

Dear Legislators:

Perhaps, no declaration of law has been exploited more than the Second Amendment which reads, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." If you read it in the textbook, disassociated from political and economic gluttony, the message of the Second Amendment could not sound clearer. Anybody who can scrape together some money to pay for a firearm is not a well-regulated Militia, and these "anybodies" are not necessary for the security of a free State. On the contrary, they can infringe on the constitutional rights of the remaining citizens to life, freedom, and pursuit of happiness.

I invite you to familiarize yourself with the Harvard Injury Control Research Center and its Firearms Research section. Read the headlines - Social disorder increases the likelihood of adolescent gun carrying; Selling crack is associated with carrying guns; Increased gun carrying reduces community feelings of safety; The public favors most sensible gun policies, policies the U.S. does not have; Owners of semi-automatic guns are more likely to binge drink than other gun owners. The list goes on and on.

"When people live in households that are struggling with poverty, they also have a higher rate of violence that involves a firearm at 3.5 per 1,000 people compared to 0.8-2.5 per 1,000 people in middle-to-high income families. When someone receives more education, they are less likely to commit a crime and are more likely to earn a living wage' (26-poverty-and-crime-statistics, Vittana.org, January 3, 2017). "In middle-income neighborhoods the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1, in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children. 1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read. Children who aren't reading at grade level by the end of third grade are four times as likely to drop out of high school. 78% of juvenile crime is committed by high school dropouts" (Fifty Top Literacy Statistics, Ferstreaders.org). The mother tongue of these children is violence. They learn from gun shots and shouting before they learn from a written word, arts, and sciences. They learn fear and conflict before they learn love and care. These children do not have much to lose by taking their own or someone else's life. Their socioeconomic status destines them to fail sooner or later, and these are the very households we are arming across the country at an increasingly disproportionate rate. You took the liberty to interpret the Second Amendment for them without ever affording them a right to develop into fully educated and thoughtful individuals who are capable of their own judgement. By doing so, you took their future choices away too.

The statistics are staggering, and the downward spiral is clear. The ever-increasing number of suicides, homicides, drug overdoses, an alarming early age onset of chronic illness, employers increasingly relying on foreigners for both skilled and unskilled labor undeniably point to the fact that we are raising the most mentally fragile generation in American history. We choose not to arm our children with zest for education, competitive advantage, and healthy lifestyle habits that would afford them and those around them the very right to life, freedom, and pursuit of happiness. On the contrary, we choose to arm them with propaganda, drugs, weapons, and junk food. When all hell breaks loose, nobody will be spared, and most certainly nobody will be glorified for their zeal for irresponsibly interpreting the Second Amendment.

I live in Ohio where the Ohio Senate Bill 215, effective as of June 13, 2022, will allow for a permitless carry of concealed weapons. It is bound to increase firearm casualties and collisions with law enforcement. Such legislation of public health importance should not be a shush vote; it should be put out for a referendum. But not surprisingly, the fact that The Ohio Fraternal Order of Police strongly opposed the bill did not change its course.

Every time an enthusiastic guide at the Independence Hall turns to the audience and asks whether they see a rising sun or a setting sun, it reminds us that the answer was designed to be a choice, and we bestowed this choice on our lawfully elected officials. Will enough of you have the courage to raise yourselves to the level of dignity, humility, empathy, and intelligence that the Founding Fathers believed this country deserved?

Do not force your personal beliefs and interests down everyone else's throat and do not spend our tax dollars on arming teachers and training them to handle firearms. Spend funds on mental health services, meaningful afterschool, exercise, and mindfulness programs, community engagement, healthy meals, literacy, vocational training, family planning, and parental education. Whenever I encounter public school meals, I want to cry. Our children are under fire all the time – poisoned by food, air, water, and violence. How could anyone manage to grow up sensible and healthy under these conditions? Will you stand with your constituents to protect the future, or will you stand with the processed food monopolists and firearm manufactures for short-term profits and glory? Next time you stand in front the mirror, ask yourself whom you indeed represent. The choice is yours.