

With the first frost, the leaves turn and begin to fall, the air is filled with the rich aroma of the crop drying down in the fields, and the hunting season is upon us. This time of year, more than any other, gives us the opportunity to reflect on the right to keep and bear arms that we enjoy because of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In order to understand the importance of this Constitutionally guaranteed individual right to keep and bear arms, we need to understand its origins. Some of the ways we exercise our 2nd amendment rights are target shooting, self defense, gun collecting, and hunting.

While we enjoy hunting and other recreational pursuits as benefits of the right to bear arms, it is important to remember that the purpose of the 2nd amendment, as intended by the Framers of the Constitution, is to provide a deterrent to injustice and tyranny. Our Constitutional right to "keep and bear arms" is the right of the individual. This was guaranteed purposefully by our Founding Fathers to ensure that a nation of armed individuals could always act as a check against any type of tyrannical encroachment by the federal government or other power against ALL the rights and liberties of all Americans.

In recent years, however, we've watched as some have mounted an assault on our rights under the Second Amendment. These individuals and groups often seek to exploit the latest headlines to advance their anti-gun agenda. They point to horrific acts carried out by evil individuals as the justification for more regulation over how, when, and whether Americans should be able to exercise their Second Amendment right. And yet, studies have shown time and time again that the best deterrent to violent crime is for potential victims to have the ability to defend themselves. Infringing upon American's Constitutional right to own firearms will not prohibit criminals from obtaining and using these weapons against a defenseless public. We have ample laws on the books to prevent criminals from obtaining guns illegally; more laws are not the answer. We need to educate and put this idea into our culture. The person who pulls the trigger is responsible, it's not the gun that is responsible. I agree that we need to protect our citizens from gun crime. Instead, the focus must be on tougher enforcement of existing laws to ensure that drug dealers, convicted criminals, and illegal aliens are not obtaining weapons.

The Second Amendment protects our right to bear arms, but with that right comes the responsibility of doing so appropriately. That is something I was taught at a very early age, and it's what I've taught my sons. In our family, we pass our guns down from generation to generation, and the basic principles of how to responsibly use those guns are handed down as well. Just like the guns in my family, when out hunting and enjoying the outdoors this season, remember where that right came from, and what its original purpose is. Because the right to "keep and bear arms" is continually challenged by those who would undermine our way of life, we must work to protect it to ensure that Americans can enjoy all the freedoms guaranteed in

the Constitution. Safety needs to be a very high priority, but limiting use of guns will not solve the problem. Education, informing the public and enforcement is the best way to keep violence at bay. It is gun owners who support the strongest penalties for gun crimes.

The right to "keep and bear arms" has been handed down to us by our Founding Fathers. There are a number of ways to responsibly express this right, but it is enshrined in the Constitution to protect us against tyranny – and we must remain ever vigilant in our efforts to, in turn, protect it.