

30 years, Congress has dramatically expanded both the tax base and the tax rate supporting the Medicare trust fund. Initially, Medicare relief on a 0.6-percent payroll tax on the first \$6,600 earned. Today, the program relies on nearly a 3-percent payroll tax on all income earned. Next year for the first time in its history, the trust fund will begin spending more money than it is taking in. Without reform, a tax increase is around the corner. And at best, this tax increase would only prolong the program a few years.

Third, beneficiaries pay for Medicare's failures. Skyrocketing costs of the program force the same rate of growth on the direct expenditures by our seniors and disabled. Their out-of-pocket costs are directly related to overall program costs. Medicare does provide a generous subsidy, making it a better deal than anything else out there. But not all services are covered, the coinsurance and deductibles are substantial, and premiums are calculated to cover a defined amount of program costs. Only 1 out of 10 or 11 percent of seniors rely solely on Medicare for their health care insurance. Most seniors still purchase private supplemental medical coverage or have access to additional employer-sponsored coverage. Beneficiary costs will continue to climb as the overall program spending spins out of control.

Medicare is an entitlement. I do not suggest we take away that concept. However, I do ask us to remember what it entitles us to. Quite simply, the entitlement was intended to provide access to the private system. Our predecessors did not create a system which limited beneficiaries to public hospitals or Government-employed physicians. Rather, it provided financial access to private physicians and hospitals, the same providers Americans used before they turned 65.

If we viewed the Medicare subsidy today as it was originally intended—allowing beneficiaries to use it to access private coverage—seniors would then be able to choose health care plans that better meet their needs. Today they do not have that choice. We should provide that choice to our seniors.

Mr. President, I will continue this discussion over the next several days as we look forward to better ways to save, to preserve our Medicare Program.

I yield the floor.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for 15 minutes, and that a period for morning business be extended accordingly.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, earlier today my colleague from Arkansas, Senator PRYOR, spoke about a very disturbing letter circulated by the National Rifle Association [NRA]. I commend him for his remarks. I do not want to get into a lengthy discussion of this issue, but I urge all of my colleagues, regardless of where you stand on the issue of gun control, to read this letter, which was sent out by the NRA under the signature of Mr. Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice president.

I do not know of anyone here, no matter how strongly they feel about the legitimate issue of what we do about gun control, that would not be offended by this letter and the language in it.

Again, I am not going to spend a great deal of time here this morning, but there is language in the letter which talks about:

... jack-booted government thugs [given] more power to take away our Constitutional rights, break in our doors, seize our guns, destroy our property, and even injure or kill us;

That is how the letter refers to our Government and the hard-working members of our Federal law-enforcement agencies. And the letter goes on, in reference to the Clinton administration:

... if you have a badge, you have the Government's go ahead to harass, intimidate, even murder law-abiding citizens;

And there is even more:

Waco and the Branch Davidians ... Not too long ago it was unthinkable for Federal agents wearing Nazi bucket helmets and black storm trooper uniforms to attack law-abiding citizens.

Law-abiding citizens? People who shot Federal agents, who burned their own buildings, and killed their own families and friends? I mean this is incredible.

And this is not a letter from some fringe organization. It is a letter from the NRA—a national organization that usually has credibility. Quite simply, the NRA ought to know better.

Please read this letter. It is five or six pages. And if you are not as offended as I have been by reading it, I will be surprised.

Someone needs to ask for a retraction of this letter. Put aside the tragic events in Oklahoma for a moment, I do not want to suggest that this letter is linked to that terrible tragedy. I do not want to cloud the issue. But someone needs to apologize for this letter. It goes way beyond the kind of rhetoric that is appropriate on these issues.

Remember this letter went, apparently, to millions of homes. I have no problem with people sending out fund-raising letters and even using strong language in those solicitations. But the NRA's letter goes way beyond the pale. At first, I was so shocked, I thought it might be a hoax. But apparently it was not. I understand the NRA has confirmed that it sent the letter.

Again, I urge my colleagues to read the letter and I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

DEAR FELLOW AMERICANS: I've worn out a lot of shoe leather walking the halls of Congress. I've met key leaders, I've talked with old allies, I've met with the new Congressmen and many staff members.

What I'm hearing and seeing concerns me.

Many of our new Congressmen are ignoring America's 80 million gun owners. Some have forgotten what we did to elect them. Others say our demands to restore our Constitutional freedoms are "politically out of line."

Don't get me wrong, not all of them are like this. Senator Phil Gramm, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and Congressmen Bill McCollum, Bill Brewster and Harold Volkmer are all coming to our aid. But too many others are not.

And without a major show of force by America's 80 million gun owners, America will resume its long march down the road to gun bans, destruction of the Constitution and loss of every sacred freedom.

I want you to know I'm not looking for a fight.

But when you consider the facts of our current situation, you too, will see we have no other choice.

Fact No. 1: The Congress' leading anti-gunners, Senators Dianne Feinstein, Ted Kennedy and Congressmen Charles Schumer and Major Owens all survived their last elections.

They've pledged to fight us to the bitter end for Brady II and its ammo taxes, licensing and registration schemes, gun rationing, bureaucrats with the power to determine if you "need" a gun and yes, the repeal of the Second Amendment.

It doesn't matter to them that the Brady Law is a failure.

It doesn't matter to them that the Brady Law has become one more tool that government agents are using to deny the Constitutional rights of law abiding citizens.

It doesn't matter to them that the semi-auto ban gives jack-booted government thugs more power to take away our Constitutional rights, break in our doors, seize our guns, destroy our property, and even injure or kill us.

Schumer, Feinstein, Kennedy, Owens and the rest of the anti-gunners want more and more gun control.

It can be something small and subtle like a regulation expanding the disqualification criteria for the Brady Law. They're fighting for anything that makes it harder for you to own a gun.

The gun banners simply don't like you. They don't trust you. They don't want you to own a gun. And they'll stop at nothing until they've forced you to turn over your guns to the government.

Fact No. 2: If the anti-gunners fail to achieve their goals in Congress, they have a fall-back position in Bill Clinton, the most anti-gun President in American history.

In two short years, Bill Clinton launched two successful attacks on the Constitution. He signed two gun control bills into law. He has sworn to veto any repeal of the semi-auto ban and any restoration of our Constitutional rights.

His Interior and Agriculture Departments have set their sights on closing hunting lands.

And his Environmental Protection Agency is attempting to take jurisdiction over existing uses of lead. This, of course, includes gun ranges and spent shot.

What's more, gun owners aren't the only ones Clinton's EPA has set its sights on.

They're after fishermen, too. They want to BAN the use of small lead fishing sinkers and, of gravest concern, they want to stop the home casting of these sinkers.

If fishing sinkers are on the Clinton bureaucrat's list, you know what's next: lead shot, lead bullets, bullet casting and reloading.

Clinton's State Department is also adding to the attacks on gun owners and our Constitutional freedoms. In December, he signed the Summit of the Americas agreements which pledges that the U.S. Government will push for additional gun control.

Over in the Justice Department, Clinton's Attorney General Janet Reno has signaled her intent to "squash" the states' rights movement and deny states their Constitutional power.

And worst of all,

Fact No. 3: President Clinton's army of anti-gun government agents continues to intimidate and harass law-abiding citizens.

In Clinton's administration, if you have a badge, you have the government's go-ahead to harass, intimidate, even murder law-abiding citizens.

Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge . . . Waco and the Branch Davidians. . . . Not too long ago, it was unthinkable for Federal agents wearing nazi bucket helmets and black storm trooper uniforms to attack law-abiding citizens.

Not today, not with Clinton.

Our calls to investigate these outrageous assaults on our Constitutional freedoms are routinely silenced by the anti-gun media. But that's no surprise.

Fact No. 4: They've launched a new wave of brainwashing propaganda aimed at further destroying our Constitutional freedoms.

CBS, ABC, NBC, USA Today, Time, Newsweek, and The New York Times have launched another round of phony polls and slanted stories to help the anti-gunners achieve their goals.

Their latest phony poll shows 70% of America support the "semi-auto" assault weapon ban.

That's simply not true. When it's explained that "semi-autos" are used in less than a fraction of one percent of crimes; that the ban only affects the law-abiding; and, that the ban is only one more way to deny Constitutional rights to the law-abiding, support for the ban drops to 30%.

But the media still uses this 70% statistic to trumpet the call for gun control.

What scares me the most about this 70% number is that the media has brainwashed 70% of Americans into believing that the government—and not each individual—is responsible for their personal protection.

Even worse, this 70% number means that there are enough people who can be brainwashed by the media to vote for a repeal of the Second Amendment if it were put to a vote.

The media, Clinton, the anti-gunners in Congress . . . this combination is a powder keg that could blow at any moment and it's set squarely underneath the Constitution.

And what this means is:

Fact No. 5: Congress must be forced to restore the Constitution, repeal the gun bans, investigate abuse by government agents and focus the public debate on criminal control, not gun control. . . .

. . . Or what we're seeing now will only be a momentary patch of sunshine on the road to doom for the Second Amendment and our Constitution.

There is hope, though. Despite the current situation, I'm encouraged by you and your fellow NRA members.

Everywhere I go, to every gun show, every NRA-ILA grassroots operation, every Friends of NRA Dinner, even in cabs and air-

ports around the country, I run into NRA members who understand the stakes and stand ready to fight.

The question I hear from almost every one of these NRA members is the same: "What can I do next?"

If you're one of those members, I want to thank you for your courage, your conviction and your spirit. You keep me going. You keep me on the road. You give me strength to lead the battle.

And if you want to join me in taking the next step, I need you to do these two things today.

First, I need you to sign the enclosed Petitions to the United States Congress.

These petitions are addressed to the leaders of the U.S. Congress, Senator Robert Dole and Speaker Newt Gingrich, and your U.S. Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Alfonse M. D'Amato and Congresswoman Sue Kelly.

Please be sure to sign all five petitions, then fold them and place them in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope addressed to me at NRA Headquarters.

These petitions spell out, in black and white, our agenda of repeal, reform, investigate and limit government power.

In the first amendment of the Bill of Rights, we are guaranteed the right to "petition our Government for a redress of grievances."

And that's exactly what we're going to do: redress our grievances in the biggest and most powerful display of political clout and commitment to the Constitution.

I want to personally deliver your five petitions, and the petitions of all 3.5 million of your fellow NRA members—17.5 million petitions in all—to Congress.

And I want to show the leadership in Congress, and your Senators and Congressmen from New York, that the number one priority in their Contract With America must be defending and restoring our Constitutional freedoms.

17.5 million Petitions to Congress is the largest "redress of grievances" since the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were written.

So I KNOW Congress will get the message. And I know they'll act on our agenda of Repeal, Reform and Investigate if only you and I speak out.

Your Petitions to Congress also sends another message—a message not spelled out on the Petitions themselves.

Each Congressman, on the average, will receive 8,000 Petitions from NRA members demanding action. 8,000 messages from angry voters sounds an alarm in every Congressman's head.

You see, most Congressional elections were won or lost by 5,000 votes or less. So, they'll realize that failing to defend the Second Amendment and failing to retake the Constitutional freedoms lost to the anti-gunners, could result in big losses at the next election!

That's why it's critical you take a few minutes to sign your Petitions to Congress and return them to me as soon as possible.

These petitions are our D-Day.

Armed with these petitions and our First Amendment rights, we are going to storm Congress, knock our anti-gunner strongholds and recapture every bit of ground we lost since Bill Clinton took office.

And if we're successful, these petitions will be the turning point in the history of the Constitution A day when our sacred right to keep and bear arms will be secure for the next generation of law-abiding Americans.

Second, when you return your signed Petitions to Congress, I need you to make a special contribution to the NRA of \$15, \$20, \$25,

\$35, \$50 or the most generous amount you can afford.

Most Americans don't realize that our freedoms are slowly slipping away.

They don't understand that politicians and bureaucrats are chipping away at the American way of life.

They're destroying business, destroying our economy, destroying property rights, destroying our moral foundation, destroying our schools, destroying our culture

. . . Destroying our Constitution.

And the attack, either through legislation or regulation, on the Second Amendment is only the first in a long campaign to destroy the freedoms at the core of American life.

You can see it in the gun bans, certainly. But you can also see it in closed ranges, closed hunting lands, confiscated collectors' firearms, banned magazines and ammunition taxes.

You can see it when jack-booted government thugs, wearing black, armed to the teeth, break down a door, open fire with an automatic weapon, and kill or maim law-abiding citizens.

America's gun owners will only be the first to lose their freedoms.

If we lose the right to keep and bear arms, then the right to free speech, free practice of religion, and every other freedom in the Bill of Rights are sure to follow.

I am one American who is not going to sit on the sidelines and watch this happen.

And if you want to help me stop this destruction of the Constitution, then I hope you can make that special contribution of \$15, \$20, \$25, \$35 or \$50 to the NRA today.

With your special contribution, I'll have the financial ammo I need to keep Congress focused on the mission we've assigned them.

First, with your help, I will expand our petition campaign to involve as many of America's 80 million gun owners as possible.

If we can double the number of Petitions flooding Congress, we'll double the speed Congress deals with our demands to Repeal, Reform and Investigate. And with double the show of clout, we'll wipe out anti-gunner opposition.

Second, with your special contribution, I can increase the NRA's public exposure on talk shows, at rallies and shows, in radio and T.V. advertising and through broadcasts like the NRA's Town Meeting that first sounded our alarm in 16 million households, last summer.

Part of our problem is that far too few Americans understand what's at stake in these battles.

My ultimate goal is to educate the American people that this issue is not just about guns, not just about hunting, not just about personal protection; this issue is about freedom—Your Freedom.

I want to use the power of T.V. and radio to show the American people that, if the NRA fails to restore our Second Amendment freedoms, the attacks will begin on freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure. . . .

. . . And that unless we take action today, the long slide down the slippery slope will only continue until there's no freedom left in America at all.

I know you see it. The elbow room you have to hunt, shoot and live life the way you see fit is slowly disappearing.

And the truth is, NRA members have been hardened by legislative battles. And only NRA members have the courage, the conviction to draw the line in the sand.

That's why I'm hoping you can take a few moments to sign and date the enclosed Petitions and return them to me with your special contribution of \$15, \$20, \$25, \$35, \$50 or more in the enclosed postage-paid envelope

today. Or, you can charge by phone by calling 800-547-4NRA today.

You know, besides going shooting, I love to go to football games. And every time I go, I always hear my fellow fans talk about the impact of "the 12th man."

The 11 players calling the plays and doing the hitting get a lot of their motivation from the 12th man in the stands. I'm talking about the crowd who cheers wildly when our team is on the offense, and drowns out the signals of the opposing team when they're on the defense.

I need you to be that 12th man.

I need you to sign your Petitions to Congress and return them to me today. That simple act will give our allies the political courage to do what's right, to push ahead with our agenda of Repeal, Reform and Investigate.

Likewise, your signed Petitions to Congress will confuse and demoralize the anti-gun team and their agenda of bans, taxes, intimidation, harassment and destruction of the Constitution.

I know I've said what I'm about to say before. But this is a message that resonates with NRA members across the land. It's something I hope you, too, will say whenever you have the occasion to defend our Constitutional freedoms.

This, the battle we're fighting today, is a battle to retake the most precious, most sacred ground on earth. This is a battle for freedom.

Please tell me you're ready to take the next step by returning your signed Petitions to Congress and special gift to me in the enclosed postage-paid envelope today.

Thank you, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours in Freedom,

WAYNE LAPIERRE,
Executive Vice President.

P.S.—As a special thank you for making a special contribution of \$25 or more, I'd like to send you a copy of my national best-selling book, *Guns, Crime, and Freedom*. *Guns, Crime, and Freedom* is 263 pages of truth about guns, gun control, gun owners, the anti-gun media and what's happening to our freedoms.

I hope you'll read it and use it in your own personal campaign in New York to defend the Constitution. Use *Guns, Crime, and Freedom* to help you keep the pressure on Congress, write letters to the editor and teach other Americans about the battle we're fighting today. Thanks again for your support and friendship.

Mr. DODD. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JOHN STENNIS

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, Senator John Stennis will long be remembered as the "conscience of the Senate" for his personal religious convictions and his many years of work on the Senate code of ethics. I will always think of him as a friend, and as one of the most effective chairmen of the Defense Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. We shared many of the same beliefs in that the United States should always strive for the most effective Armed Forces in the world, and his leadership was always deserving of respect and admiration.

Despite physical ailments and the death of his beloved wife of 52 years,

Senator Stennis remained committed to this body and to his countrymen. He could always be found in his offices, never leaving until the Senate had adjourned for the day. He never gave up when he believed that he was right.

We need men and women who will fight for what they believe, and we should look to John Stennis as an excellent example of the forthrightness and dedication necessary to be effective leaders today.

Since Senator Stennis retired from this body in 1989, the Senate has been denied his wisdom and his leadership. Our entire country mourns his loss.

KOREAN AGREED NUCLEAR FRAMEWORK

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I find myself in the unfortunate position of once more coming to the floor to briefly discuss the lack of progress being made in the implementation of the United States-North Korea Agreed Nuclear Framework.

During the recent recess, talks in Berlin between us and the North Koreans broke down. The point of contention continues to be the DPRK's obstinate refusal to accept two light-water reactors of South Korea manufacture as called for in the agreement. Mr. President I—and, I am sure, our negotiators headed by Ambassador Galucci—have grown weary of the North's negotiating tactics. Last-minute brinkmanship has failed to work for them in the past; I am unsure why they think if they continue to pursue that course we will eventually relent.

Korean's have a saying about the futility of trying to influence someone too stubborn to listen: "reading into an ox's ear." At the risk of reading into the "Pyongyang ox's" ear, let me say it one more time. As I have said before as the chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, we should not accept any deviation from the agreed framework on the part of the DPRK. As called for in the agreement, North Korea must accept the two light-water reactors from South Korea. It must not refire its Yongbyon reactor. It must cease its attempts to produce fissile material. It must take steps toward initiating and maintaining a bilateral relationship with the South. The consequence for their failure to live up to the agreement is very straight-forward: a return to the Security Council and the imposition of tough sanctions.

Mr. President, this is their choice—in black and white. There is no subtlety, no innuendo, no hidden message. Our negotiators have done an admirable job in continuing to press the North Koreans; I urge them to stick to their guns.

WAS CONGRESS IRRESPONSIBLE? THE VOTERS HAVE SAID YES

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, anyone even remotely familiar with the U.S.

Constitution knows that no President can spend a dime of Federal tax money that has not first been authorized and appropriated by Congress—both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

So when you hear a politician or an editor or a commentator declare that "Reagan ran up the Federal debt" or that "Bush ran it up," bear in mind that the Founding Fathers, two centuries before the Reagan and Bush Presidencies, made it very clear that it is the constitutional duty of Congress to control Federal spending, which they have not for the past 50 years.

The fiscal irresponsibility of Congress has created a Federal debt which stood at \$4,876,206,792,345.50 as of the close of business Wednesday, April 26. This outrageous debt—which will be saddled on the backs of our children and grandchildren—averages out to \$18,403.01 on a per capita basis.

THE GUN-FREE SCHOOLS ACT OF 1994 REMAINS IN PLACE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, yesterday, the Supreme Court overturned the Gun Free Schools Zones Act, a 1990 law sponsored by Senator KOHL and others that made it a felony to bring a gun within 1,000 feet of a school. The case revolves around a San Antonio youth who was tried for bringing a .38 caliber to school, and the decision has ignited widespread debate because it reverses decades of Supreme Court precedent.

However, as a result of this controversy, it is extremely important to clarify the status of a separate, recently passed law, which has a similar name—the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994—but remains firmly in place.

Parents, teachers, and school officials must know that gun possession on campus cannot be tolerated, that the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 remains in place, and that in order to receive Federal education funds every school district in the Nation must soon have in place and functioning a policy that assures that any youngster who brings a gun to school will be expelled for not less than 1 year.

The following points must be clearly understood:

First, the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was not struck down by the Supreme Court yesterday.

Instead, the Court struck down a 1990 criminal law with a similar-sounding name—but a different legal status.

Second, the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 will not be swept away by the Court's decision.

By simply requiring schools to have a zero tolerance policy as a condition of receiving Federal education funds, the Gun-Free Schools Act does not rely on the commerce clause for its authority.

Third, the Gun-Free Schools Act remains in place, and zero tolerance policies are already showing positive results.