



Written by [Patrick Krey](#) on June 11, 2010

Think Nationally, Act Locally

Varg Freeborn, president of the Young Americans for Liberty (YAL) chapter at Youngstown State University in Ohio, had no idea the levels that his local government would stoop to in order to not only deprive him of his rights but also to silence any public protest.

The City of Campbell enacted an ordinance in January that would ban the sale of guns within city limits. The law had a fair amount of critics. Ohioans for Concealed Carry (OFCC) warned Campbell that the law was in violation of Ohio state law and a lawsuit would soon be coming their way if it was not soon repealed.



The libertarian-conservative Freeborn decided to launch his own campaign and up the pressure on the anti-gun City Council by organizing a rally in support of gun rights outside Campbell City Hall. In an interview with The New American, Freeborn explained how he envisioned the rally. "I wanted to organize this rally to not only protest their sales ban but also to promote gun rights. It was about being for something, not just against something."

When Varg and a friend from YAL first met the Campbell City Administrator, they were assured that they would get their permit to hold a rally and no fees would be charged. Over the following weekend, the rally was heavily promoted at area events and via the Internet, which garnered them a lot of attention. As Freeborn explained, the rally went "viral" and soon city officials changed their tune. When Freeborn's friend returned for the permit, the City Administrator now said the request for a rally would need to be in writing. Shortly after Freeborn provided them with a written request, the City Administrator told Freeborn that they would have to pay for three to four police officers to provide security for the event. This was five days before the planned event! Freeborn was shocked, "We heavily promoted it and then they said you have to pay us \$2,000 to hold the event." After a pretty heated exchange over the phone, Freeborn went back to City Hall to meet with officials and was able to negotiate the fee down to \$480.

The Mayor's secretary, Denise Sarigianopoulos, tried to tell the online news site DailyPaul.com that the city was misinformed about what the rally was for. She said they initially thought it was a "Support the Troops" rally and that "if it were for the troops, we wouldn't need police protection. We would probably have marched with them." Unfortunately for city officials, their rationale fails the constitutional litmus test. Since the city charged Freeborn money with the explanation that it was owing to the content of the rally, the city has come under intense scrutiny by First Amendment-oriented organizations for hampering free speech. Luke Sheehan, of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), explained to DailyPaul.com: "From the facts of this case, it looks like standard ideological discrimination." Sheehan then went on to explain that the Supreme Court has held that any requirement that organizations hosting controversial events pay for extra security is unconstitutional



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because “it affixes a price tag to events on the basis of their expressive content.” Even the notoriously liberal American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) became involved in the case owing to the outrageous conduct of the local politicians to frustrate the First Amendment rights of the citizens.

Sadly, Freeborn still found himself in a quandary. With only days left before the event, he had to raise \$480 to hold the event, and YAL only had \$80 of cash on hand. Graciously, Ohioans for Concealed Carry stepped up and contributed \$400 to the cost of paying for the rally, which it raised online after it reported on the details of what transpired. But this wasn’t the end of Freeborn’s troubles. The city wasn’t done in obstructing the peaceful assembly of its citizens. Even with Freeborn agreeing to pay the fee under protest, city officials would not commit to a location for the rally. Just before 4 p.m. on the day before the rally, the Mayor contacted Freeborn and explained that the rally would be moved to a park nearly two miles away. When Freeborn and his associates showed up to organize the rally at the park, they encountered a “logistical nightmare.” “They didn’t know where they were putting us. They put us at a pavilion first and then changed their mind because a birthday party was there. Then they put us at another pavilion which was in the middle of a mud hole and we said ‘no.’” Even with all the difficulties though, Freeborn felt the final rally was a major success. “Finally, we picked a little amphitheater. We had about 100 people there who were mostly openly armed and it went off great.”

There was a silver lining to this story beyond just the successful rally. The city eventually relented in their gun sales ban. WFMJ.com reports that the “Campbell city ordinance banning the sale of guns within the city has been repealed after sparking controversy among [the] council and residents.... Last weekend, protesters gathered to voice their opposition to the ordinance, which also prohibited residents from selling firearms privately.”

So the hard-fought efforts of grass-roots activists in the freedom movement paid off locally when Freeborn took on the system and won. Ken McPherson, of the Campaign for Liberty, a small businessman and lifelong liberty activist, worked with Freeborn on the rally and explained to The New American: “If we don’t stand up and get off our couches, these people will go and violate the Constitution and their oath of office. Until we scheduled this rally, they were just going to modify the law instead of eradicating it all together.”

It is true that in the end the good guys actually won, but it was after a difficult struggle, and even with that, the local legislators are already talking about passing a slightly modified but similar gun-control law. There may be victories for liberty in small skirmishes like this across the nation, but the larger war is far from over as politicians everywhere seem to be in a mad dash to restrict God-given rights. McPherson contends that he learned an important lesson that everyone in America should understand: “This was nerve-wracking and sometimes scary but if we can’t stand up to these guys in our backyard, then what makes you think we can stand up to Washington?” Patriots across the nation should listen to that kernel of wisdom from a citizen-activist.



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