

Greetings Friends, Patriots and Article 16/2nd Amendment Supporters

Uniform Crime Statistics from the FBI show that for 2015: Vermont was the safest state in the nation in regards to Violent Crime as we had the absolute lowest rate of violent crime per 100,000 people of all 50 states. This is not a new situation for Vermont, as we have enjoyed being the Safest State in the Nation with the lowest rate of violent crime for 3 years in a row.

For 2015: We had the lowest rate for Property Crime. We had the lowest rate of Larceny. We had the lowest rate of Motor Vehicle Theft. We were second lowest for aggravated assault. We were third lowest for Robbery; we were the third lowest for Rape using the revised definition of Rape and we were 4th lowest using the legacy definition of Rape.

Despite having a very high rate of firearms in Vermont households - 42% according to the 2010 census (but we know that rate is probably closer to 70%) - we are tied for 3rd place with the lowest number of murder by firearm of all the 50 states.

Despite claims made by the uninformed or those that would intentionally mislead the public: According to the ATF Vermont is not a major source of guns for NY; we are not a major source of guns for Massachusetts; and in fact - Vermont is the 3rd lowest source of guns of all the 50 states.

With all of these easily verifiable facts as a backdrop: It is beyond me to understand how any politician running for office today to serve the great state of Vermont can suggest that Gun Control is our biggest issue. Yet that is the case today - and we all know that this push is NOT coming from Vermonters - it is coming from out-of-state and those that would pander to those interests in return for political donations.

As we approach this next legislative session: We already know that there will be yet another push for "Universal Background Checks" as there was a rather poorly attended rally on this very spot in August to announce that initiative. Despite having this issue soundly defeated in the last legislative session - and despite over 1,000 people like you flooding the statehouse to make our views known - there are legislators and gubernatorial candidates that wish to waste more time and resources on this foolish initiative.

Let me be clear: The concept of UBC is an utter failure. It will do absolutely nothing to stop a terrorist; it will do nothing to stop a person determined to do evil; and it will not keep guns out of the hands of those that should not have them - because these people do not conform to the laws that we do.

UBC will however absolutely inconvenience law-abiding citizens and it will absolutely result in law-abiding citizens becoming criminals when they do not conform to a ridiculous law when selling a firearm to a long-time friend who they know poses no threat to anyone. It will also absolutely cost those of us that do conform precious time and precious money to make a completely legal private sale.

Simplistically, there are two types of people in this world, good guys and bad guys. If we consider "bad guys" obtaining guns - they can only do that today by breaking existing laws. The sad truth is that evil and sick people will always have the ability to get their hands on tools to kill, whether that be a bomb, a vehicle, a knife, a hammer, their bare hands or a firearm.

Today, and as honest and law-abiding citizens, it is our right to own firearms.

A significant portion of Vermonters exercise that right, and it is crystal clear to me that our ownership of firearms is THE main reason why Vermont has such low rates of violent crime.

Every day, every hour, every minute and every second of every day: Vermonters use good judgment in handling their firearms, and we have the statistics to prove that.

However: The basic concept of UBC is that when it comes to selling guns - our good judgment cannot be trusted. How absurd is that? As a law-abiding citizen, and should I wish to sell a firearm today, there are two very compelling reasons why I would not sell to a criminal, a terrorist or a sick person. The first reason is that it would make me a felon to do that under today's existing laws with a substantial fine and substantial jail time *IF* our liberal courts ever chose to vigorously prosecute them. The second reason is far simpler to understand: It's called self-preservation. No honest and law-abiding firearm owner would EVER sell, gift or loan a firearm to someone that then may use that gun against them, or their family, friends or community.

We can apparently be trusted to own firearms, but we cannot be trusted when it comes to selling them?

Hogwash.

Beyond the ridiculous notion of UBC - we will likely see other ridiculous initiatives. Possible bans on Modern Sporting Rifles; bans on lead ammunition; bans on magazine capacity;

restrictions on where you can have a firearm; requirements to have ID cards to purchase ammunition; restrictions and constrictions on our ranges - the list goes on and on and on.

When was the last time you heard someone say: "You don't need an AR-15 for hunting"?

It is not about "hunting" and never has been. It is about a constitutionally guaranteed INDIVIDUAL right, it is about a personal choice, and in my case I own any number of firearms that I am sure would qualify under someone's notion of an "assault rifle" - I happen to use them for competitive shooting.

As an aside here - an inconvenient fact for many is that the AR-15 is THE rifle of choice for most high-power shooting competitions. It is an ideal firearm for our youth and for women due to its' ergonomic design and low-recoil, and with a match trigger, free-floated barrel and match sights these are incredibly accurate firearms, out to and beyond 600 yard with iron sights. Ask me how I know this.

As we have seen however, a very small number of evil people and terrorists have adopted their use. In the final analysis however: There is no way to stop such people - especially when they carefully plan their heinous acts and then further plan to kill themselves afterward.

If these are the weapons being used against honest and law-abiding citizens, am I the only one that believes that we, as those honest and law-abiding citizens who are being attacked, should be able to meet that threat with equal force? Haven't we proven that we own our firearms responsibly? Isn't having firearms like the AR-15, or a semi-auto deer rifle or a pistol or a shotgun the true point of Article 16: Defense?

How is it that people who do not own guns, people who can only ever read about the negativity of guns in the paper because that is all that media chooses to print, people who would be horrified to pull a trigger once let alone several times, think that they can dictate what guns we can own, or what guns we can use for whatever lawful purpose? Especially when our right to defense is guaranteed by our Vermont Constitution?

For the past 17 months, firearm sales in the United States have progressively broken all previous records and due to how these guns are being sold - they are all being sold with background checks - these firearms are being purchased by law-abiding citizens. As a matter of record, firearm sales have been steadily increasing for well beyond the past 10 years, and across the same time span: Violent Crime in the US has steadily fallen. Is this some decade-long statistical fluke - or is there in fact a direct causal relationship between a steadily

increasing rate of firearm ownership among law-abiding citizens and a steadily decreasing rate of violent crime? Am I the only one that sees that more guns in the hands of honest citizens is THE cause of that decline in Violent Crime?

Beyond all of the threats facing our Article 16 and 2nd Amendment Rights - our very heritage will be under attack this coming biennium. Much like gun rights are under attack by groups such as Gun Sense Vermont (GSVT), the Vermont Trappers Association (VTA) and even our own Fish & Wildlife Department have been under an unrelenting attack by a newly formed group called "Protect Our Wildlife" (POW), and we can only expect this attack to continue.

What this really amounts to is very small but very vocal groups of people, most of whom are transplants to Vermont, who, after moving here, now want to change the nature of Vermont. I personally do not trap, but I am friends with a number that do, and they have a perspective of living close to the land that I frankly envy. These are honest people, people who know the nature of our wildlife, people who pride themselves on being self-sufficient, and they, like the rest of us, **just want to be left alone.**

I mention the Vermont Trappers specifically because I want you to know that they will need your support this coming year. Regrettably, we often find ourselves only looking to defend the things we are personally involved in, and we must change that. As a competitive high-power shooter, and even though I do not typically shoot pistol or shotgun, I will stand with my brothers and sisters who are involved with these sports when their sports are attacked. Even though I do not trap, I will stand with the Trappers when their rights are attacked, and we all must do that. For every sport we have and enjoy, there are detractors. When we stay as one cohesive unit: We are a force that cannot be ignored or discounted. If we allow ourselves to become fractured or only stand when our own sport is attacked - we will all surely hang separately.

I spend a lot of time serving our causes here at the legislature as a registered lobbyist, but the true power of our stance lies with you. I see you all as Vermont's modern-day minutemen; men and women who will take their most precious commodity - their personal time - to come to the statehouse and stand with your friends and fellow citizens, standing in defense of your unalienable rights, and tell the Legislature "NO".

I wish I could tell you that you will not need to invest that time, but we all know what is coming.

When the call goes out to assemble back here to make our views known, and it will, no one can do that for you. You have to do it yourself, and in doing it you need to bring all of your family

and all your friends. In a similar manner, we need to vote and we need to get every man and woman who thinks like us to vote as well.

I conclude with a message for those politicians who hate the NRA, who hate the GOVT, who loath our personal freedoms, and who wish to change things in a state where things are clearly already working better than just about every other state in our great nation.

Firstly: *I* am the NRA. I am not just an annual member or a life member, I am an endowment member because I want the NRA to fight for my rights, I want them to fight hard, and I send them money so that they can fight a good fight. I stand with the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs in that fight, just as I stand with the Gun Owners of America, the National Sport Shooting Foundation, the Gun Owners of Vermont, the 2nd Amendment Coalition, other groups and you all.

Any politician in Vermont that can stand and openly suggest that Gun Control is the biggest issue facing Vermont is sadly misguided. Do they not see their failure to achieve a balanced budget with all their wild spending? We cannot run our households like that. Do they not see our severe economic issues, or rising state and local taxes, or soaring health care costs, or deteriorating infra-structure, or the problems facing education?

Apparently: All of those issues and more are second string to their view of the "Gun Issue", and they wish to waste more time and money in an attempt to "fix" something that is clearly not broken.

As for me: I intend to continue to stand and fight for our rights, for all our rights whether or not I am actively involved in them, and I have the certain knowledge that I stand with some of the best people in Vermont: All of you.