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NRA convention rhetoric becomes more heated

Pat Perriello | May. 8, 2013 NCR Today

The National Rifle Association has completed its annual convention in Houston. The fiery rhetoric issuing from this gathering [1] is difficult to listen to, but I want to focus on the words of the group's executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre.

La Pierre plays the role of victim. He says the Obama administration wants to "blame us, shame us, and compromise our freedom." Nowhere does he mention the real victims of gun violence. He goes on to say that universal background checks would do nothing to "prevent the next mass shooting." It sounds like he fully expects there to be another mass shooting but sees no reason to even attempt to do anything about it. Finally, he dramatically affirms that "we will never surrender our guns, never." So the NRA intends to do whatever it takes to achieve its goals. I wonder if that includes violence.

One is struck by the intense anger generated by this issue. One is equally struck by the lack of anger or sorrow over the loss of life that has occurred. Who is the NRA really protecting? About 90 percent of Americans, including gun owners, support background checks [2]. The NRA, therefore, is not about protecting all gun owners, but only a small fraction of them. Additionally, the NRA just might be even more interested in protecting gun manufacturers and distributors.

The NRA is willing to oppose the wishes of even 90 percent of the American people. It seems they do not understand or are not really interested in representative government. They do not feel bound by laws or even the will of the majority. They essentially deny the legitimacy of government and ascribe to individuals and like-minded groups the right to take matters into their own hands and hold on to what they see as their rights -- forcibly if necessary.

It is also interesting to note how we respond differently to the threat of gun violence and the threat of terrorism. When it comes to terrorism, we are more than willing to give up our rights. We allow invasions of privacy at airports, even permitting body searches and scans. We seek to eliminate anyone we see as foreign from our midst, even refusing to allow the dead to be buried on U.S. soil. The current immigration bill may now be in jeopardy because of a desire to eliminate the possibility of anyone entering our country to do us harm. Wiretapping that was once considered illegal is now acceptable. There is a willingness to trample on any of our rights that may get in the way of our safety.

When it comes to gun violence, however, we seem much less concerned about safety and more insistent on brooking no interference with the Second Amendment. We continue to opt for no additional background checks, no reduced magazine sizes and no ban on assault weapons. The gun lobby refuses to consider even the most minor inconvenience or sacrifice in the interest of protecting our children and families.

The stance of these gun advocates is disturbing and troubling. An even greater concern is our willingness as a nation to let this fringe group have its way. Because they make the most noise, we tend to back off. Somehow, the issue is more important to them than it is to us.

Some of this complacency is changing through the efforts of Mayor Michael Bloomberg in New York and Gabby Giffords in Arizona. It still needs to be made clear, however, that the majority will not be bullied by a vocal minority who believes the government is out to get them, who believes in the most bizarre of conspiracy theories, and who appears incapable of seeing any problem, much less any solution, to the continuing carnage on our streets and in our communities.

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