

July 8, 2009

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Sessions:

I am writing to express strong disagreement with the National Rifle Association's (NRA) views on Judge Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States. NRA concerns were sent to you in a letter from Executive Director Chris Cox dated July 7, 2009.

I am a veteran, a manufacturing firm executive and a gun owner. I own three pistols, two rifles and a shotgun. I enjoy hunting, target shooting, and the feeling of safety that guns provide.

I have lost respect and trust in NRA to deal with gun matters in America and encourage you to ignore their advice about Judge Sotomayor's confirmation.

NRA characterizes the firearms issue through narrow toilet-paper tubes of fear that 'liberals' with an anti-gun agenda will take away our guns. The reality is that illegal and improper use, storage, or transfer of guns is a significant problem in America. I strongly support gun ownership but come down on the side of organizational and personal responsibility and competence with respect to guns. Guns are dangerous.

When I was a youth and through my 30s I was an NRA member, looked forward to my *American Rifleman* magazine, and counted on NRA to help keep 'gun control' a private, not government matter. NRA provided hunter and sportsman skills, safety, property rights, and firearm maintenance training for many years; however, NRA's emphasis has become political, not around firearm competence and responsibility. When I was a Boy Scout assistant scoutmaster, NRA was not there for my sons and other boys in the troop so I was forced to arrange gun safety and skills training through off-duty police. Here in Idaho where I live there are no NRA basic firearm training programs even though this is a great outdoor sports state.

I have high respect for Judge Sotomayor. If I were able to question at her confirmation hearing, here are some I would like to ask:

- Do you believe that gun ownership in America carries responsibility by the owner to be competent in the storage, handling, maintenance, and use of the owned firearms?
- Do you think that the 'well regulated militia' language in the second amendment implies that private gun owners should be trained and certified perhaps as automobile drivers are tested for knowledge, skill, and abilities?
- Should gun ownership carry insurance requirements for liability and health damages caused by the gun owner?

Thank you for considering my views.

Laurence P. Gebhardt

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