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**Congress of the United States**  
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Mr. Dennis Henigan  
Acting President  
The Brady Campaign  
1225 Eye Street NW, #1100  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Acting President Henigan:

You asked for clarity last week concerning my recent statement on gun rights in Illinois – the most anti-Second Amendment state in the nation and the only state that prevents law-abiding citizens from carrying a firearm. This is my response.

Before we begin though, let me first start with a short refresher course on American history because there are facts that should never be overlooked nor forgotten. The freedoms we enjoy today were won by the gun and remain protected by the gun. Our founding fathers knew this fact because it was the gun that sent the British packing and paved the way for a government of the people for the people.

To ensure America remains ruled by the people, our early leaders inserted the right to keep and bear arms as our Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights. They did this not by accident but because they recognized the importance that Americans should be able defend themselves from tyranny no matter what form it takes on.

Yet even with our fundamental right to bear arms enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, Americans and especially Illinoisans are subject to a new form of tyranny – a big government bent on slowly dismantling our rights to own and carry a firearm. This is happening everyday in America through new laws sold as helping to “protect Americans.” If you want to protect Americans, then let the law-abiding citizens of this great country be able to do so on their own. They do not need the government or your organization to find new ways to restrict and deny gun ownership to good Americans.

We both agree that reducing crime and violence is a critical and noble objective. However, we fundamentally differ in how to address these problems.

In Illinois – where the Second Amendment is treated by lawmakers and authorities as just words on an old piece of paper – gun owners must gain permission from the “state” to own or purchase a firearm. Even worse, the City of Chicago had until recently banned handgun registration, ultimately making it impossible even to own certain firearms. Luckily, the U.S. Supreme Court recently struck down this 28-year-old ban as it was ruled unconstitutional – at least they bothered to read the Second Amendment.

Nothing has changed in Chicago and Illinois though. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision, the City has found new and absurd ways to restrict firearm ownership. If a gun owner who is registered to own a firearm in the City steps into their garage or on their porch or in their own backyard with a firearm they can be charged with illegal gun possession. This should sound ridiculous to you, because it is.

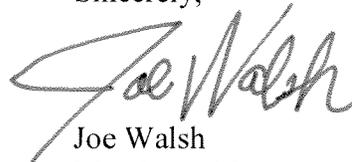
Just as ridiculous is that in recent months Illinois is now the last and only state to deny legal gun owners from carrying a firearm on them. I understand your organization is unlikely to support these reforms but the facts are clear – violent crimes continue to decrease even with 49 states having adopted concealed carry laws. With gun ownership at an all-time high, the nation's violent crime rate according to the annual statistics gathered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation has fallen for the fourth consecutive year.

This decrease in violent crime occurred simultaneously as more and more states repealed their archaic gun laws. In New York and Ohio, their firearm murder rates per 100,000 residents in 2010 were lower than Illinois. These two states have laws that allow lawful citizens to carry a firearm while Illinois does not. Restricting gun ownership to lawful Americans is not the answer to reducing violent crime.

The laws your organization supports have created a convoluted web of regulations designed to deter regular Americans from even owning a firearm. Day-by-day and with each new law, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine how, where, and when an individual can have a firearm. This is how you want it though – impossible for the average and law-abiding citizen to figure out where they can legally carry a firearm.

You are dismantling the Second Amendment and the freedoms that have been defended by American patriots for centuries. That is one more fact that could not be any more apparent. I hope I answered your questions.

Sincerely,



Joe Walsh  
Member of Congress