

Sponsor Statement for SJR 17

Federal Gun Policies

Urging President Bush to renounce and reverse Clinton Administration anti-gun-ownership policies.

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Senate Joint Resolution 17 requests that President Bush direct the United States Justice Department to acknowledge gun-ownership to be the Constitutionally guaranteed freedom that the founding fathers intended. It reflects the belief of the Alaskan people that the writers of the United States Constitution fully intended the Second Amendment to irrevocably protect the right of individual American citizens to keep and bear arms.

Under President Clinton's Administration, the United States Department of Justice advocated the legal position that the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution afforded no protections to individual citizens: not even for members of the national Armed Services, the National Guards or states' militias. Furthermore, attorneys for the Justice Department argued in open court that the Second Amendment of the Constitution was consistent with their position that the United States government could, without explanation or rational justification, relieve otherwise law-abiding American citizens of any and all firearms. Guns liable for confiscation included not only handguns but muskets, rifles and shotguns: cherished firearms, traditionally used for hunting and self-protection, since the very inception of our nation.

From the body of historical evidence it is clear that the founding fathers of the United States were, one and all, gun users and gun owners: Mason, Madison, Monroe, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Paine, Henry, Webster, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Washington... Federalists and Anti-Federalists alike considered the right to own and bear arms, like freedom of religion, speech or the press, to be an inalienable natural right and a necessary check on the power of a potentially overreaching government.

The Alaskan people positively recognized the true spirit of the United States Constitution when they voted overwhelmingly to amend the Alaska State Constitution to specifically protect the right of individual citizens to keep and bear arms. Senate Joint Resolution 17 urges President Bush to bring renewed honor to the office of the Presidency by joining us in this reaffirmation of the true meaning of Article II of the Bill of Rights, the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Senate Joint Resolution 17 was drafted in consultation with the National Rifle Association.

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