that Pratt’s GOA is far smaller than the 300,000 members that Pratt claims are holding true to the faith, and that with the passage of time the GOA is likely to fade away into history.

When challenged with that, Pratt responded in an interview with *The New American* that GOA’s influence is strong and getting stronger. He noted that when West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin’s bill to expand background checks was offered back in April, 2013, the GOA stood strongly against it while the National Rifle Association (NRA) remained on the sidelines. Said Pratt:

So we sent out an e-mail to just those members who also belonged to the NRA, asking them to call the head of the NRA’s legislative institute to ask him why they remained neutral on this bill.

The pressure was sufficient to cause the NRA to come out against the bill, which needed 60 votes to pass. It failed, 54-46, causing Manchin to whine: “We had the votes we needed. We had it in the bag. But when the NRA came out against it, there was nothing we could do.”

As Eliot Ness told Al Capone in the film *The Untouchables*, “Here endeth the lesson” — a small, dedicated, highly motivated and informed group of citizens can have an influence far beyond their numbers. Margaret Mead put it this way: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Correction: The article originally said that Congressman Maloney’s Freedom Index Score totals 21 out of 100 since she got into office in 1999. She has been in office since 1993.

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