

To whom it may concern,

How can it be that we as a nation have reached this point in our development that we have allowed a small minority of highly financed individuals to overwhelm the core rights of the vast majority of our citizens. How can it be that the most basic principles of which our nation was founded "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" can be usurped by a highly prejudiced, small fraction of our population that insists on a biased reading of a single amendment to our constitution. An amendment that was specifically written to give the states the right to arm themselves as an entity to protect against the potential tyranny of our fledgling government. We need to make some very serious changes to our thought process and our understanding of what type of a nation we have become. We can no longer be held hostage by the NRA, we can no longer allow the 2nd amendment rights of some people to destroy the more fundamental rights of the majority.

We deserve better.

It took a long time for our nation to come to terms with the abundantly clear harm that cigarettes were doing to the health of this country. It took decades for the restrictions and reforms to take hold against tobacco. But it is working. We are healthier, our children are less likely to smoke and second hand smoke in public places has been dramatically reduced. It was a long and difficult battle to get legislation passed and to enact the changes but it was worth the fight.

Today the entire mood of the country regarding tobacco products has changed, yes people still have the right to smoke but not in a manner that tramples on the rights of others to clean air and a healthy work place.

The fight against gun violence is even more pressing. The battle will be harder because the stakes are higher. The NRA is more committed than the tobacco lobby was but that is why we must prevail. We must change the mentality, we must alter the course, we must begin the ball rolling. If we can start to change things now, maybe it will take years, maybe decades, but the tide will change and the rights of those who do not wish to own, handle or operate guns will no longer be trampled upon by those who do.

***I urge you to begin the process of controlling gun violence by enacting strict measure to do the following:***

*1) Ban the sale or ownership of any assault style (military) weaponry whose sole and only purpose is to kill large numbers of people, institute an immediate buy back with amnesty on these weapons and make it a felony to own such weaponry in the future.*

*2) Ban the sale or ownership of high capacity magazines for any weapon (no legitimate hunter uses these, the only use is to kill many people without reloading), offer a buy back with amnesty and make it a felony to own high capacity magazines in the future*

*3) Institute a national gun owners database that is accessible to the general public and includes every gun owner's name and fingerprints and the name's and fingerprints of every member of their household including live-in help*

*4) Legislate that all guns must be registered and insured against accidental or criminal misuse and that each and every gun owner and every member of a gun owner's household must be required to take a course about the perils of gun ownership and gun safety. Make it a crime to own a weapon that is not insured, punishable by a lifelong prohibition on the right to own a weapon of any sort in the future. **I have to insure my car, my home, even my tools. I have to carry liability insurance in case I damage a home I am working on, why do gun owners hold***

***no liability insurance when they own the most dangerous of all property?***

***5) Institute a severe excise tax on the purchase of any ammunition for personal or hunting use; exceptions can be made for the sale and use of ammunition at shooting ranges but that ammunition must be strictly controlled and documented. This is crucial because we will never eliminate the guns that are already in circulation but you can easily make it much more difficult to purchase and procure ammunition. Make it a criminal offense to own more than specified number of rounds of ammunition under any circumstance. Make hunters purchase ammunition each and every hunting season and document the bullets that were fired, where they were when they were fired and return unused ammunition to place of purchase. **Truck driver's have to keep logs of the miles they have driven and the number of hours they are on the road for safety issues, why don't gun owners share a similar responsibility? We have to show our driver's license and sign a form to purchase Sudafed in a drugstore! Can't we demand at least as much scrutiny when purchasing ammunition?*****

Thank you,  
Bill Heyde