

Defending the Right to Arms

Despite the multitude of explicitly political messages sent in the past few months, there's a secret behind the curtain. We don't think focusing on politics is a great use of time. It's necessary, especially when there's a number of political attacks explicitly targeting our rights, but it is not high-value time spent.

Don't let that discourage you from participating in the political process. It's necessary. Our relentless emails, calls, and testimony were essential to minimizing the damage done this year, and we'll need to mobilize again next year, or if the governor calls a special session, or if the federal government starts aggressively pushing some extreme gun control agenda.

The issue with focusing on politics is that politics, by its nature, is a polluted morass. Occasionally, something good for us may come out of Santa Fe or Washington, but it's the exception, not the rule. Even if we poured millions of dollars into lobbying, campaign contributions, or outright buying lawmakers, we'd be shoveling additional fuel into a burn pit, the smoke from which is already choking us all to death. Besides, that kind of money would be much better spent concretely improving our club, our state, or our country.

Where, then, is effort more intelligently spent? Influencing culture.

Culture is the drinkable fresh water upstream of the salty ocean of politics. No realistic amount of fresh water introduced will desalinate the ocean and drinking only seawater will kill in relatively short order. Fresh water can be rendered undrinkable by mixing with seawater, in much the same way we see politics infiltrating and poisoning every aspect of our culture. To get rid of all the excess salt taken in by drinking seawater, one has to urinate more water than one drinks. Eventually, a person drinking seawater dies of dehydration even as they become thirstier. Likewise, omnipresent political division will poison culture until the spirit of a nation withers and dies. We must support our culture, advocate for our culture, and protect our culture.

There are, presently, two distinct issues confronting us with our political activity to defend and assert our rights. First, we are not well coordinated, both as advocates on political issues and insofar as we fail to align our lesser political and greater extra-political activities, that is, all other social and human activities apart from politics. Second, we suffer from a lack of unity in spirit, which is indispensable to people surrounded on all sides by enemies who will try to take advantage of any internal dissension. We will address these both, and will also make the argument throughout for aggressive and unified action on our rights, specifically influenced by the fact that an armed people are the only type who can truly claim and maintain their freedom.

Part I: With an Understanding of Recent History

In the 1990s, gun rights activism felt like a losing battle. There was a federal assault weapons ban, where every "evil feature" and "shoulder thing that goes up" restricted our ability to own long guns. Machine guns had recently had their market capped, presumably forever. Many states simply didn't allow carry of guns in public at all, much less a concealed weapon, and even where you could get a permit, it was a hellish process. The media, backed up by big Brady-type money, was pushing a relentless culture war against gun ownership and winning. Politicians and lobbying organizations that were quick to trumpet their gun rights positions were just as quick to compromise. As we all know, "compromise" on guns has its own distinct meaning, well divorced from the normal definition - it means that anti-rights zealots demand everything and get some of it, while we get nothing except a warning that they'll come after the rest next time. The ATF could entrap a poor man into cutting a shotgun barrel half an inch too short, and punish him by having shot dead his dog, his son, and his wife, the last because she was armed with an infant, and nobody would care. The ATF could also, in the wake of that calamity, justify its existence by botching an uncaringly misinformed and politically motivated raid on an FFL so badly that the FBI would redeem that botch by once again killing women and children, with the wrinkle that this time they were burned alive on national television, and, again, no one seemed to care. The government was coming for our guns and we all knew it, so what was the point? Hunker down, be defensive, lose your guns in that "boating accident", and definitely don't engage in public advocacy for gun rights, you'll only paint a target on your back.

But things began to change. State organizations began to make legal and legislative gains. Lawsuits were filed on the state and federal level and started to be won. The internet made coordinating between gun rights activists and regular gun owners simpler. As a result, gun culture started to become less insular, less defensive, more open, and more assertive about our rights. Elected officials started hearing from an increasingly large number of voters who were tired of having their rights stripped away and being told over and over in the media that they were bad people because some stranger they had never met and had nothing to do with had done something wrong. We saw this year how effective that type of pressure is.

When the federal assault weapons ban sunset in 2004 (because the government couldn't show that it had done a thing to reduce crime, despite their best efforts to show just that), huge numbers of Americans ran out to buy the guns we had been told we couldn't have for a decade, and millions of people very quickly discovered that those guns were great. The AR, once a niche for firearms connoisseurs, became the most common type of rifle in the country in short order. In 2008, the Supreme Court put gun controllers on notice that yes, the Second Amendment means what it says. Armed with *Heller*, gun rights activists began to sue states and local jurisdictions and win. Concealed carry became increasingly normal, with laws liberalizing around the country, [as you can see here](#). As public carry of guns became more common, the histrionic shrieking that people carrying guns in public would lead to Wild West shootouts over

parking spaces became an obvious lie and the type of person who frets that "if we pass these laws I might be next to someone carrying a gun in the supermarket" became increasingly concentrated in certain areas of the country. The difference in safety between gun-friendly and gun-hostile jurisdictions became increasingly obvious - the Wild West would be a huge step up in safety for residents of Detroit or Baltimore.

As this was happening, and starting around Hurricane Katrina, the government started and has since kept demonstrating to all of us that when bad things were happening and Americans were in danger, we probably couldn't count on the state or the federal government to actually help. Each time law enforcement stood by and let criminals burn, loot, and murder, that created new gun owners. There aren't many better motivators for procuring and holding on to the tools to take care of ourselves than being left to twist in the wind despite all our tax dollars at work.

Then last year we got *Bruen*. Once again, the Second Amendment means what it says, and this time the court really means it, so stop trying to dodge. Gun controllers are frothing over the matter - how dare the right to be armed not be treated in a second-class manner! Unfortunately for them, the horse has fled the barn and they haven't realized that gun control is a dead letter. The idea was already on life support with the expansion of consumer-grade milling machinery, and now we have additive manufacturing (3D printing) technology. At the time of writing, there are rebels against Myanmar's military junta conducting operations armed with printed FGC-9s (yes, that's the "F#\$k Gun Control - 9mm" - they take Glock mags, which you can print bodies and followers for for about a dollar each, then it's just add a spring). The internet exists, which makes controlling information on how to print an FGC-9 yourself, or take sheet metal and make a fully automatic Luty submachine gun for about 150 bucks in an afternoon, or turn out AR lower receivers like it's going out of style impossible.

We've also seen authoritarianism rear its head around the world again. Where we thought we had slain the idea with the fall of the Soviet Union, its sympathizers never went away. We saw with COVID what governments around the world, including so-called liberal democracies, were willing to do to their people. In China, where they make no pretenses about being authoritarians, they welded people into their apartments to starve. In Australia, people were sent to quarantine camps. In Canada, noncompliance would cost people millions. In the UK, people were arrested for spreading "misinformation" that the government would later admit to be true. In the US, national authorities had to tread more lightly, despite their publicly professed desires to wield similarly naked exercises of power. It's become increasingly obvious that there exists a transnational elite that want to create a world where they are in charge and the rest of humanity are serfs - and this isn't a left wing/right wing issue, it's those of us who want to be left alone to live free lives against those who would control the lives, money, living situations, and even our thoughts of everyone else. They're willing to admit it. It's openly available as they take private jets to conferences in Davos or Fiji or some other resort location, where private security partners with local police seconded to protect these events, then stream their talks and working groups on the internet for the world to

see. One of the major obstacles to their plans is the pesky notion that people can disagree with this new, corporatist, utopian future.

In countries where the populace is disarmed, handling disagreement is simple - there is no fear of the governed by their rulers. It's often misattributed to Jefferson, but appears to have been said in 1914 in a series of debates on socialism that, "where the people fear the government you have tyranny; where the government fears the people you have liberty." Make no mistake, those who would have us fear the government are terrified that we are armed, because in our place they would use those arms to forcibly deprive us of rights and sweep our corpses into the dustbin of history. They cannot understand the ability to be armed and peaceful, because their impulse is to control by force.

Gun culture has recognized this. The Firearms Policy Coalition sells [this shirt](#) which neatly sums up the change in attitude. Instead of joking about boating accidents in a wink-wink manner, the real answer's simple. "I didn't lose a thing, I'm not giving up my liberty, come and get the guns if you want them that badly." Because of this shift, the speed at which gun grabbers have to boil the frog has slowed down significantly, and, increasingly, frogs are jumping out of pots. These attacks on the right to arms are part of a larger and intentional degradation of the American spirit and a world where we can create and enjoy maximum human freedom. The rats gnawing at the base of the tree of liberty are terrified that the people they seek to rule are able to, as a matter of simple fact, make them stop at any moment - not ask, *make*, and refresh the tree with these would-be tyrants' blood, its natural manure. That one's correctly attributable to Jefferson.

Part II: Because the Second Amendment is Common Sense Gun Control

Authoritarianism appears to be the natural state of human society above the tribal level - rulers dictate, and everyone else can only listen. Rule by, of, and for the people is the exception in history, and one that endures only as long as we struggle to preserve it in much the same way we repair roads and bridges against the entropic forces of nature. Much like Camelot and the Knights of the Round Table, the center cannot hold without sacrifice and real effort expended to preserve it, and cannot maintain itself without the spirit carrying it forward - for Arthur, for the Roman Republic, and, unless we're careful, history will record that for us the first death was spiritual, not physical.

The first and most critically important thing to recognize about our rights is that they were not created out of whole cloth at the founding of our nation. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights instead recognize and protect preexisting natural rights, available to any people with the will to secure them for themselves and their children against the impulses of those would rule instead of govern. Jefferson wrote that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are

created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." A sentiment with which we wholeheartedly agree, and one often trotted out to advance whatever the politicians of the day favor. We submit to you that there is a reason we much less frequently hear the very next line, "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The government should exist to secure the rights that we have, not to rule us. Our rights don't come from governments or documents.

Those rights enshrined are self-sustaining, with the right to arms providing the mechanism by which, "whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." The founders didn't rely on their arguments alone to throw off King George's yoke, they relied on force of arms, and, when they had succeeded in their time, they made sure to secure that right firmly for us. Those who oppose the right to arms would have us believe that the right protects hunting for food, plinking at cans, or some sporting purpose. At their most extreme they argue the right is not actually ours at all, but instead protects the ability of the state to create a state militia. We doubt that having just defeated the most powerful military force in the world with self-armed citizen volunteers, our forefathers then strove to turn around and deprive that citizenry of arms. We strongly rebuke a limited interpretation of the right to arms and forthrightly declare that the primary purpose of the right, as recognized by the Second Amendment, is to protect by force all other rights of the people from the advances of tyrants. Hunting, recreation, and whatever other purposes for owning arms one can think of are ancillary to that primary purpose of defense, both of self and of the people and the nation as a whole, against the criminal who would victimize the individual and the despot who would yoke the people.

History vindicates the keeping of arms for defense against a governmental leviathan and its minions. Gun control isn't about guns, it's about control. When a government owns its people, the people then become mere assets or liabilities on a balance sheet kept by some bureaucrat. Managers eliminate liabilities, so, naturally, the worst atrocities in history have been committed by governments against their own people. Tens of millions purposefully starved, gassed to death, or made to dig a ditch before being lined up in front of it and shot in the back of the head. So many corpses they needed bulldozers to push the dead into piles or into mass graves like a human waterfall. In every modern genocide or democide, their own governments preceded the killing with disarming the populace. The Turks disarmed the Armenians, then turned loose criminal gangs to commit the Armenian genocide. The Nazis disarmed the Jews prior to the Holocaust. The Ukrainian peasantry was disarmed before the Holodomor. Soviet and Communist Chinese societies were systematically disarmed, then went after "Kulaks" and "landlords" in the millions. The Khmer Rouge overthrew a weak government to claim a barely armed and war-weary population, then killed almost

everyone with an education, who spoke a foreign language, or who lived in a city. The Pakistani government carried out a military pacification, including rounding up arms, in Bangladesh before killing millions of Bengalis. In Rwanda, having virtually no arms in civilian hands, the inventiveness of human cruelty saw half a million hacked to death with *machetes* in just over three months.

That's why we have to win.

That's why the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed - because every bite, every nibble, every morsel eroded away is one step closer to the end of our experiment in citizen governance. And, because the founders knew the crimes governments could commit against their own people, they put a "break glass in case of emergency" into the Bill of Rights. That was not an accident - only by a pledge to amend into the Constitution the Bill of Rights was ratification achieved! It's incredibly simple, and while in politics we may have to say one thing at present to find common ground and appeal in a suitably comprehensible way to those vulnerable to the lies of our opponents, in culture we should have no such reservations. Don't back down if the topic comes up - the Second Amendment is for our defense against the government. It's the easy and obvious truth.

Speaking of truth, yes, ARs are weapons of war, and the right to arms protects weapons of war - if it comes down to it we'll hardly miss the select fire or will take them to get a third hole drilled *en masse*. Proponents of gun control will try to intimidate a listener or make the argument seem insane - after all, you can't fight an F-15 with an AR-15! Of course, this conveniently ignores the fact that we just lost a series of wars where the most advanced and overmatching military coalition in history was defeated, twice over, by a force it outnumbered at least ten to one in both instances, a force equipped only with poorly maintained small arms, high school chemistry, and Radio-Shack-level electronics. At the final buzzer, we gave away tens of billions in military equipment as part of what amounted to a negotiated surrender in the war on terror. We've all but admitted defeat in the war on drugs, capitulating to drugs. It's estimated that this year the federal government will spend 1.5 *trillion* dollars defending its ground in the war on poverty, while real wages have been stagnant for years and over a million New Mexicans are on some form of welfare. It's hard to believe a war on guns would go much better for the government! Say so, and have the courage of your convictions.

"If ye love wealth" Sam Adams said, "better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen." Servility does not befit the American spirit. The right to be armed guarantees that there is a limit to what a government can do without the consent of the governed.

Rights come with responsibilities - you may have heard at some point that the right to arms comes with the attendant responsibility to be safe with guns or law abiding or to learn to use them capably. That's all dross. To live up to the right to arms, we are

responsible for defending all our rights, with the soapbox, with the ballot box, with the jury box, and, at the ultimate, with the cartridge box. Only an armed people can truly be free, for all others are subject to whatever whim occurs to their rulers - those people can advocate, and protest, and vote, and sue, but if denied in those, have exhausted their remedies, and must suffer whatever cruelties a tyrant designs or die hoping for a rescue by an armed, benevolent, and free people who can stomach the plight of their fellow man no more.

Part III: In Unison With Our Allies

We promised at the outset that we would address two distinct issues confronting us with our political activity to defend and assert our rights, with the first being that we are not well coordinated, both as advocates on political issues and insofar as we fail to align our lesser political and greater extra-political activities.

An important thing to understand at the outset is that our opponents are not those who repeat the lines fed to them in support of gun control - those people need to be informed and educated. These may be our family members, our friends, and our coworkers. They are not our enemies, and we should have as a primary goal bringing as many of them around to our side as possible! For the misinformed, the old saw still cuts that we will catch more flies with honey than vinegar. Our true opponents are those who understand that the right to arms defends all other human rights, and attack human rights out of a desire for power.

We see in our opponents a great deal of coordination - their local mouthpieces loyally regurgitate talking points shilled and disseminated by their national allies and mass media. Great amounts of money are mustered to bring these people together, form them into coalitions, buy airtime on television to promote their view of the world, and turn out masses of misled youth to demand in the streets that the government confiscate all guns, with no concept of what horrific violence that would entail. On our side of the issue, organizations exist, but we are hardly marching off the same sheet of music, much less ensuring that we don't accidentally undercut each other procedurally as we saw in the legislative session several times. The channels of communication so baked in for our opponents to collectively scheme are siloed for us. The obvious question is why this might be, and we think the answer is apparent - our opponents are largely social collectivists, whereas we are largely individualists. By nature, many of us would be content for the government to simply leave us alone to live our lives, whereas for our opponents a powerful state to take care of them in many aspects of life is a feature, not a bug. This, again, is not a left wing/right wing issue. It is those who argue society is more important than the individual against those who believe in the individual over society.

Despite our inherent inclinations, we need to organize. We intend to, first, create a committee on legislative issues within the club and then, from there, begin coordinating

with our allies in the state in anticipation of next year and the year after. If anyone believes our opponents will take their limited success this year lying down or take it as a sign to reverse course, they need to disabuse themselves of that notion. We have momentum, and the broader culture around gun rights has shifted significantly - as such, we need to seize the initiative and act in defense of our rights. Anyone who would dodge the responsibility of preserving the right, while relying on others to carry water for them, should think twice. This is not the 1990s where we can bury our heads in the sand and hope the wave washes over us, and if anyone intends to, we find that to be a coward's option - one we can empathize with, but not a cowardice we can support. Ben Franklin wrote, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." Those who wish to claim victory after the battle has already been won are difficult to describe in less harsh terms. We need to stand up together for our rights!

Any difference in expression of our convictions in political and cultural conversation only exists until we are coordinated and every voice can honestly speak. Without coordination, the true but lone voice is easily dismissed as extreme, radical, or unrepresentative. When the truth comes as a chorus, it is undeniable and irresistible.

Beyond coordination, we must align our political and extra-political, that is, all social and human activities apart from politics. Our goal should be to generate the conditions by which we can be honest in the defense of our rights. This starts with each of us individually refusing to dissemble in everyday life - when some misinformed but well-intentioned person starts arguing for "common sense gun control" at a dinner party, don't be silent about your viewpoints for fear of ruining the evening or being seen as less than good-natured. Push back publicly against anti-rights positions. Our opponents are so reliant on misrepresentations, fuzzy feel-good talking points, and outright lies and are so used to our defenders being easily browbeaten that a simple rebuttal is stunning to them, and equally effective on an audience used to our side rolling over. Don't expect it to stick with the gun control advocates - if defeated today they will slink away and return with identical arguments tomorrow as if the debate never occurred. The purpose of public debate is not to convince your opponent, but to convince the undecided audience. Be fearlessly honest!

Beyond advocacy, the things we support must further our beliefs and our political aims. The club has existed for decades as primarily a gathering point for the exercise of our rights. Bring your neighbors, your families, your friends as guests. Get them shooting, have a good time, tell them why our right to arms is important. The legislative issues committee will also look into how the club itself can advocate in our state more broadly for our rights. Conduct yourself as befits a free person, with the attendant disdain for authoritarianism that a condition of freedom naturally implies. If your rights are important to you, if you claim you would take up arms to resist tyranny, but you won't sacrifice time, send an email, or back up your beliefs with money now, we encourage you to examine whether or not you are comforting your ego by writing a check with your mouth you believe you'll never have to cover with another part of your body. It's not as if there aren't plenty of national organizations highly representative of where gun culture

is today that are happy to take our money and actually use it to fight for our rights. Regardless of the organizations you choose to support, you can't expect to just send a check off or enter your credit card information and hope someone else will do the work, and we encourage you to be chary of anyone who claims that's all you need to do as long as your money goes to them. If we're giving money to an organization, we should also demand accountability in the use of that money to defend the right to arms.

Our opponents want us to feel alone and ashamed - if we believe we're part of a tiny minority that exists outside of polite society we're much more likely to keep our opinions to ourselves. This is why there's a relentless cultural push to portray gun owners as being outside the mainstream, and why some try to desperately hide anything that shows gun owners as regular, normal Americans. Reality couldn't be further from that portrayal. There are millions of us, parents, spouses, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. We aren't alone in our communities nor in our state. Everyone who owns a gun, every FFL, and every shooting club, every civil rights organizations like NMSSA and NRA-ILA, are people we need to get in sync with. We must and will reach out to these people and these organizations and develop a plan together to advance the right to arms. We will also reach out to and educate legislators who, while in our corner on the issue ideologically, don't have the time to deeply research and become experts on gun rights issues. Actions like this will need to be taken together. Already this year, we amazed the legislature with the sheer number of people willing to stand up for the right to arms. We're eagerly awaiting the reaction when we organize.

Part IV: By Refusing the “But”

We promised that secondly, we would address a lack of unity in spirit, and here we come to the Fudd. For anyone unfamiliar with the term, please [enjoy this presentation before continuing](#). The reason the Fudd is so dangerous is perfectly encapsulated by one of his primary taglines, "I support the Second Amendment, but...". We see this not only among Fudds but among our actual opponents, where they'll claim to be gun owners as if taking on some sinful burden immediately before arguing for more gun control! This tactic is designed to make the anti-rights argument or proposed measure seem reasonable and widely supported when in fact the person claiming to be a gun owner either does not own anything resembling an actually useful gun for the core purpose of the right to arms, owns one gun and keeps it locked in a cabinet, never to be used, doesn't own a gun and is simply lying, or, most dangerously, is one of our true opponents who feels they are entitled to arms but we are not.

The key to refusing the “but” is often to educate the misinformed. When we come to people who are our friends, neighbors, relatives, and coworkers, we often already have fertile common ground. Leverage your existing relationships with these people to have an actual productive dialogue! On the other hand, you'll see people cling to the “but”. We all like to think of ourselves as reasonable people who can be convinced through rational argument to change our minds, and hope that we're mature enough to realize,

admit, and change our minds when we've been wrong. Most people are like that. Our true opponents, however, will not back down from the "but", and this is an easy way to identify them, or to convince them to forgo the appearance of support for the right to arms. The rebuttal to many of these "buts" will be the following - self-defense is a human right, being armed is a human right, and the Second Amendment is for everyone!

We see many "buts". One of the classics is "I support the Second Amendment but people should have to have some kind of training before they own or carry a gun!" A lovely sentiment. We have club members who can shoot rings around the average person - should only they have the right to arms? Obviously the Fudd himself doesn't wish to be deprived of the right, so for many proponents, they set the bar just below what they can achieve. If the standard is above what they can do, it's too much of a burden, and if it's far below what they can do, it's much too easy, and probably dangerous! Our opponents take this "but" and compare the right to arms to a driver's license. Whereas a driver's license is a privilege, being armed is a right. We don't need a license before we can speak, even if we might say something inaccurate. We don't need a license to refuse a warrantless or causeless search. We're sure that many of you would be unhappy if you had to demonstrate your ability to match Jefferson's elocution in the Declaration of Independence before being allowed to voice your opinion. Nor do we think you should have to match the skill of a world class shooter to exercise your right to arms. The right to self-defense is universal and no one should have that right denied to them on the basis of some arbitrary test.

How about "I support the Second Amendment but those dangerous weapons of war and assault weapons have no place on our streets!" Some combination of that first "but" and this one are especially popular among the Fudd subtype often referred to as the "Bro Vet", who loves to use his military service (with the most prominent current examples being former special operations cool guys that CNN trots out as the "reasonable gun advocate") to look down on civilian exercise of the right to arms. We see these Fudds say things like, "There's no reason a 19 year old needs an AR-15!" or "Civilians have no reason to own plate carriers!". This is the same Fudd that says, "I carried an M16 in Viet Nam, and you don't need one in America!" with 40 or 50 years more on the clock. Arms, as defined by Blackstone, are "anything that a man wears for his defense, or takes in his hands as a weapon." We've seen club members out on the range in armor and with fighting long guns more and more frequently, and the club fully supports that. The right provides us, the people, with the means to take the fight to tyrants. This extends to any kind of arms. In Article I Section 8 of the Constitution, Congress is endowed with the power to "grant Letters of marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water". To and for whom are these letters granted and rules made? The people! Citizen-owned warships, equipped with citizen-owned cannons, preyed on British logistics convoys to great effect during the War of 1812. That's equivalent to you owning a guided missile destroyer today! We share this to highlight how ridiculous it is that, in the modern day, there's a debate over 10 or 11 rounds in a pistol magazine. The private citizens who owned warships

understood that being armed is a human right, and exercised that right when those we broke from in the Revolution sought to reconquer our country.

Making a comeback in recent years, we have “I support the Second Amendment but I bet if women/minorities/LGBTs started arming themselves you’d support gun control!” This “but” is a not-so-subtle accusation of some kind of hatred on the part of the target. Ironically, in the wake of *Bruen*, the government, in its search for historical analogues to today’s gun control, largely finds laws that we’d today consider racist to support its position. Guns are especially valuable to any vulnerable population that wishes to defend themselves and their rights. Gun control is about control, not guns, and those with less societal power are, historically, the beneficiaries of a robust right to arms. In Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, a terrorist bombing of a church killed four African-American girls. Condoleezza Rice, who would later in life be national security advisor and Secretary of State, watched as her father took his gun and sat on the porch on the lookout for night-riders until sunrise in the wake of the blast. Her father and the neighbors formed an *ad hoc* militia, guarding the streets that led to their neighborhood under arms in shifts. If those men had no arms, they would have been helpless, and had they registered their arms with the police, the government “surely would have confiscated (the guns) or worse.” We’re sure many of you are familiar with the old saying: God created men, Samuel Colt made them equal. The Second Amendment is for everyone - the whole of the people, no matter who they are.

Then there's "I support the Second Amendment but not where it's more important than the lives of children!" This honeyed promise is one where we just give up our guns and nothing bad ever happens again, presumably followed by flying pigs and manna from heaven. A common variant of this “but” is the ominous-sounding, "How many children need to die before you support gun control?" This probably unsettles you on an instinctual level, and with good reason - it's a threat, not a rhetorical question. The kind of person who supports this line of argument are the same types as the congressman who writes tweets threatening to nuke Americans who refuse to comply with his favored extreme gun control measures ([yes, it actually happened](#)). To realize a gun free utopia they feel that they're going to have to break a few eggs and if there's not popular support for nuking our neighborhoods, they'll send SWAT teams to our houses to shoot us in the face instead. The mask of caring about the children is a thin and threadbare one over the tyrannical lust for the blood of the noncompliant it conceals. We've even heard that resistance to an anti-rights agenda is worthless because, even though we recently capitulated in the war on terror, we were laboring in Iraq and Afghanistan under rules of engagement that stopped us from making a desert and calling it peace. Amazingly, our opponents argue that similar rules wouldn't apply inside our country in their campaign against guns, with Americans like us as the enemy! We doubt the people these types would rely on to actually carry their plans out would do so, but history is replete with Red Guards, so we're ready to concede that point as circumstances dictate.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in his writings about life in the Soviet Union, accurately identifies the deserved fate of such quislings and the consequence of not resisting.

"What would things have been like if every Security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive and had to say goodbye to his family? We submitted with pleasure! We purely and simply deserved everything that happened afterward." While the Soviet Union and New Mexico in 2023 are obviously not one-to-one analogues, two of our three US representatives recently refused to vote in favor of a bipartisan resolution that "[denounces socialism in all its forms, and opposes the implementation of socialist policies in the United States of America](#)." We can only assume this is because they, representing their constituents and with the support of their affiliated caucus in our state, support socialism in at least some of its forms, and/or support the implementation of socialist policies in our state and country. These types of policies are, obviously, impossible without a level of centralized government power that we have as a people thus far largely avoided.

Be bold, and refuse those who would tell you "but". They can, for the most part, be brought around, but if they persist they have at least done us the favor of accurately and openly identifying themselves as an opponent of our rights. They may not advocate directly for us to be thrown in the Gulag, but they'll submit with pleasure and go along with the machine of tyranny as it grinds their fellow citizens into paste.

Part V: Effectively in Public

There's a couple obvious questions at this point. If self-defense is a human right, being armed is a human right, and the Second Amendment is for everyone, why is there public disagreement on the topic? Shouldn't everyone, even solely out of self-interest, appreciate the right to self-defense, just as everyone appreciates freedom of association and protection from compelled self-incrimination?

The answers to those questions are complex, and involve factors far beyond the right to arms. Simply put, despite the fact that the right to arms should be useful for everyone equally, it's inconvenient to those who wish to control everyone, so it's rolled into a suite of other issues, many of which well-meaning people can have honest disagreements about. Some collective somewhere has developed a unified theory of righteousness that gets pushed everywhere, and it has no time for nuance. This is now popularly referred to as the "culture war". Regrettably, it seems to be omnipresent, unrelenting, and extends to every topic imaginable. Because of the exclusion of nuance, everyone is expected to either be all in to support a topic or is labeled an opponent of decency, with dissenting opinions said to be incorrect at best and harmful at worst.

While we wish things were different for the right to arms, we must be realistic about the current state of play. It goes without saying that guns belong to the wrong team, the one full of *those people*, and that team is always wrong in the eyes of those pushing this theory. In the past decade, our side of the "right to arms" issue has woken up to the bigger picture, and has stopped playing defense. A decade ago, body armor was the purview of the military or the police. Today, citizen ownership of plate carriers is widely

normalized. Two decades ago, the AR-15 was a fringe rifle. Today, it's the most common type of rifle in the country. There's a commonly-spread statistic that says there are 400 million guns in citizen hands in this country. That statistic is based on the number of NICS checks conducted, and, as we all know, you can have multiple guns on a Form 4473. It's also worth noting that NICS was started in the 1990s and guns don't come with an expiration date. It's not a stretch to estimate well over half a billion guns in our hands in our country.

Those hands are alike in only one way - they're the hands of Americans. The fastest growing firearms owning demographics are women and minorities, because the right to arms is for everyone and, as gun culture has become less insular and more assertive, a larger slice of everyone is taking advantage of it. When we talk to those who may be on the fence about the right to arms, its social benefits, or its benefits to them, let them know we don't care what anyone's personal beliefs are or what their lifestyle is, especially if they don't match the stereotypical "gun owner" straw-man that our opponents have constructed! Gun rights are human rights, and gun owners are all types of people.

Despite that, we've reached the point where keeping and bearing arms is labeled by our opponents as extremism. As a result of the relentless push, the fact that most people don't have a lot of time to filter what they're told and are agreeable, and the polarization of the right to arms along with every other issue, most of the time when people argue against gun ownership, they don't actually know much about the issues nor do they really care at a deep level. Humans are social animals, and if the message everywhere seems to be "guns are bad", our natural tendency is to go along with what seems to be the group. Modern social engineering technology has created a concept known as "manufactured consensus", where, through amplification of a message, a group opinion on a topic can be created among millions of people out of whole cloth. The victims of manufactured consensus have many ideas that aren't their own. They didn't arrive at these ideas through introspection and philosophy - they received them from someone else. We find this constantly when discussing the right to arms.

Where do these opinions come from? Our cultural institutions are and have been unified in their disdain for the idea of an armed people for decades. Filmmakers and celebrities mock the ability to exercise the right of self-defense as they profit off of action movies jam-packed with creative death and live in gated communities, but the amplified message is the mockery. When Harvey Weinstein was outed as a sick predator, he attempted to buy his way out of trouble - if only he was allowed to keep making movies, he promised, he would produce propaganda to destroy the NRA. On social media, the amplification is even more explicit. Facebook, for example, banned people profligately for discussing Kyle Rittenhouse's actions taken in self-defense, but only on one side of the discussion - posts condemning him as a racist murderer were fine! While we're not sure how a white guy shooting three white guys somehow adds up to racist, the message is obvious. What about our prominent universities? Academics should be engaged in debate, and should encourage respectful disagreement purely for the sake of thorough examination of issues. Somehow, the inverse has become true, where

expressing a belief in an individual right to arms at an Ivy League school is more likely to get you a visit from the police on a red-flag confiscation order than tenured. A reflexive, unquestioning disdain for the right to arms is *mandatory* in certain social circles - you have to give off the correct virtue signal to declare you're a good person. No one should be forced to have a certain opinion to be viewed as a good person - we believe that well-meaning people should be able to disagree in a reasoned, informed manner on issues and still respect each other.

When engaged in conversation about the right to arms in public with a stranger you are almost certainly not debating them. You're debating a series of talking points they've received from someone else. One of the most effective strategies to use is to ask someone you may hear repeating things you've heard time and time again is to ask the person why they think what they do. "We should ban assault weapons!" "Why do you think assault weapons should be banned? By the way, what is an assault weapon? I've heard a bunch of different definitions of that term and I want to make sure I understand you." You're giving the person you're talking to more opportunities to elaborate on their position, which will allow you to better respond. Frankly, if you hear a talking point, it's often safe to assume that the person you're talking to, even if they're emotionally invested in and vehement about their argument, has very little technical or legal expertise about guns and gun rights issues. By making sure you understand them, calmly pushing back, and not belittling the person, you stand a better chance of convincing any audience you may have, and if the conversation goes well and you're talking to someone who doesn't know much and isn't heavily invested in the issue, you stand a chance of convincing them.

We briefly considered putting talking points in this message, but decided against it because we believe in everyone's ability to think for themselves and ask for support as they need it. If you need any support advocating for the right to arms, we will be ready to help through the legislativeaction@ziarifleandpistolclub.com email, and we'll continue to learn more together.

The greatest advocate for the right to arms is the grandfather who takes his grandchildren out and shows them how to knock cans off the fence with a pellet gun, the spouse who tries gently to persuade a significant other that Moms Demand Action is lying to them, the manager who tears down "gun free zone" signs, the woman who tells her ladies biking club that if anything bad happens while they're out riding they need to get behind her. It's you, every time you take some new people down to the range, show them how to use your guns safely, and help them have some fun. It's us every time we get together on a weekend for our favorite shooting activities, and agree that we'll see each other next time.

There exist all manner of ways to fight for our right to arms. Fortunately, it's not all butting heads with zealots and heated arguments on the internet. It's not all donating money to good organizations or emailing and calling politicians to tell them that if they vote for this or that we'll make it our mission in life to kick them out of office. It's not all

sitting in committee meetings waiting to be told we don't get to speak today or typing up lengthy emails to keep people abreast of current happenings.

You will, in daily life, find that conviction makes you invulnerable to ill-informed anti-rights arguments. Confronted with this spirit, those seeking to undermine the right to arms or their unwitting dupes will recoil. If other democratic and republican forms of government existed in history besides the Greeks and the Romans, they were so utterly obliterated that not one stone remained atop another, their people scattered like leaves before the wind of history, their deeds and spirit erased from immortality. Our founders traced out the only method by which tyranny can be beaten back, the only barrier against the entropic fall into authoritarianism witnessed again and again in history, an armed people. There's an oft-repeated talking point about needing more "common sense" gun control laws, but the Second Amendment is the "common sense" gun control law, designed for the people to keep control of the government through the mechanism of citizen gun ownership.

We have the opportunity in our time to strike another great blow for our nation, for its spirit, for the people. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe - here we stand, we can do no other.