

2013 GIRC Scholarship Topic: Our right to bear arms is under attack. What are the consequences to our country if Americans lose their Second Amendment rights?

Essay of Erica Pena:

Our nation's identity came to surface when our forefathers stood up with their weapons and fought for our independence which they then preserved in writing so that today "we the people" can reflect on our history and how we became the great nation that we are. Due to recent tragedies on American soil, a colossal debate on gun control is in full spectrum which has placed our right to bear arms under attack. I believe that , if we lose our Second Amendment rights, the crime rate and demand for illegal weapons will skyrocket. Also, the loss of the Second Amendment could cause the economy to suffer. Americans could start losing jobs, retail sales, and the marketing profits that come with the right to bear arms.

Firearms are utilized every day as a means for many Americans to survive. Not only do they provide entertainment when it comes to shooting or hunting competitions, but they help the economy stay afloat. The sport of hunting generates more than \$67 billion and more than 1 million jobs in America which consists of retail sales, salaries, and wages, while creating sales tax, state income tax, and federal income tax (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies). Without the Second Amendment the revenue that is generated from the use of firearms will be slim to none. This would be a major setback for a country that is trying to come back from a recession. Many families that have spent their entire lives making a living off of the use of firearms will also suffer, especially those families that reside in rural areas across the country. These are the same families that provide the produce that is distributed nationwide and use hunting as a way to provide food for their own families. Their crops, wellbeing, and pursuit of happiness will be at stake because of the dangers that lurk around them if they are not allowed to possess guns. First responders in rural areas may not always arrive in the most timely manner due to the vast land that they are responsible for protecting. Criminals or saboteurs will not feel threatened and they will have the advantage when it comes to stealing from the crops or the families that they belong to.

The argument can be made that rural land owners should be more vigilant of their property, but vigilance can only take you so far when it comes to protecting yourself and your belongings. Normal citizens do not have the expert training that military men and women or police officers have, so we may not recognize when danger is standing at our front porch. Often by the time we realize that we are in danger it is too late to call the police for protection, which would make having a firearm within reach crucial when protecting ourselves. Keeping the right to bear arms will allow us to continue to protect ourselves without the fear of suffering the same consequences that our attacker may face. Unfortunately, as seen in the cases of Columbine, Aurora, and most recently Sandy Hook Elementary, not all human beings use guns effectively and appropriately. The people responsible for these massacres along with many other criminals in the United States that are guilty of wrongful use of a gun are the reason why this is even a topic of discussion. What is really sad about these tragic events is that the media glamorizes these murderers and puts their face on every magazine and news channel for everyone to see. Very rarely do you hear about an event in which a normal everyday citizen saved their own life or the life of someone else with their personally registered gun. These heroic events along with the victims of the mass shootings are what the media should be making their reports on, not

some irresponsible human being that is looking for attention and getting it in all the wrong ways. I believe that if there were fewer stories about the murderers and more stories about the heroes then many politicians would see the importance of the right to bear arms in our country. Instead, they contemplate repealing the Second Amendment, putting our economy and safety at risk, and causing an inflation of crime in our communities.

The inflation of crime will come from a rise in demand for guns in the United States because the absence of the Second Amendment does not mean we have to stop wanting guns for protection, but that it is illegal for us to have or purchase them. This could possibly force law abiding citizens to turn to criminals to purchase illegal weapons for our own protection. The example below takes place several months after the Second Amendment has been repealed and illustrates a situation that law abiding citizens may be forced to deal with:

Billy is robbed at gun point after withdrawing some of his hard earned cash from his financial institution. Fearing for his life, Billy hands over all his cash, and the criminal runs away. Normally Billy is your everyday law abiding citizen but now he feels that he is not safe without a gun. Motivated by fear of his life, Billy seeks protection and searches for an illegal gun distributor. He finds the gun distributor and purchases a pistol illegally. Billy just broke the law in efforts to provide a peace of mind to himself and his family.

The scenario paints a vivid picture of how easy it will be to corrupt every day law abiding citizens into breaking the law just to protect themselves. Not only will they be breaking the law, but they will be forced to deal with criminals that could harm them at any point during the transaction. In essence, laws will still be broken, not only by criminals of today but also by normal, law-abiding citizens purchasing guns for protection, and by corrupted law abiding citizens that have turned to distributing guns as a means of income.

The Second Amendment states that the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. There are many consequences that Americans will face if the Second Amendment is repealed such as a damaged economy to a nation that is already in recession, and inflation in crime and corruption. I believe that the biggest consequence will be that our nation's values and the freedom of the people will be severely damaged leaving the United States of America susceptible to more attacks and tragedies on our home soil. These attacks will not only come from other countries but from our fellow Americans leaving the perception that we are no longer the unstoppable force we used to be. Instead, we will reflect an image of the enemies that we have so solemnly swore to defend our nation against.