

THE Gun Owners

32 YEARS OF NO COMPROMISE – 1975-2007

Democrats sneak McCarthy gun control bill through the House!

GOA Uncovers Unholy Alliance, Backroom Deals

by Erich Pratt with John Velleco

The fireworks started early this year on Capitol Hill, after House Democrats snuck a massive expansion of the Brady Law through the House.

It was June 13 — exactly three weeks before Independence Day — when it was a Wednesday like any other day. Representatives were attending congressional hearings, meeting with constituents, perhaps devising clever new ways to pick our pockets.

At 8:30 in the morning, an email went out to House Republicans indicating that a gun control bill, recently introduced by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), was on the Suspension Calen-

study in backroom deal making, unholy alliances and deceit. A sausage factory in a third world country with no running water has nothing on today's U.S. Congress.

The Washington Post reported on June 10 that a deal had been struck between the NRA leadership and Democrat leaders in the House. The headline read: "Democrats, NRA Reach Deal on Background-Check Bill."

That set off a chain reaction of fire-



GOA's John Velleco debated the issue of gun control several times on MSNBC in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings this April. Since then, GOA has been on the front lines, leading the opposition against those who want to exploit the shootings as an excuse for passing more gun control.

the lead sponsor of a bill that makes the old Clinton gun ban pale by comparison.

Even many Democrats wouldn't go near a McCarthy gun bill. They have learned that supporting gun control is a losing issue. Enter Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), the so-called Dean of the House, having served since the Eisenhower administration. Dingell is also a former NRA Board member, and was in that capacity tapped to bring the NRA leadership to the table.

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"Another gun rights group, the Gun Owners of America, is adamantly opposed to the [McCarthy] legislation. It said the measure would allow the government to trample privacy rights by compiling reams of personal information and potentially bar mentally stable people from buying guns."

– Associated Press, April 21, 2007

dar (normally reserved for 'non-controversial' bills).

Many Representatives didn't see that email until it was too late. Less than three hours later, the bill had passed by a voice vote. In other words, it passed with only a handful of Representatives in the chamber. There was *no recorded vote!*

The bill in question, H.R. 2640, is a massive expansion of the Brady Gun Control law, the subject of many previous alerts and mailings by Gun Owners of America.

Its passage in the House is a case

works throughout the pro-gun community. Who was party to this 'deal,' and how many of our rights were being used as bargaining chips?

The McCarthy bill, at the time, looked to be going nowhere. The general consensus among pro-gun Congressmen was that any gun bill offered by McCarthy was simply DOA.

After all, if there were such a thing as a single-issue Member of Congress, it would have to be McCarthy. Rep. McCarthy ran for office to ban guns; Hollywood made a movie about her efforts to ban guns; and she is currently

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The end result of the negotiations was that this small clique among the NRA leadership gave the bill the support it needed to pass.

But why was it necessary to pass the bill in such an underhanded fashion? If this is such a victory for the Second Amendment, why all the secrecy? Why was a deal forged with the anti-gun Democrat House leadership, keeping most pro-gun representatives in the dark? Why was the bill rammed through on the Suspension Calendar with no recorded vote with which to identify those who are against us?

For starters, it would be a hard sell indeed for the NRA leadership to explain to its members what they would gain by working with McCarthy. If this legislation had gone before the NRA membership for a vote, it would have been rejected. For that matter, if it went through the House in the regular fashion, with committee hearings and recorded votes, it would have been defeated.

Consider also what the bill is: *gun control!* The lead sentence in an *Associated Press* article accurately stated that, "The House [on June 13] passed what could become the first major federal gun control law in over a decade."

The bill's supporters can talk all they want to the contrary, but forcing the states to hand over to the federal government millions of records of Americans for the purpose of conducting a background check is certainly an expansion of gun control.

McCarthy to deny guns to law-abiding citizens

The McCarthy bill that passed will *dramatically* expand the dragnet that is currently used to disqualify law-abiding gun buyers. So much so, that hundreds of thousands of honest citizens who want to buy a gun will one day walk into a gun store and be shocked when they're told they're a prohibited purchaser, having been lumped into the same category as murderers and rapists.

This underscores the problems that have existed all along with the Brady Law. At the time it was passed, some



Senator Schumer is the one who is leading the charge in the Senate to pass the McCarthy bill, and he is "generously" offering military veterans the opportunity to clear their names, even though it's been his amendment that has prevented honest gun owners from getting their rights back under a similar procedure created in 1986!

people foolishly thought, "No big deal. I'm not a bad guy. This law won't affect me."

But what happens when good guys' names get thrown onto the bad guys' list? That is exactly what has happened, and no one should think that the attempts to expand the gun control noose are going to end with the McCarthy bill (HR 2640).

Speaking to the CNN audience on June 13, head of the Brady Campaign, Paul Helmke, stated that, "We're hopeful that now that the NRA has come around to our point of view in terms of strengthening the Brady background checks, that now we can take the next step after this bill passes [to impose additional gun control]."

Get it? The McCarthy bill is just a first step.

Military vets on the chopping block

So what does HR 2640 do? Well, as stated already, this is the most far-reaching gun ban in years. For the first time in history, this bill takes a giant step towards banning one-fourth of returning military veterans from ever owning a gun again.

In 2000, President Clinton added between 80,000 - 90,000 names of military veterans — who were suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) — into the NICS background check system. These were vets who were having nightmares; they had the shakes. So Clinton disqualified them from buying or owning guns.

For seven years, GOA has been arguing that what Clinton did was illegitimate. But if this McCarthy bill gets enacted into law, a future Hillary Clinton administration would actually have the law on her side to ban a quarter of all military veterans (that's the number of veterans who have Post Traumatic Stress) from owning guns.

Now, the supporters of the McCarthy bill claim that military veterans — who have been denied their Second Amendment rights — could get their rights restored. But this is a very nebulous promise.

Visit a shrink, lose your gun rights forever?

The reason is that Section 101(c)(1)(C) of the bill provides explicitly that a psychiatrist or psychologist diagnosis is enough to ban a person for ever owning a gun as long as it's predicated on a microscopic risk that a person could be a danger to himself or others.¹

How many psychiatrists are going to deny that a veteran suffering from PTS doesn't possess a *microscopic risk* that he could be a danger to himself or others?

And even if they can clear the psychiatrist hurdle, we're still looking at thousands of dollars for lawyers, court fees, etc. And then, when veterans have done everything they can possibly do to clear their names, there is still the Schumer amendment in federal law which prevents the BATFE from restoring the rights of individuals who are barred from purchasing firearms.

If that amendment is not repealed, then it doesn't matter if your state stops sending your name for inclusion in the FBI's NICS system ... you are still going to be a disqualified purchaser when you try to buy a gun.

So get the irony. Senator Schumer is the one who is leading the charge in the Senate to pass the McCarthy bill, and he is "generously" offering military veterans the opportunity to clear their names, even though it's been *his amendment* that has prevented honest gun owners from getting their rights back under a similar procedure created in 1986!

But there's still another irony. Before this bill, it was very debatable

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GOA in the Media

GOA representatives appeared in several hundred media outlets across the country (newspaper articles, radio talk shows and TV debates) in the two weeks following the Virginia Tech massacre this April. The pictures here are just a snapshot of some of the things Gun Owners of America was doing to defend the rights of gun owners in the public forum. Readers can see some of the TV debates for themselves by going to www.gunowners.org/svtb.htm on the GOA website.



GOA's Larry Pratt appeared on a wide variety of TV outlets, talking the offensive against gun control into both the English and Spanish-speaking communities. He challenged the need for more gun control on MSNBC (pictured above), CNN and CourtTV -- but continued the debate in Spanish, appearing on Univision. Pratt spent long hours in the weeks following the Virginia Tech murders, defending Second Amendment rights all across the country and advocating the need to have more citizens carrying concealed firearms.



GOA Director of Communications Erich Pratt (left) went head-to-head against the leader of the Brady Campaign on CNN with Anderson Cooper in April. Pratt also appeared on several talk radio stations, including the nationally-syndicated Michael Reagan show.



John Velleco pulled double-duty in April -- briefing Congressional offices on the dangers of expanding the Brady Law, but then appearing on MSNBC several times, as well as on C-Span's *Washington Journal* (pictured above).

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(in legal terms) whether the military vets with PTS should have been added into the NICS system ... and yet many of them were — even though there was *no* statutory authority to do so. Before this bill, there were provisions in the law to get one's name cleared, and yet Schumer made it impossible for these military vets to do so.

Now, the McCarthy bill (combined with federal regulations) makes it unmistakably clear that military vets with Post Traumatic Stress *should be added* as prohibited persons on the basis of a "diagnosis." Are these vets now going to find it any easier to get their names cleared (when the law says they should be on the list) if they were finding it difficult to do so before (when

the law said they shouldn't)?

Add to this the Schumer amendment (mentioned earlier). The McCarthy bill does nothing to repeal the Schumer amendment, which means that military veterans with PTS are going to find it impossible to get their rights restored!

The slippery slope of gun control

Do you see how Congress is slowly (and quietly) sweeping more and more innocent people into the same category as murderers and rapists? First, anti-gun politicians gain a toehold by getting innocuous sounding language into the federal code. Then they come back years later to twist those words in the most contorted way possible.

Consider the facts. In 1968, Congress laid out several criteria for banning Americans from owning guns — a person can't be a felon, a drug user, an illegal alien, etc. Well, one of the crite-

ria which will disqualify you from owning or buying a gun is if you are "adjudicated as a mental defective." Now, in 1968, that term referred to a person who was judged not guilty of a crime by reason of insanity.

Well, that was 1968. By 2000, President Bill Clinton had stretched that definition to mean a military veteran who has had a lawful authority (like a shrink) decree that a person has PTS. Can you see how politicians love to stretch the meaning of words in the law ... especially when it comes to banning guns?

After all, who would have thought when the original Brady law was passed in 1993, that it would be used to keep people with outstanding traffic tickets from buying guns;² or couples with marriage problems from buying guns;³ or military vets with nightmares from buying guns?⁴

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Rudy's Gun Control Agenda

by John Velleco

The 2007 version of Rudy Giuliani defends his past support of gun control as a necessary evil to fight crime in a big city.

When pressed about his views of the Second Amendment by Sean Hannity of Fox News, Giuliani attempted to tap dance around his gun control record without alienating the 290 million people who don't live in New York City.

The former mayor told Hannity that gun control was "appropriate" for the city, but that states and cities should be allowed to make those decisions locally.

"So," Hannity continued, "you would support the state's rights to choose on specific gun laws?"

"Yes, I mean, a place like New York that is densely populated, or maybe a place that is experiencing a serious crime problem, ... maybe you have one solution there and in another place, more rural, more suburban, other issues, you have a different set of rules."

Apparently, in Giuliani's America law-abiding citizens in large cities would not enjoy the same constitutional liberties as the rest of the country. Why? Are city dwellers not as trustworthy as country folks? Are metro-Americans not deserving of the right to self-protection?

Disarming citizens *because* they live in a high crime area is taking away the most effective means of self-defense from the people who need it most. Creating mandatory victims is no way to fight a crime problem.¹

If Giuliani's gun control agenda was really limited 'only' to big cities, that would be disturbing enough. But the record shows that the Mayor continually tried to export his gun control agenda to the rest of the nation.

The new Giuliani of state's rights simply does not square with the Mayor of the '90s.

In 1993, before even being sworn in as mayor, Giuliani met with then-President Clinton at the White House to discuss *national* gun registration. Giuliani

supported the Brady bill, which had recently passed, but argued that it didn't go far enough.

The President, largely crediting Giuliani for the idea, enthusiastically sent Attorney General Janet Reno off to develop a gun licensing and registration system.²

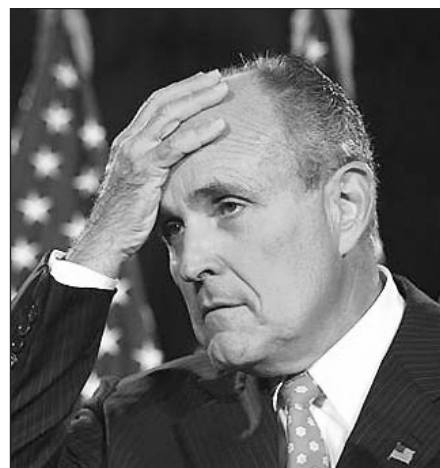
The Clinton-Giuliani scheme was slowed only by the Republican Revolution of 1994.

In May of 1994, as the battle over the ban on certain semi-automatic firearms reached its height, Giuliani threw his support behind the ban. On the eve of the final vote, he noted that so-called assault weapons "have no legitimate purpose."³

When the ban passed, Giuliani commented that, "This is an important step towards curtailing the indiscriminate proliferation of guns *across the nation*."⁴ [Emphasis added.]

When a lunatic attacked innocent civilians at the Empire State Building in 1997, Mayor Giuliani used the tragedy to again push for gun control beyond his city's limits.

"We need a federal law that bans all assault weapons, and if in fact you do



Republican presidential contender, Rudy Giuliani, is trying to distance himself from his gun control record.

trigger locks on all firearms, thus rendering the guns useless in the even of an emergency. Such a law would be enforced, said the Mayor, through "criminal penalties and the revocation of gun permits."⁶

If Giuliani had a federalist conversion, it did not occur in his first six years as mayor, for in 2000, he again took his gun control show on the road.

In becoming the first Republican mayor to launch a city lawsuit against gun makers, Giuliani complained that

"When the Republican-controlled Congress tried to repeal the gun ban, Giuliani made the trip to Washington to testify against the repeal effort."

need a handgun you should be subjected to at least the same restrictions — and really stronger ones — that exist for driving an automobile," the Mayor said.

"The United States Congress needs to pass uniform licensing for everyone carrying a gun."⁵

When the Mayor did focus on City gun laws, which already were among the most stringent in the country, his effort was only to further disarm the law-abiding.

In 1998, Giuliani pushed a proposal that would require gun owners to use

"less restrictive gun laws in other parts of the country" exacerbated the crime problem in New York City.⁷

Giuliani is not only a long-time supporter of gun control, but his support was convenient to leading anti-gun Democrats eager for the appearance of bipartisanship.

In the midst of the fight over the 1994 crime bill and semi-auto gun ban, Giuliani escorted President Clinton to Minnesota to stump for the bill. The *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* noted that,

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¹ Interestingly, when Giuliani addressed the conservative CPAC group in March of this year, he credited the decline in New York's crime rate, which was significant, not to gun control but to the implementation of certain policing strategies based on James Q. Wilson's *Broken Windows* theory. Though not without controversy, New York police officials took petty crime more seriously, based on the belief that petty criminals would eventually turn into more dangerous and violent criminals.

² *Washington Times*, December 8, 1993

³ *Newsday*, May 3, 1994

⁴ *Newsday*, May 6, 1994

⁵ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/rwg/html/97a/me970302.html>

⁶ Mayor Proposes a Law Requiring Trigger Locks on All Guns; *The New York Times*, May 19, 1998

⁷ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/rwg/html/2000a/weekly/wkly0626.html>



Gun Owners Foundation in the Courts

Gun Owners of America (GOA) and its foundation (GOF) are continuously involved in legal cases around the country, helping to defend the rights of gun owners. Here are three of our most recent, high-profile cases — one of which is before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Brady Campaign continuing attack against GOA. In November 2006, the Brady Campaign asked the Federal Election Commission to investigate GOA's practice of posting its candidate ratings on the Internet. The Brady Bunch is challenging GOA's right to do this under the infamous McCain-Feingold Incumbent Protection Act.

While this case is pending, GOF has filed an *amicus* (friend of the court) brief before the U.S. Supreme Court in a similar case — the outcome of which will directly impact upon the Brady's

case against GOA. Should the Supreme Court rule in favor of GOA's position, it is expected that the FEC will dismiss the Brady's complaint against GOA.

GOF fighting the Lautenberg gun ban. Gun Owners Foundation is fighting the Lautenberg misdemeanor gun ban in the federal courts. The case stems from the state of Wyoming, which allows partial expungement of these Lautenberg misdemeanors (offenses which include pushing, shoving or yelling in the home) for the purpose of buying a firearm or getting a concealed carry permit.

The federal district court of Wyoming initially ruled against GOF's position, stating that the Wyoming law violated federal law. The court overruled a Supreme Court case (*Caron v. United States*) which says that states are free to expunge records in any manner

they choose — as long as the conviction occurred in the same state. Wyoming has given notice that they will appeal this ruling, so GOF will seek to file another friend of the court brief on behalf of the Cowboy State.

GOF defending border agents against gun charge. GOF has filed an *amicus* brief on behalf of unjustly convicted Border Patrol agents, Ignacio Ramos and Jose Alonso Compean. GOF got involved because these agents received 10-year sentences which derived from "firing a gun during the commission of a crime." GOF attorneys discovered that this is not a crime under federal law — it can only be used as a sentencing enhancement. If the appeals court agrees to consider this point, which was not raised during the trial, they will almost certainly set the agents free. ■

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Isn't a lifetime gun ban for ADD a bit extreme?

So if you thought the Brady Law would never affect you because you're a "good guy," then think again. Military vets are in trouble, and so are your kids who are battling Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Everything that has been mentioned above regarding military veterans, could also apply to these kids.

Do you have a child in the IDEA program — a.k.a., Individuals with Disability Education Act — who has been diagnosed with ADD and thought to be susceptible to playground fights? Guess what? That child can be banned for life from ever owning a gun as an adult. The key to understanding this new gun ban expansion centers on a shrink's determination that a person is a risk to himself or others.

You see, legislators claim they want to specifically prevent a future Seung-Hui Cho from ever buying a gun and shooting up a school. And since Cho had been deemed as a potential danger to himself or others, that has become the new standard for banning guns.

But realize what this does. In the

name of stopping an infinitesimal fraction of potential bad apples from owning firearms, legislators are expanding the dragnet to sweep *all kinds* of good guys into a permanent ban. It also ignores the fact that bad guys get illegal guns *all the time*, despite the gun laws!

So back to your kid who might have ADD. The BATFE, in an open letter (dated May 9, 2007), said the diagnosis that a person is a potential risk doesn't have to be based on the fact that the person poses a "substantial" risk. It just has to be "any" risk.

Just any risk, no matter how slight to the other kids on the playground, is all that is needed to qualify the kid on Ritalin — or a vet suffering from PTSD, or a husband (going through a divorce) who's been ordered to go through an anger management program, etc. — for a *lifetime* gun ban.

This is the slippery slope that gun control poses. And this is the reason HR 2640 must be defeated. Even as we debate this bill, the Frank Lautenbergs in Congress are trying to expand the NICS system with the names of people who are on a so-called "government watch list" (S. 1237).

While this "government watch list" supposedly applies to suspected terrorists, the fact is that government bureaucrats can add ANY gun owner's name

to this list without due process, without any hearing, or trial by jury, etc. That's where the background check system is headed ... if we don't rise up together and cut off the monster's head right now. ■

Mike Hammond also contributed to this article.

¹ Section 101(c)(1)(C) of HR 2640 makes it explicitly clear that the diagnosis from a psychologist or psychiatrist is enough to ban a person from owning a gun. But to fully grasp this, one has to look at Section 101, while also going to federal regulations via Section 3 of the bill. Please go to the URL below for more information.

² As a government report at the URL below documents, the Brady law has been used to illegitimately deny firearms to people who have outstanding traffic tickets.

³ Because of the Lautenberg gun ban, couples with marriage problems or parents who have used corporal punishment to discipline their children have been prohibited from owning guns for life. See the URL below.

⁴ Several articles listed at the URL below have pointed to the fact that military vets with PTSD have been added to the NICS system.

GOA has built a special section on its website to inform gun owners of the dangers in McCarthy's Brady expansion bill. Please go to www.gunowners.org/netb.htm to learn what are the specifics of the bill, who are its main supporters, what are answers to claims made by proponents of the bill, who faces the greatest risk of being disqualified for buying a gun, and more.

Second Amendment Used to Dump Gun Law

by Larry Pratt

Judge Laurence H. Silberman has written a landmark legal decision using the Second Amendment to overturn the DC gun ban. The case is known as *Parker v. District of Columbia*.

Overturning the gun ban in our nation's capital will have the effect of returning the law to where it was before 1976 (when guns were available, but still highly restricted). The pre-1976 statute will once again reign in D.C. if one of two things happen — either the District fails to appeal the *Parker* decision or the Supreme Court upholds it. Under either scenario, people in D.C. will once again be able to buy a handgun and keep it in their homes.

Judge Silberman's decision in March provides a platform for the next challenge to other anti-gun laws in the District. DC officials are hardly likely to want to clean up the rest of their anti-gun, anti-self defense mess that is still on the books following the *Parker* decision. Their priorities can be clearly seen by contrasting their reaction to two events.

The elitists in DC are outraged by the *Parker* decision and are accusing the justices of judicial activism. (When-



DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton told *The Washington Post* in 2002 that the District should pull out all the stops to “preserve our valuable handgun ban law” — a statement which ignores the fact that the only people who find it truly “valuable” are the criminals.

ever courts don't follow the law and decide in a case in their favor, however, elitists are often quick to claim that the Constitution is a “living document” and judges should be free to interpret it in any way that advances their view of a better society.)

Those same DC officials were totally unconcerned, however, when plaintiff Shelly Parker was being attacked in her home. She wanted to sue the District to get rid of the handgun ban because drug dealers in her neighborhood had tried to break into her home. When they did,

one of them shouted: “I will kill you! And I live on this block, too.” Perhaps DC officials are afraid that the thug might have been shot if Ms. Parker had a gun?

It seems more than our elite rulers can understand. They have 24/7 police protection — armed police protection. They experience no crime problem. So, why should the rest of us need a gun? Since the DC officials are not likely to “get it” regarding the problem the rest of us have with crime, Congress needs to step up to the plate and exercise its constitutional responsibility.

Congress should get rid of the pre-ban gun control laws in DC and legislate a concealed carry law similar to the one in neighboring Virginia. There should be no permit required at all, as is the case now in Vermont and Alaska, but at least a fairly workable law such as Virginia's would be a big step forward.

If DC residents could legally carry concealed firearms (the way crooks are already doing illegally), watch for crime to plummet. The only people who would really suffer from getting rid of the rest of DC's gun laws would be the crooks. ■

Rudy's Gun Control Agenda

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“Clinton seemed especially proud that New York's Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, as well as Philadelphia's Democratic Mayor Edward Rendell, agreed to accompany him on his trip.”⁸

New York Senator Chuck Schumer also gleefully accepted Giuliani's support of the semi-auto ban. According to a *Newsday* article, Schumer hoped Giuliani would “sway some skittish Republicans.”⁹

The following year, when the Republican-controlled Congress tried to repeal the gun ban, Giuliani made the trip to Washington to testify against the repeal effort.

So, if the new Rudy Giuliani in fact supports state's rights in the area of gun control, it is a dramatic shift from the policies he has been advocating for over a decade.

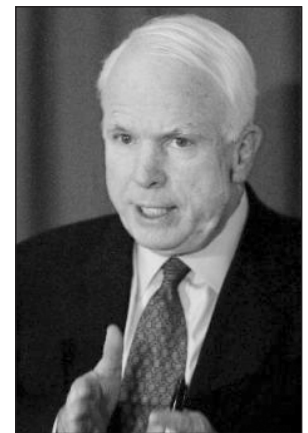
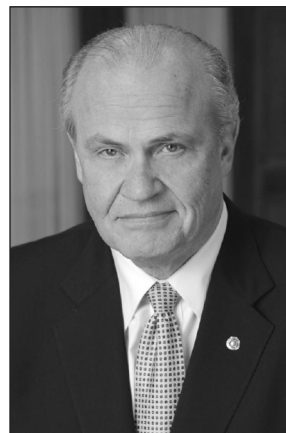
This flirtation with federalism is merely a façade, however, for in the recent interview with Sean Hannity, Giuliani assured gun owners that he supports only gun control laws that are “reasonable and sensible.” He then went on to defend his support of the Brady bill and the semi-auto ban, which are neither.¹⁰ ■

⁸ *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, August 13, 1994

⁹ Rudy used by Dems to push gun control; *Newsday* 5/3/1994

¹⁰ *Hannity and Colmes*, February 5, 2007

Where do the Candidates Stand on Gun Rights?



Go to GOA's website at www.gunowners.org/pres08 to find out where presidential contenders — both Republican and Democrat — stand on Second Amendment rights.

VA Tech: Refusing to Learn the Lesson

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have jeopardized his graduate career.

Now Rep. McCarthy has proposed more gun control as an answer to the gun ban that failed at Virginia Tech. McCarthy wants to empower the U.S. Attorney General to compel the states (who will be paid a billion dollars) to submit all relevant information about individuals that might disqualify them from buying a gun.

The most obvious objection to this proposal is that keeping crooks from buying guns at stores does not keep crooks from getting guns. There are no gun stores in Washington, DC, yet crooks get guns there quite easily. The same is true (with few exceptions) in England, an island with a gun ban. No stores there either, but lots of illegal guns. And lots of crime — more than in the U.S. according to a UN study of the 17 most industrialized nations.

Rep. McCarthy's bill would launch a massive data mining of all Americans, not just gun owners. In order to make sure that illegal aliens are not getting guns, the "relevant" information required by the bill will have to include state tax returns, education records, and library usage records. And don't forget health records. After all, those getting treated for free without insurance at emergency rooms might often be illegal aliens.

So, for Rep. McCarthy, it is okay to build a data base from state records on all Americans, not just those who might sometime buy a gun. But she has another message for the Bush administration's probing of personal records and listening in on calls of suspected terrorists. In that case, privacy is paramount. Frankly, Rep. McCarthy is a hypocrite.

But let us not forget that even if McCarthy succeeds in her endeavor — and she might because the NRA has been supporting her bill (H.R. 297) — it will not keep guns from getting into the hands of criminals. She may keep criminals from buying guns at stores, but certainly criminals will get their guns elsewhere. There are no gun stores in Washington, D.C., but that has not kept criminals from getting all the

guns they want.

I know that McCarthy will answer that last point by blaming the ease of getting guns in Virginia for the staggering murder rate in Washington, D.C. What she has never explained is why Washington has had a murder rate of 35 per 100,000 in 2004, whereas the urban county of Fairfax (across the Potomac River with virtually twice the popula-

tion of Washington) had at the same time a murder rate of less than one per 100,000.

Kind of interesting, isn't it. The guns seem to behave themselves better where they're legal and there are a lot of them around. Since guns themselves aren't the problem, we should stop impeding honest citizens so that Good Samaritans can do their job. ■

National Park Service Refuses to Overturn Gun Ban



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
W46 (2465)

JAN 31 2007

Mr. Philip Van Cleave, President
Virginia Citizens Defense League
P.O. Box 513
Newington, VA 22122

Dear Mr. Van Cleave,

Thank you for your interest in our regulation that manages the possession of weapons when in a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). I understand you feel it's important for personal protection. However, the NPS finds the current regulation, 36 CFR 2.4, to be very effective for these primary reasons:

- **Parks are safe places.** While some crime does occur on NPS managed lands, statistics show that such crime levels are far lower than in other similarly-situated communities, especially when considering that the National Park System has approximately 280 million visits each year.
- **"Right to carry" laws do not reduce crime.** In fact, armed citizens attempting to assist rangers create volatile situations, often putting the private citizen or ranger's life in jeopardy.
- **Firearms already may be transported in a vehicle through any park area.** They need to be made inoperable or stored in such a manner as to prevent their ready use. The firearms regulation is designed to ensure public safety and provide maximum protection of wildlife resources by limiting the opportunity for unauthorized use of weapons, while still providing reasonable regulatory relief for persons living within, traveling through, or conducting activities on lands adjacent to park areas.
- **"Right to carry" laws do not protect visitors from wildlife.** Most weapons carried for protection from wildlife are not adequate for that purpose. Untrained individuals attempting to protect themselves from dangerous animals often exacerbate the situation.

Based on these reasons, the NPS does not support any change in the current regulation (36 CFR 2.4) which prohibits possessing, carrying, or using a weapon in virtually all units of the NPS. Therefore we deny your petition for rulemaking. If you have further questions in regard to this issue, please contact Jerry Case, Chief Regulations and Special Park Uses, at 202-208-4206.

Sincerely,

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

In defending a National Parks gun ban, a bureaucrat in the Interior Department took several shots at gun owners this past January. Her letter, which looks like it could have borrowed talking points from the Brady Campaign, not only claims that right to carry laws have failed to reduce crime, it states that armed citizens put others at greater risk.



VA Tech: Refusing to Learn the Lesson

by Larry Pratt

When an evil man (let us not use his name) gunned down 32 unarmed victims at Virginia Tech, gun control advocates began clamoring within hours for more gun control. But how more gun control would have helped is not intuitively obvious,

especially since the campus was already supposed to be a gun free zone. What more gun control can you have than a total ban such as the one in force at Virginia's public university campuses (and probably most, if not all of the private ones, too)?

The lesson learned from the Virginia Tech massacre should have been that similar murder sprees in the last ten years had been cut short — by armed citizens. One involved a high school principal in Mississippi. Another, five years ago, involved two students at a Virginia law school. In both cases, the good guys ran off campus (the gun free zones) to get guns from their vehicles and run back to confront and subdue the killer.

Episodes like these should have taught us that our country needs to make it easier for Good Samaritans to save lives. Instead, Virginia Tech continued its gun ban on campus. The assumption is that such rules and laws prevent crime. The mistake is to assume that laws prevent criminals from committing their deeds. Laws spell out what will be (or should be) the consequences for breaking the law. Laws do not deter criminals.

Average people may be deterred by laws, but criminals, by definition, are not. We must seek legislation that will work to empower people, not disarm them. We must understand that gun free zones are in reality criminal safe zones.

There is a tendency to think that in our modern society we should leave defense of individuals to trained first responders. I would agree, but only if we can all agree who the first responders really are. They are the victims, who are always present at the scene of a crime. There were victims at Virginia Tech who did seek to foil the murderer, but they died, in large part, because they were unarmed.

On the other hand, there were lots of cops on campus when the massacre began because they were investigating the

first two murders that had been committed over two hours earlier. That presence did the next 30 victims no good. The cops responded immediately when shots were heard as the massacre began. But all they could do to help was bring body bags and note pads. They were clearly not first responders, and it is unfair to call them that.

I have debated Rep. Carolyn McCarthy about this issue. She was horrified to hear the proposal that individuals with permits to carry concealed firearms should not be barred from doing so on campuses. She threw up the bromide about drunken frat parties and armed students not mixing together.

What McCarthy was saying was merely the collegiate version of the standard objection to concealed carry of firearms permitted elsewhere in society. Every time those laws have been debated we have been warned that bars will resemble the Wild West (at least as it is depicted in the movies) and that road rage will turn roads red from running gun battles. But it never happens.

Studies of those with concealed carry permits have found that they are the folks in the population with the lowest crime rates of all — even lower than the cops. They are precisely the ones who we should want on campus. (In Virginia and most states, they need to be at least 21 years old.)

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The Virginia Tech murderer did not choose to vent his criminal hatred in the adjacent town of Blacksburg for a simple reason — the shooter might have been gunned down by an armed citizen. Instead, he chose to murder as many as possible where he would be as safe as he could be for as long as possible — the campus.

A student wrote a letter to the editor of a local paper explaining that he has a concealed carry permit. He had chosen not to carry the gun on campus because he did not want to get caught and thus jeopardize his graduate career. Since the shooting, he said that he had been rethinking his decision. After all, if he had been killed in the massacre, that would

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John Velleco
Director of Federal Affairs

GUN OWNERS OF AMERICA
8001 Forbes Place, Suite 102
Springfield, Virginia 22151
703-321-8585

Web Site: <http://www.gunowners.org>

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