

SPIKE LEE, ROSIE O'NEILL AND THE RE THIS COUNTRY'S C NEED TO REA

This testimony was delivered by WAYNE R. LAPIERRE, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association, to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations.

MY ADULT LIFE HAS BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY DEVOTED TO understanding and vindicating the Second Amendment to our Constitution. The individual, personal freedom to choose to lawfully own a firearm — without permission from, or apology to, anyone — is as clear and intentional as the rest of the Bill of Rights.

Our freedoms are already endangered enough by those who oppose them. But I've learned that a freedom is most at risk when it's in the hands of honest people who think, for some perceived common good, they ought to give it up.

Today we are a country in shock, still bewildered by what confluence of forces could possibly lead young people to hurt each other.

In that tender state, good people are vulnerable. They want to do something, anything, for the common good. Indeed, some are so perplexed about what to do that legislators admit from the outset that their legislation could not have prevented the very crimes that provoked drafting it.

That's the very definition of a perceived, but fictitious, common good.

As this made-for-TV lawmaking gets played out, it needs a villain. So good Americans have been exposed daily to a well-coordinated, systematic bashing of the National Rifle Association's membership as somehow a reckless societal pathogen, a mighty extremist empire opposed to safety, caution and reason.

That is a cruel and dangerous lie.

Because nobody — nor any combination of entities you care to add up — has invested even a measurable fraction of what we have invested toward keeping safety and sanity central to the lawful exercise of the Second Amendment.

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write and ignore, or with existing laws you enforce.

Some think our insistence on enforcement is unreasonable. Others say we oppose reasonable restrictions on gun ownership. So let's talk about what's reasonable and what's not.

We think it's reasonable to provide mandatory instant criminal background checks for every sale at every gun show. No loopholes anywhere for anyone. That means closing the Hinckley loophole so the records of those adjudicated mentally ill are in the system.

This isn't new, or a change of position, or a concession. I've been on record on this point consistently, from our national meeting in Denver, to paid national ads and position papers, to news interviews and press appearances. But I've repeatedly emphasized that this Administration must stop illegally keeping records of lawful gun buyers.

In fact, it's the media's well-kept secret that the NRA was an early architect and supporter of the National Instant Check System now in place. Congressman McCollum knows we worked with him on instant checks more than a decade ago.

We think it's reasonable to provide for instant checks at gun shows just like at gun stores and pawn shops. But what's unreasonable is how the proposed Lautenberg legislation ignores the 250,000 prohibited people, like felons, who've walked away from gun stores — instead of being prosecuted for a federal felony for trying to buy a gun.

We think it's reasonable to prevent all juveniles convicted of violent felonies from owning guns, for life. What's unreasonable is how Lautenberg can prevent your law-abiding son from inheriting his grandpa's shotgun collection because Lautenberg classifies him as a gun show dealer who must be federally regulated.

We think it's reasonable to prosecute more than just two dozen thugs last year for putting illegal guns in criminals' hands. What's unreasonable is that Lautenberg considers legal guns in private hands subject to intrusive federal regulation, even in the privacy of your home.

For a century we've taught it's not just reasonable but essential to use safety locks, trigger locks, gun safes or any voluntary means appropriate to keep firearms out of the wrong hands. What's unreasonable is that Lautenberg can put you in prison just for failing to keep records on how many guns you own.

We think it's reasonable to make gun show instant checks just like gun store instant checks. What's unreasonable is how Lautenberg could define your Wal-Mart, or your uncle's skeet-shooting range, or your next-door firearms

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THE O'DONNELL REST OF GUN HATERS HAD THIS.

*Executive Vice President of National Rifle Association,
Committee on Crime on May 27, 1999.*

Collector, or your local sporting clays competition, or any person or place with
two or more firearms as a "gun show" subject to intrusive government regulation.
That's crazy!

We think it's reasonable to demand strict prosecution of criminal activity,
whether it takes place in a big-city alleyway or small-town gun show. What's
unreasonable is that Lautenberg instead demands strict registration of law-
abiding gun buyers, giving the federal government the name and address, type
of gun and serial number — not of criminals but of Americans deemed NOT
to be criminals by the instant check!

We think it's reasonable to provide full funding for the National Instant
Check System so it operates efficiently and instantly. What's unreasonable is
how Lautenberg authorizes an unlimited gun tax on purchases by law-
abiding citizens.

We think it's reasonable to expect our government to prosecute more than
24 hoods last year for providing guns to criminals. What's unreasonable is how
Lautenberg makes everyone prosecutable if you just talk about buying or selling
a gun at a gun show — even if you have no gun in your possession!

**We think it's reasonable to support the federal Gun-Free School
Zones Act. What's unreasonable is letting 6,000 students caught
with illegal guns at school go, prosecuting only 13 of them the past
two years.**

We think it's reasonable to demand that when a lawful gun buyer passes the
criminal background check and purchases a firearm, records of that transaction
be destroyed immediately. What's unreasonable is Lautenberg's decree that we
trust government bureaucrats to compile and keep names and addresses and
firearm types of millions of honest, legal gun owners for no legitimate law

by the federal government... claims that federal gun laws are for the states to enforce: Reasonable... know that a case made in state court means plea bargains, judge shopping and no mandatory minimum sentencing. Even Mayor Ed Rendell of Philadelphia knows this, even if the Justice Department does not. He said, "In state court, we average for these types of gun violations a 4-month prison sentence. The federal guidelines are 59 months in prison. That's a 5 1/2-year difference. Incarcerating convicted felons in possession of firearms for that length of time will save lives. It will save carnage. It will save people from being maimed."

That's why we support Project Exile — the fierce prosecution of federal gun laws that has cut crime rates overnight in the few places it's been tried. Even though this Administration resists it, we think it's reasonable because it works.

We only support what works, and our proud list is long. From Project Exile to Three Strikes and You're Out, to Truth in Sentencing, to ten-twenty-life, to mandatory minimums — what's reasonable is what works; what's unreasonable is what doesn't work.

What's unreasonable is further erosion of privacy, further intrusion into private transactions, and further government penalizing of the law-abiding many instead of the lawbreaking few. America will not tolerate further surrender of precious freedoms in return for nothing but perceived but fictitious promises that make none of us safer.

The Lautenberg legislation is not only unreasonable, it is unworkable ... unacceptable ... and to our Founders who gave us the Second Amendment, unthinkable.

And finally — somebody's got to say this out loud: **It's reasonable for well-meaning people to convene hearings like this to find and fashion solutions. What's unreasonable is when a new level of hate rhetoric becomes acceptable because it's aimed at honest gun owners, as in the violent language of influential filmmaker Spike Lee who last week reportedly said about NRA President Charlton Heston, "Shoot him — with a .44 caliber Bulldog."** By his defiant silence, instead of the quick apology most American role models would offer, he sanctions hate and bears his share of culpability for the kind of violence this body seeks to stop.

On behalf of millions of gun owners who are NRA members, and tens of millions who are not yet, I am asking you to practice yourselves what is so readily preached to us: Be reasonable.

