

AN OPEN LETTER TO NRA MEMBERS

When Senator John McCain addresses NRA leaders at their convention today, we all need to ask where does he really stand on the important issue of background checks on all gun transfers at gun shows.

In March of 2004, on the floor of the US Senate, Senator McCain delivered an impassioned plea for legislation to close the so-called "gun show loophole".

SENATOR MCCAIN: "Why do we need this amendment? Some might point to tragedies such as Columbine, but as horrific as the massacre at Columbine was, where eleven young people needlessly lost their lives, that is not what drives the need to close the gun-show loophole. We need this amendment because criminals and terrorists have exploited and are exploiting this very obvious loophole in our gun safety laws..."

"We need this amendment because, according to the NRA [National Rifle Association], 'hundreds of thousands' of unlicensed firearms sales occur at gun shows each year. We need this amendment because ATF has identified gun shows as the second leading source of firearms recovered from illegal gun trafficking investigations..."

We also need this amendment because my law-abiding constituents who attend gun shows in Arizona should not have to rub shoulders with the scum of the Earth who use this loophole to evade background checks to buy firearms to peddle to God knows who."

And how could we all forget those movie theater ads featuring John McCain pleading to "close the gun show loophole".

Now, McCain argues that no new gun laws are needed.

Has he changed his mind or has he had a "senior moment" and forgotten that he once was an outspoken national leader on this issue?

Hunters and shooters deserve to know where the leader of the "Straight Talk Express" now stands on gun shows.

So today, while Senator McCain panders to Wayne LaPierre and Chris Cox, Kentucky sportsmen need to call McCain's Senate office at 202-224-2235 and ask where the Senator really stands on this important issue.

Ray Schoenke,
President—American Hunters and Shooters Association

Why Does the National Rifle Association Leadership Support Congress's Biggest Opponents?

As the self-proclaimed "largest pro-hunting organization in the world," the National Rifle Association has long claimed to represent America's hunters and shooters in the fight to protect one of America's oldest traditions. The NRA's bylaws include an article setting a core goal "to promote and defend hunting...as a viable and necessary method of fostering the propagation, growth and conservation...of our renewable wildlife resources."

But it turns out that its by-laws are just empty rhetoric.

A report released by the American Hunters and Shooters Association reveals an ugly truth: the NRA's leadership is spending its Members' money to support the campaigns of the biggest conservation opponents in Congress. Contrary to its stated goals and assurances to the hunting community, our unprecedented analysis shows that NRA's leadership overwhelmingly supports Members of Congress with the worst conservation voting records.

For example, 144 House Members supported the Roadless Conservation Act of 2007, which seeks to limit road construction and corporate development in our National Forests. Those 144 members received an average grade of D minus from the NRA. Alternatively, the 291 House Members on the other side of the issue averaged B pluses – and seven times as much campaign money from NRA.

Did the NRA's leaders even take a position on the Roadless Conservation Act of 2007? No. They are flat-out ignoring conservation issues.

Given this, it's not surprising that since 2000, the NRA's leaders have contributed \$4,085,277 in campaign money to support the 193 Members of Congress who received poor ratings from the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) and only \$390,897 – more than 10 times less – to the 245 Members of Congress who have received high ratings from LCV.

The NRA's campaign contributions, endorsements and ratings of Members of Congress expose the organization's strong anti-conservation bias. Despite their lofty bylaws and forest friendly taglines, the NRA is standing by silently as its allies in Congress are helping to destroy America's wilderness.

Hunting is an American tradition that depends on conserving America's wilderness and wildlife. To fully enjoy our rights and heritage, hunters and shooters deserve leadership that will protect our guns and our land. America's hunters are beginning to ask whether anyone in Washington recognizes that.

The American Hunters and Shooters Association, unlike the NRA, is dedicated both to protecting the gun rights of Americans and preserving America's hunting heritage through conservation and responsible wildlife management. We understand the crucial relationship between protecting our rights as gun owners and protecting the lands we love.

So, for the three million NRA Members who are tired of seeing their \$25 dollar contributions wasted by an NRA leadership supporting anti-conservation Members of Congress and Wayne LaPierre's \$900,000 salary, we offer a different choice.

And, for 77 million gun-owning Americans who are not Members of NRA, we invite you to join an organization that is steadfast in protecting our Second Amendment rights, conserving our environment, and will support common sense efforts to keep guns away from criminals.

America's hunters and shooters should no longer stand by the NRA because it's clear the NRA has long stopped standing up for them.