

From: Steve May

**August 19, 2020**

**To: The Texas House Committee on Mass Violence Prevention & Community Safety**

**RE: Duty #4: Evaluate the ongoing and long-term workforce needs of the state related to cybersecurity, mental health, law enforcement, and related professionals.**

I write these comments to the Committee on Mass Violence Prevention & Community Safety in Support of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment and Gun Rights .... This right being congruent with Freedom and Liberty.

Legislators / Representatives of the People of Texas, you have a weighty responsibility to weigh the cost vs benefit of anti-gun proposals offered by some of the respondents to your inquiry. I realize and respect the concern of all for the Safety of our Community. I also recognize the danger of sacrificing liberty for the sake of safety. We have seen the negative outcome of much well intended legislation by the way of unintended consequences.

Our Constitution and Freedom are under attack today. And I don't understand what's to be gained by those people so anxious to empower government in so many ways beyond what was intended by founders of our nation. Could it be they intend to make a government of the Elite and for the Elite...for the ones that are so smart they can tell all the rest of us the best way to live our lives, while their service to us is rewarded in material ways far in excess of anything the average person could expect to achieve. They would enslave the common man and destroy the American Dream. Sounds far-fetched? Yes, not too long ago, it did sound far-fetched. But all the technology that we read about in 1984 by Orwell is now available and more. Some of it is in use in China already. What's to keep this from happening in America? Freedom can be lost in just one generation. And that could be facilitated by well-intended short-sighted legislation.

Exhibit #1 – Freedom of Speech has been Cancelled

For some time now, Political Correctness in our speech has been in vogue. In my youth, during the 60's, "Tell It Like It Is" was a frequently used expression. People at that time valued plain truth. Now people don't dare "tell it like it is" for fear of being cancelled or berated.

If a person today says "All Lives Matter" ...and they do... or "Blue Lives Matter" ... and they do too ... they are subject to and sometimes have lost their jobs. Freedom of Speech has been cancelled on most college campuses. If a speaker is brought to campus that espouses ideas that a certain number of people on campus disagree with, the disenchanted people are permitted to shout down the speaker and/or disrupt the meeting . And to add insult to injury, the justification for permitting these actions is "Freedom of Speech" ????. It's the exact opposite. Those people "Cancel" Free Speech.

Exhibit #2 – Anti-Gun Legislation Infringes upon the Right to Bear Arms

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In many states there was already and in some there is new legislation that is a detriment to our right to bear arms. Within the Democratic National Platform there is proposed significant legislation that would be a further detriment to the right to bear arms.

*Please be assured it is not my intent here below to lecture you on History. I share all this only so that you will have a better understanding of how I have come to my position on the importance to preserve the rights enshrined in our Constitution and here in particular to the Second Amendment.*

In Colonial Times King George wanted to confiscate the Firearms of the Colonials to prevent a rebellion against his oppressive tyrannical rule. As a sixth grader I memorized a portion of the poem Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Paul Revere warned the Colonials that the British were coming ....to take their stockpiles of firearms. “

On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:

Hardly a man is now alive

Who remembers that famous day and year.

I doubt that any sixth graders today have memorized and few have read that poem. Little did I realize as a sixth grader how significant the events related through that poem are.

I often wondered why the Jews did not fight back when Hitler and the Nazi's were so cruel to them. Then one day I saw a documentary that included a portion on the Jews in Warsaw. They were ordered to give up their firearms but some of them refused and hid them. Later when things got even worse they fought back but all they had was a few pistols and hunting rifles. They were no match in fire power or numbers for the Germans.

Today in Venezuela, people are starving and we believe the majority voted for a new President. However, during the current President's reign the citizens' right to own firearms was nullified. They were all required to turn them in. They gave them up without a fight for the sake of safety and promises of security. Now in Venezuela “Students Have Ideas – Thugs Have Guns”. The authorities have guns and through the black-market, criminal gangs have guns. Without firearms, the citizens have no defense from the gangs. Without firearms, the citizens have no capacity to overthrow their illegal government.

Fortunately for us, back in 1875, the Colonials refused to let King George take their firearms. Post American Revolution it was recognized that our first constitution, the Articles of Confederation, gave the Federal government too little power and a new Constitution was proposed. The founding fathers feared that the Federal government or someone in the government might one day become too powerful, like King George. All shared the same concern. The Constitution was written with many restrictions to prevent the abuse of power including the system of checks and balances. Still many of them, based on their experience with King George, refused to ratify the new Constitution until the Bill of Rights was added including the Second Amendment.

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Often the argument for the outlaw of Semi-Automatic Rifles like the AR-15 is that if these rifles were not available to the public, our world would be safer. And that they are not needed for hunting or self-defense. Although the Right to Bear Arms is essential so that American's can protect their home and person from criminals, the primary intent of the Second Amendment is to ensure that American's have the capacity to overthrow an over-powerful and oppressive Federal Government. Therefore, Americans, at least some Americans, need to own semi-automatic firearms. They need high capacity magazines. They need to own them anonymously so that the government cannot systematically confiscate them. The cost of the firearms and ammunition should not be prohibitive.

1. The Right to Bear Arms and private ownership of firearms promotes peace and safety. Criminals know before they bust my door down that I might be one of those individuals that own a firearm.
2. The Right to Bear Arms and private ownership limits the power of the Federal Government. The Federal Government cannot be "All Powerful" so long as American citizens have the will and capacity to Stand Up and Fight.

There are many hindrances to Firearms ownership that have been proposed for the sake of safety and security. Indeed, there have been too many horrific and tragic incidents that have involved firearms. So, as you consider actions that promote safety, please do, consider actions that promote safety. This is an important task. But remember to consider "Unintended Consequences". Also consider the Cost vs Benefit. If the cost is a restriction of gun rights, the cost is too high. The benefit of outlawing so called "Assault Weapons" has already been proven to be zero based on the data accrued from the years that their purchase was previously outlawed. The realized benefit is likely to be zero for most of the other anti-gun proposals.

**Therefore, consider actions that promote safety, but do not at the same time, infringe on the Right to Bear Arms.**

**Go After the Schools again.** No child left behind is not working. Teaching to the test is not working. Develop a Pilot Program. Plan It, Do It (as a pilot program), Check It, Analyze it. When it's right, expand it to the state.

1. Teach History and Government and especially US History / US Government to children and young adults. The lessons should be age appropriate and designed to create pride in our heritage but at the same time they should accurately reflect both the positive and the negatives that were a part of those times (age appropriate). US History and Government should be required for all students at State supported colleges. High school graduates should know not only Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic but they should know a good deal about our History and Government so that they can take on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

*We learn through personal experience or vicariously. Our forefathers learned what it was like to live under the rule of King George through hard knocks. Better that we should learn*

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*vicariously. History is the vehicle. If we and our children and young adults do not learn vicariously, then we are all subject to learn the lesson through hard knocks.*

2. Provide Heroes for Children and Young Adults to Emulate.
  - a. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, Ulysses S Grant, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, Sam Houston, Alan Shepherd,
3. Teach Life Management Skills to children and young adults.
  - a. Teach both personal and public debt and the negative consequences inherent there in.
  - b. Teach living beyond our means leads to misery and hardship.
  - c. Teach Personal Money Management.
  - d. Teach the American Dream and the American Work Ethic.
  - e. Teach the Inalienable Right to the Pursuit of Happiness referred to in the Declaration of Independence is not a guarantee of material wealth or happiness. We believe that in America all are guaranteed an equal opportunity to pursue happiness as they choose. Teach that education is not a guarantee of material success or happiness. Education enhances a person's ability and opportunities to succeed. WORK is the thing that makes it happen. Even then it's not the material things that you acquire that promotes happiness. It's the WORK. Work that builds the community as well as providing self-sufficiency promotes happiness (Mental Health) by way of creating Self Worth and Pride in Personal Achievement and Service.
  - f. Teach that the acquisition of Education is critical to achieving success and happiness. But no one can give it to a person. "You can lead a mule to water but you can't make him drink." It is a means to an end. Individuals who want to be a personal success must choose to take the actions necessary to bring it about. They are limited by their God given intelligence and circumstances of their birth. "Over Achievers"....people who apply themselves as children and young adults, to acquire an education and then apply themselves to work, always do better than most of their peers. All should strive to be an Over-Achiever.
  - g. Put an end to Social Passing. It teaches children the wrong lesson. In the real world you do not get promoted if you fail to perform. You get fired. Provide resources to schools; teachers, & counselors, to identify children that are performing below standards and address these deficiencies before they fail. Get the parents involved. Advise parents and kids on the positive impact that education can have on both the parents and kids lives. Consider individual or small group study halls that address learning deficiencies. If they do not perform hold them back until they get it. Children who are passed without acquiring the skills required for the next grade level cannot perform at the higher grade level. And when they graduate they cannot perform. The people who are the products of this Social Passing feel, and rightfully so, although they too may be at fault, that they have been let down and that the American Dream is something that they have no shot at. Right again! They have low self-esteem and seek to attain it through negative pathways. Holding them back

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may hurt their self-esteem but passing them to the next level where they cannot perform hurts their self-esteem too and worse, it robs them of hope for the future. Holding them back gives them the chance to learn those skills they failed to acquire in the prior year and with those skills they can be advanced to the next grade level. There, they understand the consequences of failure to perform will mean they are held back again. They may have correctly learned a life lesson. They should still be considered at risk and continue to receive special attention to maximize their chance of passing that grade. In doing the work and achieving per standards they regain self-esteem and have the greatest chance to succeed in the real world.

- h. Teach Young People to “Be Careful How You Live Your Life.” Personal Choices / Decisions as teenagers and young adults sometimes have life-long consequences that either promote or hinder success. Among those choices/decisions that have consequences are
  - i. Negative - Deciding not to apply yourself to education.
  - ii. Negative - Deciding to experiment with drugs.
  - iii. Negative - Having a baby out of wedlock.
  - iv. Negative - Deciding to engage in criminal activities.
  - v. Positive – Taking any job you are qualified for and working hard at it.
  - vi. Positive – To live with in your means while also saving for a rainy day.
  - vii. Positive – Seeking, Forming, and Living a Faith of your choice.

***You can do it in America!!! You can do it better in Texas!!!***